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GULLS EAT CATERPILLARS
THAT INVADE RYE FIELDS

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Gulls aided farmers at the Clear Lake (Calif.) Bird Refuge last summer, when a colony of these birds checked an invasion of caterpillars on an 800-acre stand of rye, says the Biological Survey, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

The Reclamation Service caretaker for the Clear Lake Dam observed the birds feeding on the worms, and a Biological Survey reservation protector found gulls from the near-by colony carrying worms to their young. The birds ate so many ^{worms} that at the end of a month only five acres of rye had been destroyed.

Specimens of the worms sent to the Biological Survey were identified as caterpillars of the white-lined sphinx (Celerio lineata). This caterpillar, say entomologists of the department, has a wide distribution and is almost omnivorous, though it feeds mostly on weeds. Numerous kinds of birds prey on it.

Farmers using this same rye field, the bureau recalls, complained last spring that geese grazing there were damaging the grain by clipping it short. "I wouldn't give 50 cents an acre for it," said one farmer. The geese apparently did no damage, however, for in June the reservation protector found the grain shoulder high.

Previous observations by the Biological Survey on the effect of grazing geese on grain fields indicate that the experience at Clear Lake is typical; geese nipping off grain in spring apparently cause no damage to the crop.

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