

How many mice each bird would take on the average each day would be difficult to state exactly, but it is safe to assume that at least six would be required. Now multiply that by the vast army of these hawks that resort to this Province and the total number of mice destroyed would be amazing; and then against this good work constantly going on there is no damage to be set off. Not one instance, in thirty years' observation of this bird's habits, has ever come to the writer's knowledge of their having attacked a single domestic fowl. It does sometimes take a meal off a dead duck or other bird it may find lying in the marshes, but it is doubtful if it ever kills for itself a bird of any kind, at any rate in this Province. Every farmer and every sportsman in the land should do his utmost for the protection of this bird. Unfortunately they are constantly destroyed by persons who are ignorant of the good they do, and thousands are killed every autumn by mischievous people who must shoot at everything they see that has life in it. If people who wantonly shoot hawks would sometimes look at the stomach contents of the birds they kill they would soon be convinced of the wrong they were doing and would perhaps exercise sufficient common sense to refrain from continuing the evil practice.

For the sake of brevity the Red-tailed Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, and Broad-winged Hawk may be considered together. These three common species are usually known as "Hen Hawks." Why, however, it would be difficult to say. They are all fairly large, slow, heavy flying birds, whose food consists principally of mice, squirrels, toads, frogs and snakes; very rarely do they ever take a bird of any kind. In fact it would be extremely difficult for them to do so, unless the bird was very young, or injured seriously. They will, when pressed by hunger, feed on carrion, but the staple article of diet with them is meadow mice and squirrels, varied, as before stated, by toads, frogs and snakes, besides grasshoppers and other insects.

I have specially omitted from this group, to which it really belongs, the Rough-legged Hawk. This is done purposely, because the great value of the species to the farmer should be particularly pointed out, the bird having been most unjustly persecuted. It is the largest of the Canadian hawks, and one that deserves the greatest consideration and protection from every man having an interest in agriculture. It can be safely said that this so-called "Hen-Hawk" has never killed a head of poultry at any time, nor do they ever kill birds of any sort. During the fall of 1895 these hawks were very abundant in southern Ontario and large numbers were killed. I obtained all the bodies I could for the purpose of investigating the contents of their stomachs, and I spent much time in watching their habits whilst feeding. All day long, every day from the first of October of that year to November 28th, the birds were constantly passing slowly along through southern Ontario, feeding as they went, and not one fowl was taken or attacked by them anywhere, so far as I could learn, and I made enquiries from poultry keepers wherever I could. In all, 32 specimens were examined by me, and the result corroborated my experience during the last thirty years. In one stomach I found a frog, in another the flesh of a muskrat—taken from a pile of bodies of these creatures which had been thrown together in Ashbridge's Marsh. Another stomach was filled with large grasshoppers, and the rest contained mice, and nothing but mice, or traces of them, ranging in quantity from a little fur and a few bones to seven whole ones. From this it can be judged whether or not the Rough-legged Hawk is the friend of the farmer.

The attention of the Department of Agriculture at Washington was some time ago called to the fact that mice and other destructive rodents were largely increasing throughout the United States, and it was suggested that the constant destruction of the hawks and owls was the reason for it. In consequence of this