

# The Rockwood Review.

## GREAT HORNED OWL.

BUBO VIRGINIANUS.

The Great Horned Owl is found in suitable localities throughout the greater part of North America, Costa Rica, so far as known, being the southern limit of its range. Like other birds and mammals which have a wide and diversified range, this species is modified by climate and other local influences so that it is separable into several well-marked geographical races. The typical form ranges from Labrador and the eastern United States south through eastern Mexico to Costa Rica.

The Dusky Horned Owl inhabits the northwest coast region from Oregon to Alaska, and also Labrador; recently it has been found to extend south through the Rocky Mountains to Colorado and Arizona.

The Western Horned Owl inhabits the western United States (except the northwest coast), ranging eastward across the Great Plains (straggling to northern Illinois, Wisconsin, and western Ontario), northward to Manitoba, and southward over the table-lands of Mexico.

The Arctic Horned Owl inhabits Arctic America, chiefly in the interior, ranging south in winter to Manitoba and the mountains of Dakota and Montana.

In studying this Owl in relation to its food habits it will be perceived at a glance that a bird so powerful and voracious may at times be a source of great benefit, while at others it may be the cause of great damage. Now, the serious inroads it makes on the tenants of the poultry yard, as well as the destruction of many game and song birds would seem to call for the total suppression of the species. Again, when engaged chiefly in the capture of injurious rodents, which threaten the very existence of the crops, it is the farmer's most valuable ally and consequently should be most carefully protected.

The food of this species is of great variety; birds and mammals as well as reptiles, fish, crustaceans,

and insects contribute to its fare. Among the birds most often taken may be mentioned all kinds of poultry (including half-grown turkeys), grouse, quail, doves, and wild ducks. Even hawks, crows, and other owls do not escape the voracity of this tiger among birds, and the large hawks are among those attacked and eaten.

Of all the birds of prey, with the exception possibly of the Goshawk and Cooper's Hawk, the Great Horned Owl is the most destructive to poultry. All kinds of poultry seem to be taken, though when Guinea fowls and turkeys are obtainable it shows a preference for these. In sections of the country where it is common the inhabitants often complain bitterly of its ravages.

The following from Dr. B. H. Warren's report on the birds of Pennsylvania, shows a still greater proportion of this class of food: "My own record of sixteen examinations of Great Horned Owls, which, with one exception, were taken during the winter months, revealed in eleven individuals only remains of poultry; two others, portions of rabbits, and of the three remaining birds of this series it was found that one had taken two mice; another showed small amount of hair, apparently that of an opossum. The sixteenth and last bird contained a mouse and parts of beetles."

The following from the pen of Dr. P. R. Hoy, shows how destructive a single Owl may be: "The specimen in the collection of the academy was known to carry off from one farm, in the space of a month, not less than twenty-seven individuals of various kinds of poultry before it was shot."

Dr. C. Hart Merriam gives the following account of its depredations: "Indeed I have known one to kill and decapitate three turkeys and several hens in a single night, leaving the bodies uninjured and fit for the table." This preference for the heads of their victims is more or less common to all birds of prey.