

Along The Trail

by

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Since beginning my column, over a year ago, I have had several comments from readers. The most recent comes in a letter from Comelins Jacobs of Centennial street, Santa Cruz. All indicate a deep appreciation for the wonders of nature and many of them express the wish that others would share this appreciation.

Jacobs suggests that I appeal, especially to the youth, for, as he appropriately puts, it, reverence to life.

I can well agree and sympathize with him in wishing our youngsters to show more kindness toward wild creatures. He found a wounded golden-crowned sparrow which had been hit with a sling shot.

It is a pity that every person does not share our feeling for wild birds. Perhaps the reason small boys kill and injure birds is that we adults have failed to teach them that birds have feelings akin to those which humans possess; that they are not only an economically valuable part of our lives but that many people gain pleasure just from seeing them.

Most of the youth organizations teach kindness to wild animals. The junior Audubon clubs are especially effective. These clubs are formed in schools and churches with the help and guidance of the National Audubon society. The Monterey-Carmel area has many junior clubs and doubtless these do help the youngsters gain love of wild things. I have devoted much time to talking to the clubs and leading them on nature walks. The boys and girls seem to appreciate things better when they begin to understand them.

It is not an unnatural thing for boys to shoot birds with sling shots and BB guns. It do not ap-

prove of such senseless killing and injuring; nevertheless, it seems as natural as any other evolutionary phase of man's life.

The great ornithologist, Dr. Frank M. Chapman, said that he "hunted and bird-nested with the best of them." He was, as a boy, a destroyer of the very creatures he was, later, to learn to love passionately.

Birds are my main pleasure. I love to see them and observe their ways, and I have a deep feeling for their well being. But I cannot say that I have never shot one.

I think the wounding of wild animals is cruel and unfortunate, and I now have a reverence for every living thing. It disturbs me to kill any animals unless I have good reason for it. On the brighter side, most of these boys who shoot birds will grow up. The only difference between them and the men who shoot cormorants, pelicans, gulls on hunting trips is that the men are still kids who never grew up.

Often the most apparent things which sadden us most are not the principal difficulties of wild species. The greatest threat to wildlife is not the small boy with the sling shot but the big boys with their mechanical devices who alter their habitats.

We may blame permanent passage of the passenger pigeon on shooters, because a small group of "evil" men can shoulder the blame. Lumbering, being an honorable profession, is cleared. Hardwood floors were in vogue, and to get them hardwood had to be cut. People desiring hardwood and other people making money harvesting it were not likely to be concerned over a species of bird that depended upon hardwood trees for survival.

Thousands of acres of suitable