

Journal Oct 23-1936

THE LURE OF OUT-DOOR OREGON

(These Wildlife Articles Are Written by W. L. Finley,  
Sc. D. and Ed F. Averill)

From the gorges of the Columbia south through the Cascade Range of Oregon lies one of the greatest forests ever traversed by man. This is an out-door land that holds its arms out in welcome to those who love exploration, mountain climbing, hunting, fishing, and camping. Deer, Elk, bear and other animals roam this country with the freedom of all outdoors. The trout that stem the rapids and lie in deep pools along a hundred streams strike at any lure that drops on the surface. In the stretches of the primeval forest a sportsman can match his skill against bobcat, cougar, and timber wolf.

The gentle art of angling beckons from all ranks of life. For those who pursue big fish with rod and line, the Rogue River, rising in the region of Crater Lake, and taking its rough and winding course down the many canyons to the sea, is best known throughout the land as the home of the steelhead trout. This is a lithe fish with a fine body and one big efficient muscle from the nose to the tip of his tail. Feeding fat in the ocean, the steelhead runs the river rapids in late summer and only an expert angler can bring him to the strike and land him on light tackle. The rainbows or red-sides of the Mackenzie, Deschutes and other streams are gamey in fight and flavor, but not quite equal in size to the steelheads. When spring opens the door of the fishing season in Oregon it is not only an invitation to catch trout, but the run of Chinook salmon is always on in the Willamette, Umpqua and other streams. No finer salmon swims. In the spring its

flesh is bright pink in color and stored full of fat. It seems to take a whirling spinner as a challenge for a fight, and many a light tackle is demolished each season when the main salmon run has steered its course into the wide waters of the Columbia on its migration to the various headwaters of the tributaries. The sport of trolling for Chinooks in the spring time is always followed in late summer and fall by recreation almost as alluring to fishermen, and this is the pursuit of the silverside salmon that run heavy in many of the smaller coast streams. So there is not a month from the beginning of spring to the passing of fall when Oregon streams do not furnish royal recreation for owners of rod and creel.

Set out through all of the states of the Union and nowhere can one find such a variety of game birds as are in the fields and forests of Oregon. When the ring-necked or Chinese pheasant first saw the fields of the Willamette Valley in Oregon, in the early eighties, he knew he had come to a chosen land. He made the best of it. He grew in numbers and spread to many parts, until today this is a game bird more at home and perhaps better known to sportsmen than any of the native species. The ruffed grouse, known in England as partridge, is a bird of timbered bottom lands. Take an old wood road through an alder and maple copse where years ago the giant firs had been cut, and you cannot fail to flush some of these birds. A place of this kind is always a mid-day retreat. Morning and evening you may find them along the edge of the field, especially if it is bordered with wild crab-apple thicket. The blue or sooty grouse seeks the more moun-

tainous regions where salal covers the sides of the canyons and the firs grow high and thick along the ridges. The native knows this bird as the "hooter" because in spring and summer the old cocks make the forests resound with a throaty, booming note that is ventriloquial in character. An old grouse may be strutting on the limb of a nearby fir and yet he may sound as if he was booming half a mile away.

In the tramp of a few hours, a sportsman may come across three different kinds of quail, and at the same time flush two or three coveys of European partridges, for this latter bird is another introduced species that is as much at home in eastern Oregon as in its native land. The bobwhite quail, beloved by many easterners, is perhaps more abundant in the Willamette Valley than in its original home in the eastern states. Through the coast range and up into the Cascades, especially along the wilder unsettled valleys, the mountain or plumed quail is the native that strives to hold his own as long as the timber remains uncut. He does not thrive as well as the country settles up, but he has been replaced in many spots where the land has been cleared by the California or valley quail, a bird that adapts itself better about the farm.

Then while we are running the census of game birds in the Oregon country, we cannot overlook the biggest of all American grouse which thrives on the high plateaus of eastern Oregon. This is the bird of the sage, and for this reason is called sage hen. The plains of eastern Oregon are also the home of the Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, or prairie chicken.

In the lodge-pole pine timber of the northeastern part

of the State, one is likely to come upon the most fearless, and for this reason the most foolish of game birds, the Franklin grouse. It is not surprising that it is called "fool hen," because many miners and woodsmen have hunted them with sticks. The queer part of it is, the bird has never profited by these simple but destructive tricks. Fool hens are as big fools today as they were when Lewis and Clark first penetrated the wilderness of the Pacific Northwest.

Ponds and swamp lands of the Oregon country are flecked with numerous waterfowl,- mallards, pintails, redheads, teal, ruddy-ducks, and wood-ducks. The coastline and the margins of lakes are probed and tracked by many waders, different kinds of plovers, sandpipers, curlew and snipe. The alkaline lakes of southeastern Oregon, bordered by vast areas of tule or club-rushes, are the breeding and feeding places of flocks of Canada geese or honkers. The highways among the clouds in spring and fall are traveled by thousands of snow geese and swans that stop on the line of migratory flight to rest and feed where swamp grasses grow luscious in the shallow waters. So, from the standpoint of bird life, Oregon is the native home of innumerable flocks.