

Australia.
STRAYA.

Let's talk about birds. Y'all like birds? What about guns? Rabbits?

We're talking about a very special war that took place in 1932.

So let's go back to WWI. Germany, Austria, the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria vs. the rest of the world. Much of the fighting took place in the trenches of Europe, but Australia sent about 300,000 troops to fight. While they were gone, their jobs were snatched up by other people in Australia. So when the war was over in 1918, what were these veterans who just risked their lives for their country supposed to do??? (All the jobs died.)

Well, Australia said, hey, here's some land in Western Australia. It's not super settled. Go out there. Farm it. You're all farmers now. Thanks! But, we can't just give you the land. Borrow some money from us, the government, and then go buy the land from us, the government. Then, plant wheat!
Now, farming in Western Australia was a bitch and a half. Ok? They would deal with horrible freezes in the winter, and a fuckload of rabbits during the harvesting season. But, they put up fences around their crops and had a lot of good harvest years in the 1920's. Shit seemed to be working out so far.

Then, the Great Depression hit in 1929. So, the stocks plummet, people stop buying things because they have no money, people stop eating as much, America puts tariffs on foreign goods, etc. Shit is hitting the fan. The farmers are pissed because they can't sell their wheat. They start getting more pissed at the government. What did the government do?

Promise to guarantee the price of wheat. They promised financial help to these farmers, and then didn't deliver on that, because even the government didn't have money. This went on for years.

The soldiers got even more angry.

So, October of 1932. The farmers start refusing to farm. They start refusing to load trucks with wheat. Then the government says the same thing. They aren't going to load the trucks either. Classic stalemate.

So you might be asking, what happens next, Sierra?

I'll fucking tell you.

20,000 emus start SPRINTING towards the ready-to-harvest crops of wheat.
THE BIRDS ARE HERE AND THEY AREN'T LEAVING BITCH.

Let's talk about emus.

They can reach up to 6 feet in height, weigh between 40-135 lbs, and run at around 40 mph. They are fucking SCARY BRO.

Female emus can mate multiple times and can have several clutches of eggs in the spring seasons. Emus also pant to maintain body temperature, hiss like cats when angered, and can be tricked easily because of their curious nature. Apparently, aboriginals would lure emus by standing behind a tree and waving sticks around to spark their curiosity. Silly birds. Also Stanley and Karen the emus are my favorite emus on the planet. Also, their skin is really thick and they bleed really slowly. Just keep that in mind.

Ok. Back to straya.

Emus are known for regular migration after their breeding seasons, heading to the coast from inland regions. With cleared land and additional water supplies being made available for livestock by the Western Australian farmers, the emus found that the cultivated lands were good habitat, and they began to infiltrate into farm territory. The emus then had an all-you-can-eat buffet party on the wheat crops, leaving giant holes in the fences for.....you guessed it. Rabbits.

Fun fact, rabbits aren't even native to Australia. And they are considered an infestation and pests. How did they arrive there then? Oh, by the European fleets of ships sending convicts to Australia in the 1700's. So that's fun. Thanks white people.

So the farmers are like 'holy shit, we're fucked. There are giant dinosaur birds everywhere ruining our crops.' So they reached out for help. Who did they reach out to? THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE and a man named Sir George Pearce. Not the agriculture department or the forest service or animal control, no. Defense. So obviously, since these farmers were once soldiers, they know that machine guns are kinda the tits, and asked the ministry of defense and our buddy George to deploy them.

The minister readily agreed, with conditions:

1. The guns were to be used by military personnel
2. Troop transport was to be financed by the Western Australian government
3. The farmers would provide food, accommodation, and payment for the ammunition

But how can the government condone such behavior against some fuckin birds?

Oh, well it was considered good target practice. But people also say that the government viewed the operation as a way of being seen to be helping the Western Australian farmers, to stave off the pissed farmers. So what else did the government do? SEND IN THE CAMERAS BITCH, WE'RE MAKING A DOCUMENTARY. They sent a camera crew. Someone in authority wanted to document this shit. Maybe a movie would help the government come off as caring, etc, and the farmers would get back to farming.

THE WAR

The "war" was conducted under the command of Major G. P. W. Meredith of the Seventh Heavy Battery of the Royal Australian Artillery. We will call him Meredith for now. He also had two soldiers with him, cause it's just a bunch of birds, Sergeant S. McMurray and Gunner J. O'Halloran, armed with two Lewis guns and 10,000 rounds of ammunition.

The First Attempt

On November 2nd, the men travelled to Campion, where some 50 emus were spotted. They were out of range of the guns, so local settlers and farmers tried to herd them closer. Did it work? No. The birds split into small groups and just fuckin ran. Though the first round of gunfire hit literally nothing, the second round hit 'a number' of birds. Just a number. We don't know which number. You pick. Later that day, a small flock of birds were seen and 'perhaps a dozen or so' birds were killed.

Two days later. November 4th. Meredith sets up an ambush near a local dam, and more than 1,000 emus are spotted heading in their direction. They learned their lesson from the first attack and waited until the birds were in range before firing, but the gun jammed, so they only killed about 12 emus before the rest scattered. No birds were seen for the rest of the day.

By the fourth day of the campaign, army observers noted that "each pack seems to have its own leader now—a big black-plumed bird which stands fully six feet high and keeps watch while his mates carry out their work of destruction and warns them of our approach".

At one stage Meredith even went so far as to mount one of the guns on a truck, a move that proved to be ineffective, as the truck was unable to gain on the birds, and the ride was so rough that the gunner was unable to fire any shots.

By 8 November, six days after the first engagement, 2,500 rounds of ammunition had been fired. The number of birds killed is uncertain: one account estimates that it was 50 birds, but other accounts range from 200 to 500, the latter figure being provided by the settlers. Meredith's official report noted that his men had suffered no casualties. So that's good. Then, Meredith withdrew his troops. Cause shit wasn't working.

So let's summarize the culls with words from an Ornithologist, Dominic Serventy.

"The machine-gunners' dreams of point blank fire into serried masses of Emu were soon dissipated. The Emu command had evidently ordered guerrilla tactics, and its unwieldy army soon split up into innumerable small units that made use of the military equipment uneconomic. A crestfallen field force therefore withdrew from the combat area after about a month."

After the withdrawal of the military, a bad drought had pushed thousands of birds to stay near the farmlands for food and water. So the settlers are getting pissed again. By 12 November the Minister of Defence approved a resumption of military efforts, but our boy Meredith was placed in the field again because there was a lack of 'inexperienced machine gunners' in the area. GOD FORBID YOU GIVE GUNS TO THE FARMERS WHO LITERALLY FOUGHT IN THE WAR BUT WHATEVER.

On 13 November 1932, the military found a degree of success over the first two days, with approximately 40 emus killed.

The third day, 15 November, proved to be far less successful, but by 2

December the soldiers were killing approximately 100 emus per week.

Meredith was recalled on 10 December, and in his report he claimed 986 kills with 9,860 rounds, at a rate of exactly 10 rounds per confirmed kill. In addition, Meredith claimed 2,500 wounded birds had died as a result of the injuries that they had sustained.

Despite the problems encountered with the cull, the farmers of the region once again requested military assistance in 1934, 1943, and 1948, only to be turned down by the government.

So then the government finally gave the farmers guns, with around 150,000 birds being killed. Much better.

Then, they started a BOUNTY SYSTEM AGAINST THE BIRDS. BIRD BOUNTY.

This bird bounty started after WWII, 57,034 bounties were claimed over a six-month period in 1934, with over 284,000 birds being killed in total.

TODAY

The emu population is stable, at around 600-700k. They are even on the Australian code of arms. Which is cute. Even though it was already there in 1932, when they tried to kill them.

Another very cute animal involved in a war:

Germans. WWII.

Voytek was a Syrian brown bear cub adopted by troops from a Polish supply company who purchased him while they were stationed in Iran. The bear grew up drinking condensed milk from a vodka bottle and drinking beer. When the Polish troops were moved around as the war progressed, Voytek went too: to battle zones in Iraq, Palestine, Egypt and then Italy.

Soon, Voytek had grown to weigh more than 880 pounds (400 kg) and stood more than 6 feet (1.8 meters) tall. In time, he was enlisted as a private soldier in the supply company, with his own paybook, rank and serial number, and eventually rose to the rank of corporal in the Polish Army. In 1944, Voytek was sent with his unit to Monte Casino in Italy, during one of the bloodiest series of battles of World War II, where he helped carry crates of ammunition.

In his later years, Voytek lived at the Edinburgh Zoo in Scotland, where he'd been stationed with his adopted supply company at the end of the war. He became a popular public figure in the United Kingdom, and often appeared on children's television shows until his death in 1963.