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FISHERMEN MENACE WORLD'S MOST
REMARKABLE BIRD-BREEDING GROUND.

Sticking out in the Pacific Ocean 900 miles beyond Honolulu is a group of little islands, the largest not more than two square miles in area, and several of them barely rising above the waves at high tide. Yet on those islands are many hundreds of thousands of birds and among them are at least six species not found anywhere else in the world. In 1911, one of those species was represented by six birds--all that were left as the sole means of perpetuating the species, and they concentrated on a single little island where one man might kill them all in one minute's shooting.

That species--the Laysan teal--has fortunately increased until there are, by estimate, thirty-five individuals. For the United States Department of Agriculture, for a few years, has controlled the islands as a bird reservation--the Hawaiian Islands Reservation, it is called. But protecting the birds there is a precarious business. The possibility has existed always that one or more of the rare species might be wiped out in a day.

Albatross Destroyers Arrested.

By way of illustration, this: One day in 1909 the crew of the cutter Thetis found an old shed absolutely piled full of albatross wings. A search revealed the fact that 23 plume hunters had landed on Laysan Island and had killed at least 300,000 birds. The men were captured, taken to Honolulu, and formally arrested. Since that time there is not known to have been any repetition of such depredations, but it is always imminent.

Just now many fishermen--largely nationals of countries other than the United States--are extending their operations from Honolulu out to the region of the bird reservation. Landings on the islands are constantly imminent, and such landings would be a menace to one of the most remarkable bird-breeding places in the world. The Bureau of Biological Survey, having direct charge of the reservation, is calling attention to the fact that disturbing the birds on

Laysan or any of the smaller islands is forbidden, and announcing that the reservation will be protected, by whatever means are necessary, for the benefit of all the peoples of the world.

Laysan, the largest of the group, is one of the most westerly of the Hawaiian Islands. It has an area of about two square miles, and within it, conforming generally to the coast line, is a large lagoon. This island is one of the most populous bird-breeding places on the globe, literally hundreds of thousands of birds resorting there to lay their eggs every year.

Specialists of the Biological Survey call attention to the fact that the ostensible occupation of fishermen does not mean that men may not be very destructive to birds. The great auk, they recall, was exterminated by fishermen. The rarest of all the species that exist only in the Laysan group is a duck-like bird, excellent for food, and therefore most likely to be shot by fishermen.

Rare Birds on Island.

The species that nest there and nowhere else are the Laysan teal, the little Laysan rail, the Laysan honey-eater, the Laysan finch, the miller bird (a small warbler), the Hawaiian tern, and the Laysan albatross. Other species that nest principally on Laysan and adjacent islands and would be in danger of extermination if molested there are the red-tailed tropic bird, the black-footed albatross, the gray-backed tern, and the sooty tern.

The number of individuals of the exclusive species in 1911 were estimated to be: Six of the Laysan teal, perhaps 100 of the miller bird, 300 of the honey-eater, 2,000 of the rail, 2,700 of the finch, and 180,000 of the albatross. Indications are that, while the teal has increased, the other species have probably decreased.

The islands composing the reservation are Laysan Island, Ocean or Cure Island, Pearl and Hermes Reef, Laysianki or Pell Island, Mary Reef, Dowsett Reef, Gardiner Island, Two Brothers Reef, French Frigate Shoal, Necker Island, Frost Shoal, and Bird Island.

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