

Have you seen a Pteradactyl lately?

Extinction aims at non-games

Editors note: This is the third of a five-part series on wildlife and extinction. The series is presented in observance of Earth Week. Thursday's story will look at the need for biotic diversity in wildlife and plant habitat.

By E.G. WHITE-SWIFT
Of the Emerald

The grizzly bear, bison, grey wolf, Miller Lake lamprey, and California condor all have one thing in common. They have been eliminated from Oregon.

The wolverine, kit fox, yellow-billed cuckoo, sharp-tailed grouse, shortnose sucker, western spotted frog, and silver spotted butterfly may be next in line for extirpation from Oregon.

One of the unfortunate consequences of growth and development in Oregon was the elimination or severe reduction in number of a variety of our wildlife. Most game species have survived well or increased in numbers because various agencies have managed their populations. It is the non-game species that we know the least about and that have suffered the most.

To understand how we have disturbed the populations of so many species, it is important to understand what Oregon was like when the pioneers first brought their wagon loads of civilization laboriously across the plains. Oregon was a combination of old-growth forests and climax grasslands, with areas of unique

habitat widely scattered across the state.

Our native fauna evolved over the thousands of years since the last ice age to survive in Oregon populated only by Indians. Individual species developed behavioral patterns, territorial traits and food chain associations that were in balance with the native flora and ecosystems. Although there were minor disruptions in their habitat by fire, floods, volcanic activity or disease, most disruptions were slight and other suited habitats were available nearby.

What was a very stable and balanced environment was abruptly altered by the influx of civilization. The vegetative face of Oregon was radically changed in a few brief years. It was a total disruption that left only a few undisturbed ecosystems around the state. Only about four per cent of the state now exists as it was 150 years ago, and most of that will probably be disturbed unless it can be established as wilderness.

Those species that were highly adapted to a particular ecosystem have been forced to adapt or accept reduced living space. Species which competed with civilization for food or habitat were forced out. Animals or birds that man feared or considered a nuisance were shot, trapped or poisoned. Habitat essential to many species was altered through the introduction of pesticides, herbicides, toxic materials or other environmental pollutants.

For many years Oregonians considered only the quantitative aspects of environmental management. Natural areas were merely sources for range forage, wood products, wildlife crops, housing sites, and agricultural development. In recent years state and federal agencies have begun to take an interest in non-game management.

One state agency which began to consider all the components of our environment was the Oregon Interagency Pesticide Council. On June 15, 1965, they commissioned a series of special reports on the endangered plants and

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Drawing by Vanessa Wallace

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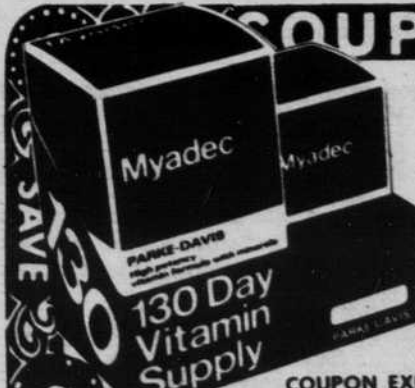
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