

see him return many times, but seldom without a rodent in his claws. The eggs are pure white and rather rough in texture on the surface. I have found them to vary in numbers from four to seven. The young, as with all our birds of prey, hatch in rotation, as the eggs are laid, so that they are of different ages. They are odd little fellows at first, all fluff, with large heads, but they very soon learn how to claw and hiss.

Several theories have been advanced as reasons for the hatching of young at different times. The chief advantage, however, seems to be that of protection, especially with birds of prey. The first born soon learns, not only to protect itself, but its younger brothers and sisters also, as I have more than once witnessed; indeed they are regular little demons as they throw themselves upon their backs and use their claws vigorously. They will also readily hop to the rescue of a younger companion and are thus a means of defending the whole family against any intruder, be it skunk, badger, or coyote. The mother, too, is a fearless defender of her brood and is by no means to be trifled with; indeed her daring on some occasions would, I believe, lead to serious scratchings did one offer an opportunity. In this respect the male is far less bold and contents himself with making faint dives, taking care to keep well out of reach.

The food for the young is collected by both parents and they are careful to pluck or skin everything before offering it to be eaten; they also carry away all tell-tale bones, etc., so that there is no unnecessary odours to attract enemies. The young, too, as soon as they are able, move away from the nest, and by the time they are nearly fully fledged may be discovered several hundred feet away, and when at last they learn to fly they are often widely separated and are to be seen resting upon some fence rail or upon the bare ground. At this period the parents can be seen teaching them to catch game for themselves, the exercise consisting of dropping a ground squirrel or some other animal and enticing the young to catch it before it reaches the ground, the lesson being repeated until proficiency is attained. After this they are instructed in field work, and soon learn to hunt for themselves.

I am not, however, of that school who believe the young only acquire proficiency through the parents teaching. It unquestionably helps, but I believe a young bird would still acquire the instinctive habits of its progenitors, supposing them to be separated, at a very early age. This seems to me particularly borne out by the habits of the young when they first learn to hunt for themselves, in making, as it were, a speciality in seeking grouse. This they unquestionably do and from August till the middle of September are one of the worst enemies our prairie