



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

1894-03-14

1894 Mar 14 C H Hittell to JM p1

Catherine H. Hittell

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~~Mr. Linn + Larks~~

March 14th

[1894]

Dear friend Mr. Muir

Some months ago when I had the pleasure of meeting you at Mrs. John Vance Cheney's house I heard you make a most eloquent defense of nearly all Nature's lower creations even including the notorious rattle snake.

That speech of yours gives me the courage to write to you asking your help to save the meadow larks. The markets are full of the poor plucked bodies of those beautiful songsters. (At most of the French restaurants, at present, a dish

of larks is one of the principal
entries. Now that the closed
season for quail, ducks and
doves has ^{begun}, the massacre of
the yellow-throated meadow
lark is going on. Can
nothing be done to prevent this
wholesale slaughter during the
nesting period of the lark?
I have been so wrought up
over this subject that I am
trying to see what can be
done. I spoke to Miss Fitch,
the daughter of Mr Fitch of the
Bulletin and this evening I
see a fine plea for the lark
in the Bulletin. I wrote to
Miss Adeline Knapp who is well
known as a champion of the

defenseless lower animals and she has promised to have a series of articles in one of the great dailies of San Francisco on next Sunday, Easter morning. Everyone knows of your pure and noble reputation, of your love for the beautiful, for nature and for California and so I beg of you, will you not help in the cause? A few words from your eloquent pen will do more for the larks than anything else possible.

Will you write a few words in favor of our songsters, either in one of the papers or for Miss Knapp to insert in the

big article for next Sunday, March 25th? You could send it to me or I would forward it to Miss Knapp. Could you advise us what further steps to take to arouse the public interest in saving the birds? Would the Sierra Club do anything to prevent their extermination of our California songsters. You know, singing birds are all too rare in California.

In a month's time I believe there will be a sportsmen's convention to revise the game laws for the coming Legislature. Each county is to send two delegates and twenty delegates

will be chosen for the state at large. Can not something be done to interest this convention in including the larks among the protected birds? If I knew the names of the leading sportsmen in the city, I think I would be brave enough to go to them myself to ask their interest in the larks.

The Meadow lark is an insect feeding bird and therefore the farmer should wish for its protection. I believe the Horticultural Society, of which my friend Mr Ellwood Cooper is president, may help in this matter, or will the Academy of Sciences,

and possibly the State Floral Society. I hope the Sierra Club will give its aid as its object is to protect and preserve the beauties of our Sierra, etc. Dear friend, will you help us? Your name is so connected with all that is beautiful in California, with our mountains and trees and flowers, that my first thoughts turn to you in asking for this help. The beautiful yellow breasted larks have lifted up their voices so many times for us that it is for us now to lift up our voices to save them, our benefactors

from complete extermination.

If you can think of anything that is in our power to do in this matter please let us know it.

Sincerely your friend
Catherine H. Hittell
808 Turk St.

P.S. Miss Knapp lives at
568 12th St., Oakland,

You know my father, Mr
T. H. Hittell whom you have
often met at Mr W. Keith's.
I mention this if you should
have happened to forget meeting
me at Mr Keith's studio, at the
Serra Club and at Mrs J. Vaner
Cheney's. I went to the

markets this morning to see how many larks were at the fountainers and I saw several hundreds. The fountainers told me that there were not so many in the markets now as there were during the first week after the beginning of the closed season. I suppose they are being thinned out. The fountainers say, the Germans and French are particularly fond of the birds.

Please pardon my addressing you and troubling you in these matters but I do love the meadow larks and I do love California and the little I can do is at my country's service.

C. H. Hettell
808 Turk St.