NEW YORK naturalist stood one day on the beach of the lower east coast of Florida, absorbed in watching what appeared to be a gigantic sea serpent disporting itself along the crest of the waves. As the strange spectacle drew near, it resolved itself into a long, undulating line of brown pelicans winging their way homeward from the outer feeding grounds. With alternate sailing and rhythmical beating of wings, the line of great birds was seen to pass on until it settled on an island in the heart of the Indian River. A field glass revealed the fact that hundreds of other pelicans were already there.

A boat was procured, and the naturalist soon set foot upon the island, which, however, was the signal for the birds to depart. They were alarmed at the presence of the man, and seemed to distrust human intrusion. Fishermen nearby stopped hauling their nets long enough to explain the reason for the birds’ hasty retreat. Yachts, they said, often came to anchor in the vicinity and seldom did they weigh without taking with them trophies of their visit, and leaving behind many demolished nests. Birds were often killed for their feathers, or to satisfy the passing desire to possess for a moment a creature of unusual form and size. Sometimes a dozen were shot to demonstrate the skill of a rifleman in knickerbockers, or again a hundred were sacrificed to procure a small portion of the skin of each bird with which to make a cloak of a kind seldom seen along the avenue.

The naturalist’s curiosity and interest were now thoroughly aroused. He made a careful survey of the island and found it to cover an area of about four acres. He counted the pelicans’ nests, the young birds and the adults, as opportunity offered during the period of several days, and estimated that the pelican population consisted of about twenty-seven hundred full-grown birds. This was in eighteen hundred and ninety-eight. Two years later he again visited the island and found that the bird inhabitants had shrunk in numbers to an extent of nearly five hundred.

This gentleman was a member of the Audubon Society and, being strong in the faith held by that organization, believed that these birds should in some way be protected. True, they were not known to be of any economic value, but on the other hand they were harmless
creatures. Then, too, they were interesting—one reason being that they were so large. When one of these pelicans spread its wings and set out for a sail down Indian River, it would have required a tape line six and one-half feet in length to reach from tip to tip of its mighty pinions. The pelican’s bill is thirteen inches long, and the pouch suspended beneath it is capable of holding four gallons of water. Even with such a mouth no pelican—not even a lady pelican—was ever known to utter a sound, as in the adult form they are absolutely silent birds. Surely such creatures were worth preserving as living curiosities. If attempts were to be made to guard them, here was the place to begin, for with a single unimportant exception there existed no other breeding colony of pelicans on the Atlantic Coast of the United States.

Upon returning to New York the naturalist unburdened himself to the officers of the Audubon Society, with the result that plans were immediately set in motion to preserve the inhabitants of Pelicanville. There was no law in the State of Florida at that time extending protection to birds of this character, but on January fourth, nineteen hundred and one, the Legislature was induced to enact a statute making it a misdemeanor to kill interesting or valuable non-game birds. The Audubon Society at once employed a man to see that the law was enforced on Pelican Island.

Then murmurings began to be heard, “Pelicans eat fish and they should not be protected,” declared a stalwart Floridian. “We need the quills for the millinery trade,” chimed in another one with a keen eye to the main chance. There was talk of repealing the law at the next session of Legislature, and the hearts of the Audubon workers were troubled.

Then someone suggested that as there were Federal military reservations, and Federal forest reservations, why not make this a Federal bird reservation and permit no trespassing. The island proved to be unsurveyed government land and this gave force to the argument, but there was found to be no legal provision whereby this could be done. There existed no law or precedent for such an act. The discussion at length reached the ears of President Roosevelt, and he settled the difficulty at once and for all time by issuing, under March fourteenth, nineteen hundred and three, a remarkable document which ran in part as follows:

“It is hereby ordered that Pelican Island in Indian River is reserved and set apart for the use of the Department of Agriculture as a preserve and breeding ground for native birds.”

The gist of this order, bearing the signature of the Secretary of
Agriculture, was quickly painted on a large sign which could be seen for miles as it stood on the end of Pelican Island.

Imagine the chagrin of the Audubon workers upon learning that when the pelicans returned in spring to occupy their ancestral breeding ground, they took one look at this declaration of the President and immediately decamped bag and baggage to a neighboring island outside of the protected zone! Signs less alarming in size were substituted, and the pelicans, with their feelings appeased, graciously returned and, much to the joy of the naturalist and the Audubon Society, have since peacefully dwelt and flourished beneath the protecting care of the Government. Incidentally, a lesson was learned in dealing with wild birds.

When this act by President Roosevelt came to the attention of the general public, it was not hard to find men who complained loudly that our national executive had overstepped the limits of his legalized power. "What meat is this," they asked, "on which our Caesar feeds that he should take to himself such powers?" So the friends of the wild birds had another task before them—the President must be given this power. A bill was therefore drafted and after a short delay was enacted by Congress, giving the President authority to establish reservations of this character on government lands not fitted for agriculture.

This accomplished, and the legal difficulty removed, the way was open for the establishment of other bird reservations and the Audubon Society eagerly seized the opportunity. Explorations were at once started to locate and survey the territory holding important breeding communities of water birds situated on government lands in other sections of the country.

Plumage hunters and eggers were busy plying their trade wherever water birds were known to collect in numbers, and in consequence several interesting species were rapidly nearing extinction. Ten thousand terns were known to have been shot in a single season on Cobb's Island, Virginia. The ten thousand pairs of wings collected went to the millinery houses of New York and ten thousand baby birds were left to perish for want of parental care. In the same way, during the seven years preceding nineteen hundred and eleven, twenty colonies of gulls and terns along the coast of the Carolinas were utterly wiped out of existence. From the lakes of the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Coast thousands of grebes' breasts were torn from nesting birds every summer, and shipped East to adorn the hats of fashionable women, while the infant grebes were left to call and creep among the tule until the breath of death should end their cries.
MR. FRANK M. MILLER, now State Game Commissioner of Louisiana, reported a case in which five thousand sea birds were broken on a nearby island inhabited by sea birds in order that fresh eggs might subsequently be gathered by the eggers whose waiting boats lay at anchor off shore. No wonder the friends of the birds were profoundly disturbed concerning the future welfare of the wild water birds, and hailed with delight the accession to their ranks of the daring, precedent-breaking Mr. Roosevelt.

So enthusiastic was Mr. William Dutcher, President of the National Association of Audubon Societies, with the results achieved in Federal reservation work in nineteen hundred and five, that he declared in his annual report that if the Association had done nothing else than secure Federal bird reservations and help guard them during the breeding season, its existence would be fully warranted.

That year President Roosevelt established four more bird refuges; one of these, Stump Lake, in North Dakota, was an immense nursery of gulls, terns, ducks, cormorants and snipe in summer, and a safe harbor for wild fowl during the spring and fall migrations. Huron Island and the Sickwit group of islands lying in Lake Superior were the homes of innumerable herring gulls, some of which perhaps find their way to New York Harbor every autumn. These were made perpetual bird sanctuaries and an Audubon warden took up his lonely watch to guard them against all comers.

Away down in the mouth of Tampa Bay, Florida, rests the one-hundred-acre island of Passage Key. Here the wild bird life of the Gulf Coast has swarmed in the mating season since white man first knew the country. Thousands of herons of various species, as well as terns and shore birds, make this their home. The dainty little ground doves flutter in and out among cactus on the sheltered sides of the sand dunes, plovers and sandpipers chase each other along the beaches, and the burrowing owls known to inhabit no other point on our Gulf Coast, here hide in their burrows by day and explore the island by night.

When this place was described to President Roosevelt, he immediately declared that a bird must never be killed here without the consent of the Secretary of Agriculture. With one stroke of his pen, he brought this desired condition into existence. Mrs. Asa Pillsbury was duly appointed by the Government to protect the birds of the island. She is one of the few women bird wardens in America.

These things happened in the early days of Government work for the protection of water birds. The Audubon Society had found a new field for endeavor, which was highly prolific in results. With all the limited means at its command, the work of ornithological ex-
A SOOTY TERN ON HER NEST AT DRY TURTUGAS, A FLORIDA RESERVATION.
TROPICAL NODDY TERNs, NESTING TIME AT THE DRY TURTUGAS RESERVATION.
THE GREAT PELICAN COLONY ON PELICAN ISLAND, INDIAN RIVER, FLORIDA, THE FIRST OF THE LARGE GOVERNMENT RESERVATIONS FOR WILD WATER BIRDS. YOUNG PELICANS ENJOYING PEACEFUL HOME LIFE ON THE GOVERNMENT RESERVATION.
TWO VIEWS OF ROYAL TERN ON THE BRETON ISLAND RESERVATION, LOUISIANA: THIS HOME FOR WILD BIRDS EMBRACES HUNDREDS OF SQUARE MILES AND INCLUDES SCORES OF ISLANDS AND BARS.
A GREBE FOUND DEAD NEAR A NEST OF YOUNG, OVERLOOKED BY THE PLUMAGE HUNTERS.

KLAMATH LAKE RESERVATION IN OREGON, THE SUMMER HOME OF MYRIADS OF DUCKS, GULLS, GREBES AND OTHER WILD WATER FOWL.
ploration was carried forward each summer. Every island, mud flat and sand bar along the coast of the Mexican Gulf, from Texas to Key West, was visited by trained ornithologists who reported their findings to the New York office.

The Breton Island reservation for the coast of Louisiana, embracing hundreds of square miles of territory, and including scores of islands and bars, was established nineteen hundred and four. Six additional reservations were soon created along the west coast of Florida, thus extending a perpetual guardianship over the colonies of sea and coastwise birds in that territory,—the pitiful remnants of the vast rookeries which had been despoiled to add to profits of the millinery trade.

The work was early started in the West, where Malheur Lake and Klamath Lake reservations in Oregon resulted. The latter is today the summer home of myriads of ducks, geese, grebes and other wild water fowl, and never a day passes but what the waters of the lake are fretted with the prow of the Audubon patrol boat, as the watchful warden extends his vigil over those feathered wards of the Government.

Once set in motion, this movement for Federal bird reservations soon swept beyond the boundaries of the United States. One was established in Porto Rico, and several others among the Aleutian Islands, where on the rocky cliffs may be seen today clouds of puffins, auks and guillemote—queer creatures which stand upright like a man—shouldering and crowding each other about on the ledges which overlook the dark waters of Behring Sea. One reservation in Alaska covers much of the lower delta of the Yukon, including the great tundra country south of the river, and embraces within its borders a territory greater than the State of Massachusetts. From the standpoint of preserving rare species of birds, this is doubtless one of the most important which has thus far come into existence. It is here that many of the wild fowl which frequent the California coast in winter, find a summer refuge safe alike from the bullet of the white man and the arrow of the Indian. Here it is that the lordly emperor goose is probably making its last stand on the American continent against the aggressions of the destructive white race.

Away out in the western group of the Hawaiian Archipelago are located some of the world’s most famous colonies of birds. From vast and often unknown regions of the Pacific, the sea birds journey hither when the instinct for mating comes strong upon them. There are beautiful terns of many species, and albatrosses, those winged wonders whose home is on the rolling deep. Their numbers on these islands were such as to be beyond all belief of men who are unfamiliar
with bird life in congested conditions. On February third, nineteen hundred and nine, these islands and reefs were included in an executive order whereby the "Hawaiian Island Reservation" was brought into existence. This is the largest of all our Government bird reserves; it extends through five degrees of longitude.

At intervals in the past these islands had been visited by vessels engaged in the feather trade, and although no funds were available for establishing a warden patrol among them, it was fondly hoped that the notice given to the world that the birds here were now the wards of the United States would be sufficient to insure their safety.

A rude shock was felt, therefore, when late that year a rumor reached Washington that a Japanese poaching vessel had been sighted heading for these waters. The revenue cutter "Thetis" then lying at Honolulu was at once ordered on a cruise to the bird islands. Early in nineteen hundred and ten, the vessel returned, bringing with her twenty-three Japanese feather hunters who had been captured at their work of destruction. In the hold of the vessel were stored two hundred and fifty-nine thousand pairs of wings, two and a half tons of baled feathers, and several large cases and boxes of stuffed birds, for which, had the Japanese escaped, they would have realized over one hundred thousand dollars.

Not only have Federal bird reservations been formed of lakes with reedy margins and lonely islands in the sea, but they have been made to include numbers of the big Government reservoirs built in the arid regions of the West.

President Taft has shown much the same interest in bird protection as did his predecessor, his last reservation being Hogg Island in Lake Michigan, which was created no longer ago than February twenty-first, nineteen hundred and twelve.

Up to the present time there have been established by executive order fifty-six of these Federal bird refuges which in the aggregate annually shelter millions of water birds at all seasons of the year.

The likelihood that this method of protecting birds will continue and the number of reservations greatly increased amounts to an almost certainty as the Government policy in this direction is now firmly established.

The movement came not a day too late to save for our North American fauna some of our most interesting feathered forms of life. Within the past generation the Eskimo curlew and the Labrador duck have ceased to exist, and the trumpeter swan, the least tern and the long-billed curlew are examples of others that are fast hastening to join the list of wild creatures which through the greed of man are now known only by name.