

THE BIRDS OF ONTARIO

IN

RELATION TO AGRICULTURE.

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The agriculturist in the Province of Ontario has annually to suffer great loss from the depredations of two classes of enemies, both individually insignificant, but, by reason of their numbers, very formidable. These are insects and small rodents, chief among the latter being rats and all the animals usually classed as mice.

It is very difficult to make anything like a correct estimate of the average damage inflicted upon the farmer by these little animals, but every man engaged in farming knows by sad experience that he continually suffers from their work. The enormous amount of grain they destroy, and the young trees girdled and killed by them are visible to everyone; but the creatures themselves, owing to their nocturnal habits and secretive lives, are comparatively seldom seen. Their enormous increase and consequent capacity for serious mischief is, of course, owing to the fact that man has interfered seriously with the balance of nature, and has thoughtlessly, perhaps, destroyed the principal natural enemies of these creatures. Man himself is almost powerless to stop their ravages to any very great extent. The constant exercise of his ingenuity in trapping, and so forth, results in very little and occupies his time to no purpose. The natural enemies of these animals are gifted with special faculties for their destruction, and so are able to cope with them. Chief among the enemies of this class of farm pests, and the only ones we shall consider now, are the birds of prey. These birds are wonderfully provided by nature with the means to fulfil their part in maintaining the correct balance between the small rodents and the vegetable kingdom. They are in a manner nature's police, and if not destroyed by man would so keep down the numbers of these small four-footed thieves that their plundering would be scarcely noticeable. Our birds of prey may be roughly divided into two classes, the hawks and the owls, the first feeding by day and the other by night. Of the eagles we need say but little. They are now so rarely found in the civilized districts that their influence for good or ill is practically nothing, except upon the game, and of that no doubt, they destroy a large quantity.

HAWKS.

Of the hawks there are eleven species, occurring regularly in this Province in greater or less abundance every season. These are the Marsh Hawk, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Goshawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Duck Hawk, Pigeon Hawk

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