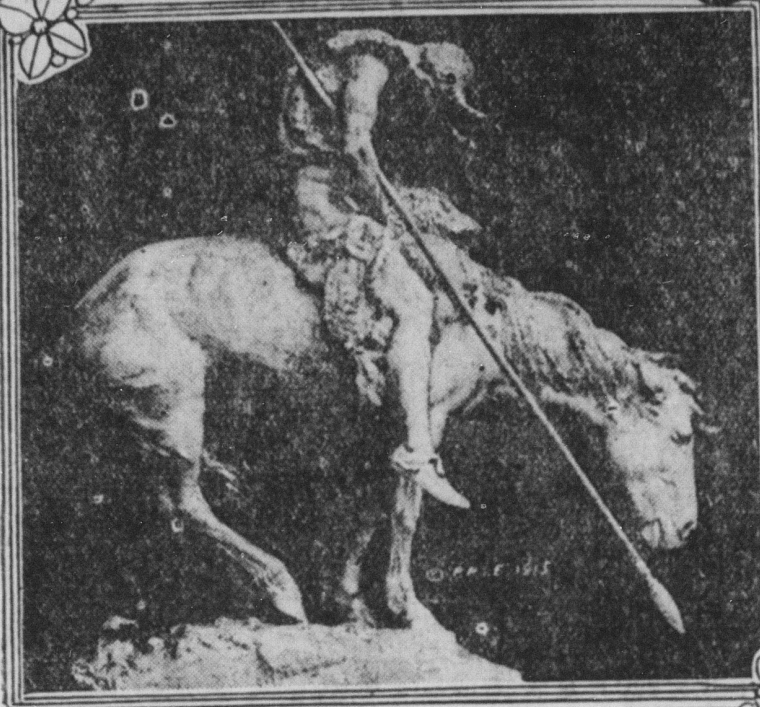


Vanishing Americans



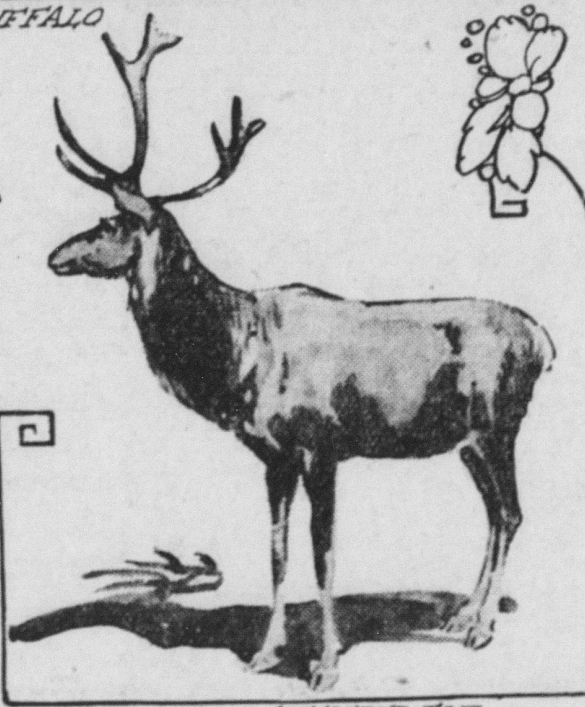
END OF THE TRAIL



BUFFALO



PASSENGER PIGEON



A FULL-ANTLERED ELK



PRONG-HORN ANTELOPE

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON

NOTHER native American has almost reached the end of the trail. From Martha's Vineyard off the coast of Massachusetts comes word that the heath hen is facing the extinction that a few years ago overtook another American bird, the passenger pigeon. Despite all the efforts that have been made to preserve the rapidly decreasing numbers of this species of grouse (for the conservation of which more than \$60,000 already has been spent), the heath hen seems to be doomed. Martha's Vineyard is the only place in the world where it can be found and it is believed that there are now only about twenty specimens of the bird left on the island, a decrease of fifteen from last year.

The story of the heath hen is a tragic but by no means an unusual one in a country which has become notorious for its prodigality in wasting its natural resources. In many respects it is similar to the story of the passenger pigeon whose numbers were at one time so countless that no one believed that they could ever be entirely killed off. So an appalling slaughter of the birds went on for years until a passenger pigeon became a rarity and before sportsmen and bird lovers realized it, it was too late to save the species from extinction. The last survivor died in the Cincinnati Zoological gardens in 1914. These birds, once so numerous that within the memory of thousands of persons now living their flight literally "darkened the sky," were wiped out of existence in a little more than two decades!

A hundred and fifty years ago the heath hen was one of the principal game birds of New England and the middle Atlantic states. It was distributed from Cape Ann to Virginia and it was especially abundant in the lowlands of Massachusetts, Connecticut and Long Island. When the early settlers began to cut off the forests the decline of the heath hen started. Its straight unswerving flight made it an easy target for the hunter in the open, and it was shot and trapped at all seasons. The spread of civilization and the increasing number of cats and dogs which killed its young further decimated the heath hen until it was practically extinct on the mainland and the few left were on Martha's Vineyard. Apparently no measures were taken for its protection until this time, but on account of the scarcity of predatory animals on the island, the strict fire patrol and the legislative measures which were finally taken to save the birds, the heath hen seemed to have a good chance to increase in numbers.

Such has not been the case, however. Twenty years ago there were about fifteen hundred birds on the island. By 1924 that number had shrunk to less than fifty. Last year the census taken by Prof. Alfred Gross of Bowdoin college, one of the foremost ornithologists in the country, showed that there were only thirty-five left, and now bird lovers of New England are alarmed to learn that this pitiful remnant apparently has been still further reduced in spite of all the efforts that have been made to save them.

The heath hen closely resembles the western prairie chicken. It is a light reddish brown above, barred with black and buff. At the sides of the neck there are tufts of black feathers, on each side is an orange-colored sac and over each eye is a small orange-colored comb. Like the prairie chicken it has the curious habit of "booming" early in the spring each year. This call is said to be similar to the whistle of a distant tugboat in a fog. It heralds the mating season and is a preliminary to and a part of what has been described as "the strangest sight ever seen

in the woods"—the dance of the heath hens. At daybreak the heath hens meet on certain dancing grounds, which they have apparently picked out in advance, and there they go through a series of antics which are as curious for human beings to watch as no doubt a charleston contest would be for the heath hen to watch. The birds run, jump, bow, toot and cackle in their unique pastime. Their short tails are cocked forward over their backs, the black neck feathers stand out stiffly at different angles until at last they point directly forward over the crested heads like the ears of a jack-rabbit. Their breasts are puffed up and the air sacs are distended until the bird looks almost twice his natural size. They prance backward and forward, flapping their wings, and from their throats come a series of squeals, cackles, clucks, chuckles and laughing sounds. Often, two birds will run toward each other until they are almost beak to beak. Then they remain motionless for several minutes. Sometimes they fight, but for the most part, their time is spent in tooting and dancing. The morning dance usually lasts until the sun is high in the sky and then the birds scuttle back into the recesses of the 5,000 acres of scrub oak in the center of the island which they frequent. Sometimes they come out to repeat their dance again just after sunset.

If the efforts to save the heath hen are unsuccessful it will be a tragic recurrence of the fate which overtook the passenger pigeon, although the ruthless slaughter of these birds is a more shameful record to be laid at the door of Americans than will be their failure to save the heath hen. The destruction of the pigeons began within forty years after the first settlers came to New Eng-

The End of the Trail

Far to the west the vanished herds they followed
And came at last unto the journey's end;
Naught have they found save bones where
bisons wallowed,
Naught now is theirs—nor food, nor fire,
nor friend.

Pony and man alike completely weary,
Even the rainbow hope at last long fled;
Sadly they face a darkness cold and dreary,
Broken, they seek the company of the
dead. —M. Beatrice Sumner.

land, and for the next two hundred years the killing continued. Finally, in 1878 the birds, having been driven by persecution from many states, concentrated in a few localities in Michigan, and it was during the next two decades that the wholesale slaughter which wiped them out of existence took place. The last important nesting place of the passenger pigeon was near Petoskey, in Emmet county, Michigan. There, in 1881, an army of five thousand men gathered for civilization's attack on the defenceless birds which had come there to rear their young. The attack continued from March until August and during this period of twenty weeks it is estimated that one billion birds were killed and shipped from this and neighboring nesting places.

One morning America woke up to find that the passenger pigeon was virtually extinct. It became so rare that prizes were offered for the discovery of a single specimen. The last individual definitely recorded in a wild state was captured at Bar Harbor, Maine, in 1904. In various zoological gardens a few individuals were preserved. David Whitaker of Milwaukee, Wis., procured a pair of young birds from an Indian in that state in 1888, and during the next eight years these increased to fifteen. By 1908, however, only seven of this number had survived, and at last only one, a female, was left. This bird, known as "Martha," was sent to the Cincinnati zoo and there she became famous as the last of the race.

Since the death of "Martha" persons in various parts of the country have reported from time to time the discovery of passenger pigeons, but in

every case it has turned out that the discoverer had seen some other member of the dove family which is easily confused with the passenger pigeon. And so despite the high rewards that are still standing for proof that the passenger pigeon is still in existence, a single authentic specimen is yet to be revealed. So the next time you see a newspaper story stating that one of these birds has been seen, just put it down that some amateur ornithologist has made another mistake. The passenger pigeon (*Ectopistes migratorius*) IS extinct.

Although the heath hen is the only bird which now seems definitely doomed to follow the passenger pigeon into the sunset, there are several other species which are in danger of extinction. One of these is a close relative of the heath hen, the prairie chicken. Only a few years ago the booming of these birds was still to be heard everywhere in the prairies of the Middle West and the eastern part of the Great Plains. In many places this sound is becoming rare, and even though the prairie chicken does not now seem to be in imminent danger of extinction certainly its numbers have been so greatly reduced that it can be called a Vanishing American.

Not only in the bird world, but in the animal world as well there are Vanishing Americans. There was a time when the buffalo was so numerous that, just as in the case of the passenger pigeon, Americans would have scoffed at the idea that this noble animal could ever be in danger of extinction. So long as the buffalo was killed only to supply the food needs of the Indian and the first white settlers on its ranges, there was no danger. Then the hide hunter came upon the scene. Again two decades saw another race of native Americans headed for oblivion. By the end of the eighties, the last wild herd of buffalo had been killed off and, of all the countless millions that once roamed the plains, only a few scattering herds in private game parks and public preserves were left. Fortunately public sentiment was aroused just in time and, due to the efforts of several conservation societies during the first part of the present century, the bison was saved. There are now enough of these animals in Canada and the United States to guarantee their preservation and in recent years they have actually increased to such an extent that there has been an overcrowding on the available space which mankind has grudgingly allotted to them.

The settling up of the last West and the increasing number of farms which replaced the open range of the cattle man's day have threatened the existence of two other species of animals—the wapiti or elk and the prong horn antelope. It must be said to the credit of Americans, however, who waited until it was almost too late before they set about to save the buffalo from annihilation, that they have taken a lesson from this experience and have taken the necessary steps to prevent the history of the elk and the prong-horn from being a repetition of that of the bison.

Perhaps it is not strictly accurate to include the buffalo, the elk and the antelope, the heath hen and the prairie chicken in the same category as the passenger pigeon, as has been done in this article. But the fact remains that they, like the Indian, are vanishing races. Of course, government authorities will tell you differently about the Indian and point to the fact that he is not only holding his own, but is actually increasing in numbers. That is true if you take into account the fact that many persons having more white blood than Indian in their veins are called Indians.

But in the truest sense of the word, the old-time Indian in all his former glory as a picturesque war-bonneted nomad and "first-class fightin' man" in the magnificent pageant of the American frontier is a Vanishing American. He belongs to the past, the past of the wilderness era, as do the buffalo, the elk, the antelope, the passenger pigeon, the heath hen and the prairie chicken. What if there still are enough individuals of each so that the conquering white man can point to them and say "See, they are not yet EXTINCT!" For they are following the Indian into the sunset, and James Fraser's "End of the Trail" is symbolic of them all. They ARE Vanishing Americans.

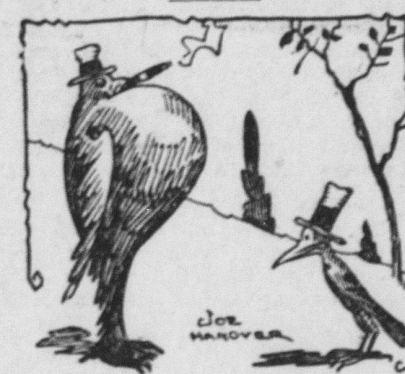


Scraps of Humor

PERFECTLY SAFE
Youthful Mother-in-Law—George doesn't kiss you good-by every morning, I notice.
Twentieth Century Wife—Mamma, you can't ask too much of a man! George is a bit absent-minded, but he always makes up for it. He'll kiss his stenographer instead, when he gets to the office.
Mother-in-Law—But surely you don't allow him to kiss his stenographer!
Wife—Why not, mamma? It's a man.
—American Humor.

More Swag
"Martha," a farmer who had driven into town phoned to his wife, "an automobile load of robbers just held up the city bank and they're headed out our way. Don't go outdoors."
"I'll have to," was the frantic reply.
"Your Sunday shirt's hanging out on the line in plain sight."—Country Gentlemen.

THE POUTER PIGEON



"You must be a millionaire or something the way you're all puffed up."
"No, I was born this way!"

Slinging Mud
My dad used to say:
"When people sling mud of shame or blame
Let it dry for a little while
And then it will brush off clean."

A Future Highbrow
He was a solemn little boy and his chin barely reached the counter in the library's circulation room.
"Well, my little man," said one of the attendants, "what book shall it be today?"
"Oh, something about life," returned the little fellow philosophically.—Boston Transcript.

Admits of No Rivalry
"I don't know whether to marry Robert or not."
"Does he play golf?"
"I should say he does. He's an expert at it."
"Then I shouldn't marry him; he has selected his life interest."

His Impression
Policeman—What did the bandit's weapon look like?
Victim—It looked like a hole about six inches in diameter.

NOT A CROWD



"You said you had room for one more didn't you?"
"Yes, lady, but only one more."

Day Lost
Count that day lost whose low descending sun
Finds not some greyhound
Race course begun.

Such a Sweet Girl
"It was so funny," said the Gushing Young Thing, "I just thought I should die!"
"Well," asked the Social Wet Blanket, "why did you change your mind?"

Leisure
Small Boy—What's leisure, daddy?
His father—Leisure, my son, is two minutes' rest a man gets while his wife is hunting up something else for him to do.

You'd Be Surprised
Car Salesman—This car has all the latest attachments. This, for instance, is the trouble light.
Binks—Humph! That doesn't interest me.
Car Salesman—Oh, you'll use it often, sir!

Yes, Indeed!
He—I've got something to tell you—but I don't know how to start.
She—Well, if I said "yes" would that help you?—London Passing Show.



Persuasion
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Horse's Odd "Pickup"
A horse belonging to Warren E. White of Henniker, N. H., in some unaccountable manner picked up a gold ring on its shoe, and it became so firmly embedded in the calk that it was removed with difficulty. It was first seen when Mr. White did some plowing with the horse.

Dawdling Process
"What do you think of evolution?"
"Don't fancy the idea; it's too slow."
—Boston Transcript.

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