

REPORT OF THE ORNITHOLOGICAL BRANCH, 1907-08.

The Ornithological Branch of the Ottawa Field Naturalists' Club met during the year 1907 at more or less irregular intervals. It has carried forward the work of rendering complete and up-to-date the local list of birds. Field work was carried on, especially so during the spring and migration months of last year. The spring migration of birds of 1907 was found here, as over practically the whole eastern half of North America, to have been very abnormal owing to the protracted cold weather of that spring. These variations in temperature, etc., render the migration of birds doubly interesting to the observer, as there are no two migrations quite alike. An account of the last spring migration was published in the "Ottawa Naturalist" in the May and August numbers. Other facts concerning the birds hereabouts have been published from time to time. An interesting specimen has lately come into the hands of one of our members, namely, a Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) from Inlet, Labelle Co., Que. In plumage it is a much lighter one than those found here usually are, and it furthermore bore very palpable evidences of having, shortly before it was shot, engaged in a fight with a porcupine. It was liberally sprinkled over with quills, especially in the sole of the right foot, the quills having penetrated even that horny and hard skin, also under the right wing, on the breast, neck and even two in the left eye-lid. Some of the quills had penetrated the thick solid muscles of the breast, lying against the sternum. Fifty-six quills and parts of quills were extracted from the skin and flesh and about 10 more were left in. How did this owl come to tackle such an undesirable antagonist or prey? The probability is that the owl was foraging for food, and being very hungry—which is a common occurrence for them in winter—she swooped down on the first moving object that even remotely appeared like legitimate prey and in her eagerness, and possibly by reason of the darkness of the woods, did not find out her mistake until she had reached forward with one claw and gotten that full of spines and simultaneously receiving a slap from the tail of the porcupine that lodged the rest of the little barbed spears in her anatomy. Most of the hawks and owls which we receive here in winter have empty stomachs, showing that hunger must be a very frequent, if disagreeable experience with them. It also seems that at such times the gall discharges very copiously into the stomach, as the stomachs in such cases are always very green, as are also the intestines. Probably a way nature adopts to relieve the pain of hunger somewhat.

Now, a few recommendations. We would urge such as take