

the Department placed the matter in the hands of Dr. Merriam and Dr. Fisher, two of the leading ornithologists of America, with instructions to prepare a report on the subject. This they have done, and the result of their investigations, which I shall give at the end of this chapter, shows conclusively that all the hawks which I have referred to as being beneficial to agriculture are of the greatest possible value in ridding us of enormous numbers of destructive animals, and that they are practically innocent of the commonly urged charge against them of poultry-killing.

There is only one more species of hawk to be considered, and that is the beautiful little Sparrow Hawk, probably the commonest of all our hawks, and which may be distinguished from any of the others by its smaller size and red back. It may be constantly seen hovering over fields in Ontario, all through the summer, for it breeds with us, raising its young in a convenient hole in a tree, frequently choosing one that has been deserted by one of the large woodpeckers. The very small size of this bird precludes the idea that it can take a full grown fowl or even a pigeon, and I have never known in my own experience that it has ever taken a young chicken. Its principal food consists of mice and grasshoppers, of both of which it consumes immense quantities, but it does occasionally take wild birds, more particularly those which frequent the open fields and skulk in the grass or run about the stubbles. The birds taken by these species are, however, so few in number compared to the number of mice which it destroys, and the good it does in reducing the swarms of grasshoppers which infest our fields, that we may well forgive its slight trespasses, the balance of good over evil being so great that the birds deserve our protection. The following shows the result of the investigation made by Dr. Fisher at the request of the Department of Agriculture of the United States :

*Red-tailed Hawk.* 562 stomachs examined : 54 contained poultry or game birds ; 51, other birds ; 409, mice and other animals ; 37, reptiles, etc. ; 47, insects ; 9, crawfish, etc. ; 13, offal ; and 89 were empty.

*Red-shouldered Hawk.* 220 stomachs were examined : 3 contained poultry ; 12, other birds ; 142, mice and other mammals ; 59, reptiles, etc. ; 109, insects ; 7, crawfish ; 2, offal ; 3, fish ; and 14 were empty.

*Broad-winged Hawk.* 65 stomachs were examined : 2 contained small birds ; 28, mice and other mammals ; 24, reptiles, etc. ; 32, insects, etc. ; 4 crawfish ; and 7 were empty.

*Rough-legged Hawk.* 49 stomachs examined : 45 contained mice and other mammals ; 1, lizards ; 1, insects ; and 4 were empty.

*Sparrow Hawk.* 320 stomachs examined : 1 contained a quail ; 53 other birds ; 101, mice and other mammals ; 11, reptiles, etc. ; 244, insects, etc. ; and two were empty.

*Marsh Hawk.* 124 stomachs examined : 7 contained poultry or game birds ; 34, other birds ; 79, mice and other mammals ; 9, reptiles, etc. ; 14, insects ; and 8 were empty.

Thus it can be seen that of the 49 stomachs of the Rough-legged Hawk examined by Dr. Fisher, and the 32 examined by me, in 1895, not one contained a trace of any domestic fowl and nearly everyone contained mice. Yet many people persist in calling this bird the "Big Hen Hawk" and in treating it as an enemy, when both by law and public opinion it should be protected by every possible means. The statement as to all the other species that I have referred to as beneficial is equally corroborated by my own experience, and shows how well entitled these birds are to consideration at our hands instead of the persecution they usually meet.