

Birds of Prey That Help the Farmer

By Edward B. Clark

Most hawks and owls are beneficial. Uncle Sam wants to protect them—why not assist him in his good work?

HAMLET said that he knew a hawk from a handsaw. Perhaps it is better to know one hawk from another. Counter to the general belief, most of our North American hawks are beneficial in their lives. In the course of a year they do much more good than harm, and yet they are shot ruthlessly on sight. It would profit the man with a poultry yard and a farm to study the habits of hawks a little and to learn to discriminate between the friend and the foe to his interests.

Let us take first the hawks ordinarily known as hen hawks or chicken hawks. The hawks commonly called by these names rarely kill any chickens. But the trouble is that they get the blame for the bad deeds of birds that "sneak in" to the poultry yard, do their killing and make their escape while the big bird soaring in plain sight against the heavens is charged with being the culprit and receives the present of a charge of shot if opportunity offers.

Take the red-tailed hawk for instance. He is known to the scientist as *Buteo borealis*. In the West the soaring "chicken hawk" almost invariably is the redtail. About once a year perhaps the redtail will pick up a chicken, but for the rest of the time he contents himself with a diet of frogs, snakes, crawfish, insects, and small mammals, mostly of an injurious habit of life. The number of field mice that a red-tailed hawk in the course of a month will catch and devour is almost incredible.

The good that this "chicken hawk" does so far outweighs the harm that it is a living shame it is hunted so ceaselessly. If there ever was a creature in the world about whom there are a thousand mistaken thoughts that creature is the red-tailed hawk, the commonest of our "chicken hawks."

Ordinarily one thinks of birds of prey as being exceedingly bold. Some of them are. But the redtail is on pretty nearly every occasion an ardent coward. He is meekly submissive to the assaults of the kingbird, and he is a perfect poltroon in the face of an attack from a crow. I have seen a crow buffet a red-tailed hawk for half an hour, the hawk making absolutely no attempt to defend himself and apparently being afraid to leave its perch on a fencepost for fear that the crow would get a greater advantage while in flight. As a rule the courageous hawks are the injurious hawks.

There is another hawk similar in its habits to the redtail. It is fairly common in many parts of the United States and particularly so east of the Mississippi river. It is called the red-shouldered hawk, and with the redtail it shares the ignominy of being known wherever it appears as a chicken hawk. Like the redtail it occasionally kills a chicken. But it dearly loves rats, mice, tree-girdling rabbits, frogs, and insects. The red-shouldered hawk soars, and soars, and soars, and when it is seen against the sky the shotgun is brought out and an attempt is made to kill the friend that is looking for field mice, gophers or something else, and with its thoughts far removed from the chicken coop.

In a suburb of Washington, D. C., a friend of mine has a country place where he raises large numbers of chickens. This friend is a bird lover and he has many species of American birds dwelling at his doorstep. Back of his house he has about twenty acres of woodland, and in these woods lived two pairs of red-shouldered hawks.

My friend asked me if he should kill the hawks in order to save his chickens. I told him to leave the hawks alone and he did so for a long time. Finally on one unfortunate day one of the red-shouldered gentlemen descended on the poultry yard and made off with a pullet. Death was decreed for the hawks and soon they were killed.

Within a few weeks the chickens began to disappear, or, at any rate, were found dead with their lifeblood gone, and in some cases partly devoured. The weasels were at work. After the hawks were killed the weasels multiplied in great numbers and took their heavy toll of roosters, hens and little chicks of uncertain sex. My friend was sorry that he had killed the hawks.

Then there is the sparrow hawk, known to the scientist as *Falco sparverius*. This is the smallest of the hawks of North America, and it has a range all over the United States. The sparrow hawk almost unquestionably is the most beautiful, as it is the smallest, of our birds of prey. This little hawk is unfortunately named. It was dubbed sparrow hawk long before the day of the English sparrows in this country. It was so called because it occasionally captured and killed some of our native American sparrows, which, for the most part, are beneficial birds. Lately the sparrow hawk when it does any bird killing at all, turns its attention largely to English sparrows, and thereby adds to the services which it otherwise renders. The sparrow hawk lives mostly on small injurious mammals, insects, grasshoppers, caterpillars, and the like. It should be said, however, that fully 25 per cent of the food of the sparrow hawk consists of field mice, house mice and shrews.

A pair of sparrow hawks have a nest, or at any rate a resting place, back of a big bronze eagle which spreads its wings near the roof on the face of the state, war, and navy building in Washington directly across a narrow street from one end of the White House. These two sparrow hawks hunt the White House grounds daily. It may not be the same pair, but two sparrow hawks have been abiding back of the state department eagle for a good many years.

When Theodore Roosevelt was president he searched the grounds around the White House every once in a while to discover what he could in the way of wild life. Next to birds, he was particularly interested in field mice. Occasionally he la-



MARSH HAWK



RED TAILED HAWKS



BARRED OWL



BARN OWL

tufts of feathers which serve to distinguish it from a less common but very much similar owl of which something will be written further on. Of owls which are not described here at length, among the most useful are the barred owl, the long-eared and the short-eared owls.

The screech owl is one of the best mousers in the world. It also is a great destroyer of insects. It starts its hunting about sunset and it journeys round and round the buildings in the country looking for its favorite quarry. It kills thousands upon thousands of mice every year. Dr. A. K. Fisher, the government's expert in all matters pertaining to hawks and owls, says of the little screech owl that their economic relations are of the greatest importance, "particularly on account of the abundance of the species in farming districts; and whoever destroys them through ignorance or prejudice should be severely condemned."

It was the barn owl, or a species closely allied to it, of which Gray wrote in his "Elegy," "the moping owl doth to the moon complain." Sometimes the barn owl is called the monkey-faced owl because its countenance does look a trifle like that of the monkey. In recent years the barn owls have been decreasing in numbers because of the mistaken belief that they kill poultry. The trouble is that barn owls frequently live in barns or in other structures reared by man, and because they are seen therefore about the poultry yards frequently the impression is given that they are chicken thieves. The barn owl, however, is one of the most beneficial of all our rapacious birds. It dearly loves rats and mice, and one barn owl is worth a dozen cats as a rat and mouse.

There is a little owl commonly called the "saw-whet," which is an interesting and beneficial creature. At first glance one might think that the saw-whet owl is a screech owl, but on taking a second look it will be seen that the saw-whet lacks the ear tufts or feathered horns that are worn by its little cousin.

The saw-whet owl gets its name from the fact that its note sounds like the whetting of a saw. It can be readily understood, therefore, that this bird is not much of a musician. It is a great mouser, and like most of the other owls, seems to prefer these small rodents to almost any other article of diet.

The saw-whet owl raises a large family each year. It keeps the father and mother exceedingly busy to get enough mice to feed the offspring, but they keep at the hunting work for hours at a time and probably deny themselves many a mouse morsel in order that the young may get enough to eat.

It is an easy matter for a person to get from the government full knowledge of the habits of the beneficial hawks and owls of the United States. The biological survey of the department of agriculture has the records in the case, and it will be glad enough to furnish information to persons seeking it. Uncle Sam wants to save most of his hawks and owls.

Why not help him do it?

RULES EASILY UNDERSTOOD.

The "Little Citizens" committee of the Bella Vista playground in Oakland, Cal., asked to draw up rules and regulations on conduct of the grounds, submitted the following series:

"No cigarettes. They're no good. Any boy found smoking will be shown the gate.

"You've got to keep paper and trash off the grounds. If you eat here, do it decent and take the refuse away with you. If you don't, look out for trouble.

"Small children must be given a chance all the time. If any boy takes anything away from a little kid, he'll get his.

"Say 'thanks.' It don't hurt you, and being polite ain't a crime."—From the Playground.

TRAVEL MADE SAFE.

The terrors of the desert will have no fears for the transcontinental tourist making the trip by auto over the Lincoln highway. It is planned to run a double copper telephone wire along the Lincoln highway from Salt Lake City to Ely, and thence to Reno. Cut-in stations will be established one mile apart along the way, and by means of these stations no traveler could ever become stranded at a greater distance than a half mile from a telephone station from which he could call for relief. A traveler will be able to procure an instrument at either end of this route by paying a small deposit on it, just sufficient to insure its return in proper condition when he reaches the station at the other end of his journey.

OUT-OF-ORDINARY PEOPLE

BEAU BRUMMELL HOBO



Playing the part of a tramp Beau Brummell, Charles Paradise, a Colgate college student, recently traveled from Miami, Fla., to New York, 1,600 miles, by "hopping" automobiles. This summer, he says, he is going to San Francisco and return over the Lincoln highway, just by asking persons along the way for a "lift."

"It's the easiest thing in the world," he said. "I hardly ever get turned down. All I do is stand at the side of the road and wave my hand at a machine. Then, when it stops, I ask if there's any room and if they mind giving me a lift. I haven't met a grouchy guy on the trip. Lots of the people ask me to spend the night at their homes."

Paradise is a fastidious tramp, too. He rises at 10:30 in the morning and has breakfast before going on the road. He moves in the best of society along the route, having called on Governor Manning of South Carolina, Governor Craig of North Carolina, J. W. Payntor at Palm Beach and Vincent Astor. Paradise stopped eight weeks at Palm Beach, being introduced by persons he met on the road.

While coming up from Florida he stopped off at Augusta to see the ruins of the big fire, attended a barbecue in South Carolina and heard Wilson deliver his special message to congress on the submarine controversy by posing as a newspaper reporter.

By his method Paradise makes between 150 and 200 miles a day. While he was attending high school and living with his mother in Albany, he made \$2,000 by running a news stand in an office building and working in vacations. He still has part of this money, and hopes it will carry him part of the way to the Coast this summer.

ASHURST AT THE BAR

Back in his younger days—he isn't very old yet—Henry F. Ashurst, United States senator from Arizona, served as a deputy sheriff. He took the work seriously and seldom did a day pass without his picking up some desperado and hustling him to the county jail. Before locking up a prisoner, however, it was necessary for a deputy sheriff to visit the retail establishment of a certain prominent drink merchant, because the key to the lockup was kept there—on a nail behind the bar. There was only one key, but there were several deputy sheriffs and a great many people to be placed in jail. So the only thing to do was to have the key in a central location sure to be open at any hour of the day or night. The liquor merchant, being a public-spirited, high-minded citizen, hospitably contributed a nail in his establishment and the key hung there off and on for a long time. That nail and its location came near being the undoing of Ashurst. A photographer snapped a picture of him one day as he was standing back of the bar, en route to the nail. This picture fell into unscrupulous hands and from then on it was published and republished all over Arizona. Many got the erroneous impression that Ashurst spent most of his time shopping about the stores of them that sold drinks. It took him just seven years to live that picture down.



BETANCOURT BUYS A HAT



The other day Senor Don Julio Betancourt, minister to the United States from Colombia, received a wireless message from Senora Betancourt, who was on board the steamer Almirante on her way to this country. The minister, with a worried expression on his countenance, at once took a train for New York and hustled over to the Fifth avenue shopping district, for the wireless told him that his wife had lost her hat overboard and, though she had plenty of hats, left, not one was fit for a minister's wife to wear when landing in the metropolis. Pretty soon a revenue cutter bore Don Julio down the bay to meet the Almirante, and with him was an attache of the Colombia embassy carrying a big hat box in his lap as tenderly as if it were a baby.

Buying a hat for a woman on a wireless description is a matter of deep concern, and Senor Betancourt was anxiously aware of the fact. It was with vast relief that he saw his wife don the creation he had purchased and wear it ashore without outward signs of disapproval.

GRAND OLD MAN OF MEDICINE

Dr. Abraham Jacobi, known throughout the country as the "Grand Old Man of Medicine" and the friend of the babies, recently celebrated his eighty-sixth birthday by attending to the needs of his many patients in New York. Despite his advanced age he is a very active man and participates in many civic and national events.

Doctor Jacobi has been a practicing physician for 63 years and is known throughout the world as an authority on the diseases of infants. He is the author of many books, and not long ago served as president of the American Medical association.

He was born at Hartum, Westphalia, and got his M. D. degree at Bonn. He was identified with the German revolutionary movement and was in detention in Berlin and Cologne, being imprisoned for high treason. He came to this country in 1853 and has enjoyed a large practice among the rich and has long been a benefactor of the poor. He has been showered with many medical honors and will always be beloved for the work he has done for the babies. He has always striven for better milk, better babies, better living, better conditions, and better parents.

