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“On the Land-birds wintering in the neighbourhood of Toronto.”

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It is not, I believe, an uncommon idea, even among those who have in some degree interested themselves in observing the movements and habits of our different birds, that when once the frosts and snows of winter have fairly set in, our woods are almost completely deserted by their feathered denizens.

It would probably, therefore, be a matter of surprise to many to learn that there are at least twenty different species of land birds, which remain with us through the whole of our long winter, braving the severest cold, and apparently finding abundant provision for the supply of their various wants.

I shall endeavour in this paper to give a few brief, though I fear very imperfect, notices of some of these different species, as they have fallen under my own observation at various times during the course of my rambles about the woods and fields in the immediate neighbourhood of Toronto. Some of the birds I shall mention are winter visitors only; others again remain with us throughout the whole year.

To begin with the birds of prey; the first I shall notice: the Bald-headed Eagle, although very rare, *has been* seen in this neighbourhood. On the shores of the Lake, near the Scarborough Heights, and about the Humber Bay, a solitary bird may still occasionally be met with. I saw one about three weeks ago, for the first time for many years flying down the valley of the Don towards Ashbridge's Bay: its white head, and the broad white patch near the tail, as well as its great size, render it easily distinguishable; and even at some little distance it may readily be recognized by its peculiar flight, which, when making for a particular point, is remarkably direct; never circling or sailing, but supported by long continuous equal strokes of the wings, without intermission, as long as the bird is in sight.

Of the owls, the large white or snowy Owl, (*Stryx Nyctea*) is one of the most beautiful of our rapacious birds. Nothing can exceed the exquisite softness and beauty of its thick warm plumage, which enables it to bid defiance to the severest cold. Its colour varies slightly according to the age of the bird, but when full grown it is a rich creamy white, the edges of the feathers of the head and back tipped with crescent-shaped spots of brown, and the wings and tail barred with the same colour. This owl pursues its prey during the day as well as at dusk, and its flight is extremely rapid and noiseless. It is not over nice in its choice of food; squirrels, rats, mice, small birds, and fish, all seem equally welcome.

The great horned Owl (*Stryx Virginiana*) is now, I believe, rarely found here. I once shot a very fine specimen in the shrubbery close to my own house—an unusual place to meet with one, as it is in general a solitary bird, preferring some thick wood on the edge of a clearing, from which it sallies forth in the fine moonlight nights in search of its prey. Their plumage is very handsome, the prevailing colour being a rich reddish brown, barred and mottled with brownish black and reddish yellow. The horns are broad, and three inches in length, formed of twelve or fourteen small feathers, with black webs and edged with brownish yellow.

The barred or grey Owl, (*Stryx Nebulosa*) is a very common visitor to our woods during the winter. It is generally found in pairs; it is a smaller bird than the horned owl, and its plumage,

though very soft and warm, is much inferior in richness and beauty. Small birds and mice are its favourite food, but a stray chicken or young pigeon does not come amiss to him. It is the funniest possible thing, to watch the gesticulations of one of these birds, when approaching them in daylight. It bends its whole body forward, pulling up the lateral feathers of the head so as to form a sort of ruff; moving its head at the same time rapidly to and fro, and eyeing the intruder in the most grotesque manner.

The little horned owl is still found in this neighbourhood. It is an inoffensive little creature, generally keeping itself very quiet till towards evening, for should it be caught abroad during the day by other birds, they never fail to express their dislike and antipathy in a very decided manner. A few weeks ago, while giving directions to some work people at my own place, my attention was attracted by the loud screaming and chattering of a party of blue-jays, collected in some low pine bushes a few yards from where I was standing. On going up to the spot to ascertain the cause of the uproar, the jays flew off, and seeing neither hawk or cat, I returned again to my men. I had hardly done so before the jays were all back, and the screaming was renewed with ten-fold vigour. Determined to see what the matter was this time, I pushed my way through the bushes, and after looking carefully, but without success, in every direction for the cause of the disturbance, was on the point of giving it up in despair, when turning round suddenly, I almost brushed up against a beautiful little-horned owl, sitting bolt upright on a small branch close to the stem of a pine bush, and eyeing me with the most imperturbable gravity. This little fellow hardly measured ten inches; his plumage was exceedingly soft and beautiful, barred alternately with wavy lines of a rich brown, grey and black.

Of the hawk tribe, the most common is the Pigeon Hawk; (*Falco Columbarius*) one or more solitary individuals hang about our woods and fields in the neighbourhood of the town all winter; and very fat and plump they become, making sad havoc amongst the flocks of red-polls and siskins, and every now and then paying an unwelcome visit to the nearest dove-cot. The colour of the adult male is generally a light blueish grey, each feather marked with a black central line, the lower parts reddish white, the breast and belly yellowish white marked with large oblong brown spots.

Among the birds of prey may properly be classed the great American Shrike, (*Lanius borealis*) for a bolder or more rapacious bird for its size does not exist. Many years ago I was fortunate enough to procure a very fine specimen; I then lost sight of the bird for several years, and almost despaired of meeting with it again, when, one fine winter's morning, a very large one dashed through a pane of glass at a pet goldfinch, whose cage happened to stand close to the window, in one of the rooms at my own house. Being a little stunned with the shock, and his wings slightly injured by the broken glass, I secured him without much difficulty. He was a remarkably fine bird, measuring rather more than ten inches, and nearly fifteen inches across the wings. The upper part of the head and body was a clear blueish grey, the sides of the head nearly white, crossed with a bar of black, passing from the nostril through the eye to the middle of the neck; the belly nearly white, marked with narrow wavy dark lines; wings black, with a white bar; the two centre feathers of the tail all black; the rest black edged with white.

The next birds I shall notice are the Jays: of these we have two kinds; one remaining with us all the year round, the other only a winter bird. The Canada Jay, (*Garrulus Canadensis*) or Whiskey-lack, as he is called in the north-west, is never met with here except in the depth of winter; and, even then, it must be very severe weather that drives these birds as far south as this.

They appeared in great numbers in the winters of 1839 and '40, flying about the woods and fields in flocks of fifteen or