

beautiful bird is protected appears of late years to have affected the wellbeing of the species ;” and “I cannot withhold expressing a fear that the Red Grouse of Scotland, if not soon left to its own resources, may ultimately become a victim to overprotection. The great changes that have taken place within the last thirty years in the management of moorland tracts, and the excessive rents now derived from such properties, induced both land-owners and lessees to clear the ground of all kinds of animals that would prey upon those birds which are not strong enough to protect themselves ; hence sickly broods of Grouse perpetuate other broods, that year by year degenerate until disease ensues and in some instances almost depopulates an entire district. There can be no doubt that this unwarrantable destruction of Hawks and Buzzards affects adversely the condition of the birds with which our Scottish mountains are stocked—the number of wounded birds alone which survive the unprecedented annual slaughter through which the Red Grouse is now obliged to pass being an argument sufficient to show that such merciful agents are wanted to prevent the spread of enfeebled life. In other sections of the animal kingdom epidemics similar to that affecting Grouse have been noticed ; and, so far as my own observations have enabled me to judge, I am disposed to regard these periodical outbreaks of disease as more or less associated with a derangement of Nature’s laws. In almost every case where undue protection is given to certain animals by the rigorous destruction of others, man’s interference is followed, sooner or later, by evils of a graver nature than those which the protective measures were intended to cure ; and until some more rational plan is tried for the restoration of the Red Grouse to its original vigour, no one can say what may be the final issue of the somewhat anomalous position in which, as a species, the bird is now undoubtedly placed.”

I can fully indorse the general remarks of Mr. Gray respecting the inconvenience arising from the undue protection afforded to certain species by the rigorous destruction of others. Strange as it may appear, the keeper who supposes that he is zealously guarding the interests of his employer by ruthlessly destroying all vermin from the estate is in some instances committing an error. As an example in point, and one not mentioned by the writer above quoted, I may remark upon the destruction of the White Owl, which, injuring the game to a very small extent, confers much compensatory benefit in the destruction of the mice, rats, and weasels upon which it feeds. Our pretty Kestrel, too, often suffers an ignominious fate without a reasonable excuse, its food generally consisting of moles, mice, lizards, frogs, and the larger insects. Considerable latitude, however, must be accorded to the keeper, who, with all his care and anxiety, is frequently nonplused by the continued loss of his young game, and that coming from a quarter little to be suspected. Some of the more intelligent of his class have, by constant watching, detected the Brown Owl habitually haunting the vicinity of their pens, and seizing, as occasion offered, two or three of their chicks. The Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*), too, stealthily threading its way through the grass, is no less to be dreaded, its presence among the coops not resulting solely in the abstraction of the scattered grain, but frequently in the