

The eyes are set in sockets facing forward, which prevents the bird from moving them without turning the head. This, combined with the facial disks, give it a solemn and dignified expression and a human resemblance, which is at times weird and awe-inspiring, while their almost human voices add much to the superstitious regard in which they are frequently held. The fact of their hunting chiefly by night has given many the idea that they cannot see by day.

They seize their prey in their talons, and, where size will permit, swallow it whole. The plumage is soft and fluffy, enabling them to withstand extreme temperatures at times, and the very soft plumage under the wings and on the body surface makes its progress perfectly noiseless, thus permitting its close approach upon its prey before the danger is realized.

I do not propose to go to either extreme in classifying the owls, but place them all in the mostly beneficial class, as all have records of occasionally capturing a small bird, while the one species which is considered injurious more than compensates for the injury by the number of injurious mammals destroyed, and I am confident that were the poultry properly penned up at night, it would effectually prevent any erratic invasions from the owls.

Of the twenty known North American species, eleven may be recorded as regularly Manitoban; some few are migratory, but the majority, especially those inhabiting the deeper woods, remain with us all the year. One of the chief causes of migration among the owls is the amount of snow, which at times cover the food up so completely in their retreats that the birds are forced to seek it in other quarters. This is the reason why owls of different species are much more numerous some seasons than others.

The eggs of all owls are uniformly white and considerably rounded. In the genus *Bubo* we have two forms, which are considered distinct species, although a microscope is almost necessary in order to locate the line of separation.

Of the great horned owl *Bubo Virginianus Subarcticus* is the common form, while *Bubo Virginianus arcticus* is a lighter, and possibly smaller, variety, with a somewhat more northern range. As some five varieties of *Bubo Virginianus* are known to exist, and as all these varieties interbreed where opportunity arises, it takes an expert to search out the pedigree of a horned owl and locate the species or variety. If the locality of collection is not known, it may be any of the five.

They are called the feathered tigers by many ornithologists, and certainly their

untamable ferocity is deserving of the name. They are bold and unexcitable; comparatively easy of approach, and when wounded present a defence worthy of any animal twice their size.

They are the largest and most powerful of the owls, and are credited with doing the greatest damage to poultry and game; they will pay repeated visits to the hen roost where access can be gained, and carry off the largest size fowls. Owls will also capture the grouse and partridge and are of great service in exterminating the rabbits where these animals are numerous. The attacks on the grouse and poultry are made chiefly during the winter, when other food is covered up and when any half-human poulterer would have all crevices small enough for an owl to look through,



Burrowing Owl.

(*Speotyto cunicularia hypogaea*.)

much less fly through, closed up to keep out frost and snow. Were there no owls to carry them off in cases of this kind more poultry would be thrown out, crippled and killed by frosts than the owls eat. I have kept many of these birds alive, and they always prefer rabbits, rats or mice to birds, and an owl can be kept in a more healthy condition with an occasional rabbit than with birds. The record for this bird shows that in 110 full stomachs examined, 80, or over 72 per cent., contained mice, injurious mammals and insects. Of the remainder, eight contained small birds, leaving only 20 per cent. injurious, and these to be divided among game and poultry. Shut up the poultry at night and cut off 10 per cent., which the owl will make on rabbits.

Second only to the horned owl in size is the snowy owl (*Nyctea nyctea*), which is a regular winter resident in greater or less