

Klamath trip

The lake region through southern Oregon is the most extensive breeding ground on the Pacific Coast for all kinds of water fowl. The series of marshes and lakes extend from the eastern slope of the Cascades east for three or four hundred miles. The altitude of this region ranges from ^{four} to six thousand feet. Some of the lakes have outlets, while others have none. In some of these lakes and marshes the water is comparatively fresh, in others quite alkaline. The two areas of greatest importance for water fowl are the Klamath Lake district ~~in the~~ embracing the Upper and Lower Klamath and Tule Lakes just east of the Cascades and lying in southern Oregon and northern California, and the Malheur ~~and~~ country in the east central part of the State, embracing Lake Malheur and Harney Lake.

From the best information we could get, we knew the White Heron was a resident of the Klamath country and in former years had been abundant.

In the latter part of May, 1905, we set out from Portland, Oregon, to hunt for this bird and investigate conditions in the Klamath country. Leaving the railroad at Ashland, with pack and saddle we crossed the Cascade Range through sixty miles of forest and entered the great lake district. Abandoning our horses, we took to a staunch row boat, loaded in our supply of provisions and set out down Lost River for Tule Lake. ^{Photographed - at several marsh areas} This is a body of water about thirty miles long. After spending several days hunting through the great tule swamps on the northern border, we found no signs of herons. We naturally didn't for later we discovered this had been the most profitable field for the market hunter in winter and for the plume hunter in summer. Probably the most extensive colony of Western Grebe in existence had been exterminated

Lucas
Ms. White Heron

*
New
* photo
tuna water

plume

We were told by several hunters that this section had contained the most extensive colony of Western Grebe in existence. At one time there were ~~twenty~~¹² camps of hunters along the northern border, and thousands of dollars worth of plumage had been shipped out each summer. The region showed it ~~for~~ we saw ~~hardly a grebe or tern for days at a time.~~ ^{but few} ~~any place where they lived~~

Then we set out straight across the Lake for the peninsula, in the hope of finding the remnants of the colony of white herons that formerly lived in the scrub willow at the southern end of the Lake. We had to unload at the neck of the peninsula and portage our boat across. We paddled on south past Rattlesnake Island to Bloody Point. Here we found a large butte of red lava, burning hot in the summer sun, yet for all its dryness a veritable garden of California poppies.

That afternoon we made camp across from a large colony of cormorants and pelicans. After cruising for two weeks on Tule Lake, we returned to the small town of Merrill on Lost River, loaded our boat into a wagon and hauled it to White Lake, a small body of water that empties into the Lower Klamath at the southern end.

Although we had not seen a white heron on Tule Lake we hoped to find a few left on the Lower Klamath. The Lower Klamath from the south end of Tule Lake. We struck a veritable jungle, tules growing in an impenetrable mass from ten to fifteen feet high, and after one enters the mass he cannot get to where he can look out above the tops of the reeds to see where he is going.

Extending for several miles out from the main shore is a seemingly endless area of floating tule islands between

* found cormorants etc

*

poppies *

* colony

wagon *

is very different

2.

which flows a network of channels. Some of these islands have fairly firm floating foundations, but it was like walking on the crust of the snow for you never knew when you would break through. These precarious footholds were the only camping spots we had during the two weeks we cruised the Lower Klamath.

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Camping

These were days full of hardships. The Lake itself is about twenty-five miles long by twelve miles wide. The water is full of sediment and is strong with alkali. The surface water is only six to ten feet deep and under this is a soft layer of oozy mud, thick, slimy, and stinking, about the same depth as the water. We had to go well out in the Lake for drinking water and then boil every drop we used.

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Large colony
in pond
comments
Photo Pel
+ Pintuck

The only fuel we had was the little we carried in the boat. The first morning out we tried wetting down the tules to make a small fire, but the foundation soon dried out and took fire. We had to use coffee-pot and frying-pan to check the flames. Later we found a place where the tules could be cleaned away and a fire made on the water-soaked roots, even with the surface.

We found ^{a number of} many large bird colonies, those of herons, cormorants, terns, white pelicans, grebe, and gulls. But in the days of search, we saw not a single white heron. We spent a month and a half cruising over two hundred miles of lake and swamp. In that time we talked with many hunters ~~who followed~~ up the last bit of evidence we could get about white herons. 0

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Our last hope lay in the colonies that formerly lived at Clear Lake at the head of Lost River, which was thirty miles to the east. ~~but when we were told by a responsible party we had visited the place~~ ^{who had visited the place}

that a party of hunters had cleaned up several hundred dollars,

in heron plumes the year previous, and got the remnants of the colony that formerly thrived in this section. We gave up the hunt and returned home, disappointed.

(Duck hunting on Klamath Lakes for the market--numbers and results.)

In some of the information we had received from a plume hunter in Klamath County, we thought there might still be some white herons at Tulare Lake in California. We determined to follow up this clue. We spent the spring and summer of the following year, 1906, in southern California. We followed such clues as we had and from all the evidence, we decided that we were too late for white herons at Tulare. I have talked with men who made four and five hundred dollars a day shooting white herons on Tulare Lake. I know of the thousands that lived there formerly, but I have the evidence that convinces me that the white heron colonies have passed and are no more a part of the natural history of that great State. There may be a few scattering birds, but that is all. The plume hunters were at work clear back in the '80's before the people awaked to the necessity of wild bird protection.

~~The~~ The work of two summers had been a failure. The third season passed and we had never even seen a white heron for all our search. I became skeptical as to whether we ever would on the Pacific Coast.

See!

Small colony

2 by 6 5000
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The first year we began our search for the white heron, I had met an old hunter who had shot more or less for the market for the past thirty years. He told me a careful search might reveal an undiscovered colony of white herons somewhere in the Klamath country, but he had his doubts. I asked him about ~~Tulare~~ Tulare, and he said it was the most profitable hunting ground in California. But that was twenty years ago. The plume hunter's harvest had been reaped. He told me if there was one place on the coast where the herons still lived, it might be Malheur Lake in eastern Oregon. According to his word, this was the greatest hunting ground in the West. From two other hunters I got much the same information the following year. Had we followed this information and gone to Lake Malheur two or three years ago, I believe we would have been successful in the search, for I am told white herons were shot on Lake Malheur in 1906 and 1907.

Our last hope of finding the white herons lay in the Malheur country. (So we set out from Portland on the 14th of last May for southeastern Oregon.)

(Malheur Trip.)

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lost him
and