

EXTINCT BIRDS OF THE WORLD

#29 GUADALUPE CARACARA



The Guadalupe Caracara, *Caracara lutosa*, is an extinct bird of prey belonging to the falcon family (Falconidae). It was, together with the closely related Crested and Southern Caracara, formerly placed in the genus *Polyborus*. It was also known as the Quelili or the Calalie.

MOUNTED MUSEUM SPECIMEN This bird was an inhabitant of Mexico's Guadalupe Island until the early part of the 20th century. The Crested Caracara, *Caracara cheriway*, is sometimes incorrectly referred to as a "Guadalupe Caracara", because the extinct birds were formerly considered a subspecies of this extant bird. However, the extinct species was reinstated as a full species in 2000.

The Guadalupe Caracara was described as "evil" and "vicious" by early observers. In 1876 the species was common throughout Guadalupe Island, but was driven to extinction by a hunting and poisoning campaign led by the goat herders on the island. In March 1897, only one bird could be found, but additional members of the species survived, as on December 1st, 1900 the collector Rollo Beck encountered eleven and preserved, (as was the custom of collectors of the day) nine as scientific specimens. It is probable he may have shot the last of the caracaras on Guadalupe Island, believing from their fearlessness and ease of finding that they were common. There was one more (unconfirmed) sighting in 1903; but the species was certainly extinct by 1906. The Guadalupe



Rollo Howard Beck
(1870–1950)

Caracara is one of the few species that were intentionally driven to extinction by humans. In its particular case, it was demands by goat herders that the birds be exterminated as they occasionally fed on young goats. It is likely the role of the Caracara as a predator of goats was much exaggerated, as is often the case when vested interests are concerned. At the same time as the Caracara was being persecuted the island was being devastated by tens of thousands of feral goats, leading to the extinction of several other endemic species as a result of the near-total destruction of habitat.

About thirty-five specimens, consisting of skins, skeletons and two eggs, remain today, and are located, and can be seen, in museum collections in Chicago, Washington, and London.

R.V.C. with help from Wikipedia