

Ernest Gimson's letter to the Leicester Post, 11 August 1882

THE TOWN MUSEUM

To the Editor of the Leicester Post

Sir, I would like to say a few words to save the birds and beasts from the clutches of the Museums, which seem to wage a war of extermination against all rare animals. Alderman Kempson, in your paper of yesterday, after reminding the sportsman that the Leicester Museum is in need of specimens, says that those "most wanted are the stock dove, wild turtle dove, rock dove, grouse and ptarmigan, any seagulls or terns, any eagles, hawks, or owls, and many other birds: a wild cat, badger, fox, otter, and roebuck are also much wanted. "I fail to see why Alderman Kempson asks for "any sea gulls or terns, any eagles, hawks, owls, and many other birds."

The Bickley Collection contains nearly all specimens of these birds found in the British isles, and to shoot more would be needless waste and cruelty. The Museum also contains a wild cat, an otter, and two badgers. Yet Alderman Kempson seems to think it nothing to ask the public to kill these nearly exterminated animals to make duplicate specimens in the town collection.

When museum enthusiasts think so lightly of nature that they do not hesitate to rob her of her greatest charms, for the sake of having several specimens of each animal, I should say that they encourage an irreverence (sic) for nature that greatly outweighs any good thing that is done. The only value of stuffed specimens is to encourage interest in living creatures. Let us not allow an enthusiasm for collecting to harden our hearts, or destroy in the smallest degree our love for nature.

Yours sincerely,

ALFRESCO