

## The Rockwood Review.

### SCREECH OWL.

#### MEGASCOPS ASIO.

The little Screech Owls are distributed over the temperate parts of the globe and are among the better known of the Owls.

The Common Screech Owl is distributed throughout the whole of the United States and the southern portions of the British provinces. It is separable into several geographic races, as is usual in species having such an extensive distribution. The typical form (MEGASCOPS ASIO) ranges from the eastern United States and the British provinces south to about the thirty-second parallel and west to the Great Plains. The Florida Screech Owl (MEGASCOPS ASIO FLORIDANUS) inhabits the Gulf States from Louisiana to Florida and extends north along the coast to South Carolina. The Texas Screech Owl (MEGASCOPS ASIO MCCALLII) is found in southern Texas and eastern Mexico southward to Guatemala. The Mexican Screech Owl (MEGASCOPS ASIO TRICHOPSIS) inhabits northwestern Mexico, Lower California, Arizona, and New Mexico. The California Screech Owl (MEGASCOPS ASIO BENDIREI) is limited to California. Kennicott's Screech Owl (MEGASCOPS ASIO KENNICOTTII) inhabits the Northwest coast, from Oregon to Sitka, and east to northern Montana. The Rocky Mountain Screech Owl (MEGASCOPS ASIO MAXWELLIÆ) is found in the Rocky Mountains, from Colorado to eastern Montana.

Their food consists of a great variety of animal life, including mammals, birds, reptiles, batrachians, fish, crustaceans, and insects. At night-fall they begin their rounds, inspecting the vicinity of farm-houses, barns, and corncribs, making trips through the orchard and nurseries, gliding silently across the meadows or encircling the stacks of grain in search of mice and insects. Thousands upon thousands of mice of different kinds thus fall victims to their

industry. Their economic relations therefore are of the greatest importance, particularly on account of the abundance of the species in many of the farming districts, and whoever destroys them through ignorance or prejudice should be severely condemned.

Those who have rambled much in the country in the clear winter mornings must have noticed the tracks of mice which often form networks in the snow, crossing and recrossing, passing in and out of walls and stacks, or converging toward some choice bit of food—all tending to show how active these little rodents are during the night, a period when most of the world sleeps. Occasionally a track stops abruptly, and while the observer is trying to read more of the history written in the snow, his eyes catch the faint impression of a pair of wings near where the trail ends, and instantly he recognizes that a tragedy has been enacted. Beside the different species of mice, the Screech Owl feeds on other small mammals, such as chipmunks, shrews, moles, and occasionally bats. During warm spells in winter it forages quite extensively, and stores up in its home considerable quantities of food for use during inclement weather. It may be said in this connection that with one exception the only specimens of pine mice procured by the writer in southern New York were taken from the storehouses of this Owl.

Frogs are devoured greedily, while other batrachians and small reptiles are occasionally eaten. Crawfish are sometimes found among the stomach contents, but not so often as in the case of the Barred Owl. Evidence goes to show that at times this Owl is an expert fisherman. Capt. Chas. E. Bendire found it feeding on fish in the Northwest, and the following note by Mr. M. A. Frazar, from Watertown, Mass., shows that it will sometimes travel a long distance for this food: