Protection of birds and animals

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Available at: https://researchlibrary.agric.wa.gov.au/journal_agriculture3/vol3/iss2/23
INQUIRIES are frequently received from farmers concerning the birds and animals which are protected in this State. It is pointed out that many Australian birds and animals are unique from the naturalist point of view and are of considerable economic and scientific importance. Indiscriminate destruction can lead to a great deal of harm and it is hoped that farmers will assist in protecting birds and animals which in many cases assist in keeping down pests.

For example, recent surveys have disclosed that the bustard or wild turkey numbers have been reduced to a very low level indeed in the southern and eastern areas of the State, and only in the Kimberleys and part of the North-West pastoral country is this bird reasonably plentiful. The Agricultural Protection Board, which administers the vermin control laws, is perturbed at the dwindling turkey population, as the wild turkey is regarded as a most important factor in controlling the grasshopper pest. Although the wild turkey feeds largely on vegetable matter such as berries and seeds, insects such as grasshoppers and beetles form an important part of its diet.

The wild turkey has been fully protected throughout the State since 1935, and its destruction by any means renders offenders liable to heavy penalties. The Fisheries and Games Department, which administers the Fauna Protection Act, 1950, is inclined to believe that most of
A number of birds are listed under the latter heading, mainly the species which do damage to cereal crops or fruit. The following are not protected:

- Indian Turtledove
- Senegal Turtledove
- Black Cormorant
- Goshawk
- Collared Sparrowhawk
- Wedge-tailed Eagle
- Little Falcon
- White-tailed Black Cockatoo
- Little Corella
- Galah
- Smoker Parrot
- King Parrot
- Port Lincoln Parrot or "Twenty-Eight"
- Budgerigar
- Silvereye
- Raven
- Little Crow
- Domestic Pigeon (gone wild)
- Goldfinch

the illegal shooting is carried out by people travelling through the country and not by local farmers who, in general, are keenly appreciative of the bird's good qualities. The Department has decided that a determined effort will be made to offenders, but owing to the large area which will need to be patrolled the cost of illegal shooting and to apprehend operation of the general public is sought. An appeal is therefore made to all country dwellers and bird lovers generally to take upon themselves the responsibility for spreading the concept of protection for the wild turkey and of sternly discouraging any tendency to regard it purely as a game bird.

**UNPROTECTED BIRDS**

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Fig. 5.—The "racehorse goanna" is another reptile that is protected by the Act.

UNPROTECTED ANIMALS

Practically all native animals are protected with the exception of the following, all of which are recognised as being harmful in some way or other:

- Spotted Native Cat (Chuditch)
- Wambenger
- Red Kangaroo (Marloo)
- Hill Kangaroo (Euro or Biggada), except the form occurring on Barrow Island.
- Jungle Kangaroo (Sand Wallaby)
- Rabbit
- Black Rat (Tree or Ship Rat)
- Brown Rat
- Mouse
- Domestic Cat (gone wild)
- Wild Dog (Dingo)
- Fox
- Gould Flying-fox
- Pigmy Fruit-bat.

Fig. 6.—Map showing the area in which the Grey Kangaroo is protected.

LANCELIN IS.  31°O' S.° LAT.  
PERTH  ©MERREDIN  
THE GREY KANGAROO [Macropus eugenius] IS TOTALLY PROTECTED WITHIN THIS AREA  118°O'E.  
NOWANGERUP  34°O' S.° LAT.  
ALBANY  HOPETOUN
Certain birds, such as wild ducks, can hardly be said to be of any great value to agriculture, but in such cases an endeavour has been made to maintain a reasonable balance between the needs of agriculture and the needs of conservation by the proclamation of open and close seasons. Such seasons operate for a few traditional sporting birds in addition to certain non-sporting varieties, but it must be emphasised that the penalties for taking such birds in a close season are just as severe as those for taking fully protected species.

REPTILES

To most people a snake is a reptile which is killed on sight. Quite a number of snakes are harmless and even fulfil a useful purpose by killing mice. These harmless snakes are the Carpet snakes and various species of python.

Goannas, Bob-tail lizards, Frilled lizards and Slender snake lizards are among the protected reptiles, the list of which also includes the Rock python, the Brown Rock python, the Children python, the Black-headed python and the Carpet snake.