

## SOME HABITS OF SWAINSON'S HAWK IN MANITOBA.

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Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo Swainsoni*), is essentially a bird of open woodlands or hilly country. It prefers a mixture of the two for nesting purposes, and the open gopher-infested plains for a hunting ground. Reaching us rather later in the spring than most of our other hawks, it almost immediately sets about selecting a nesting site, the place chosen being usually either a scrub oak or an isolated aspen poplar. Occasionally, however, the birds abandon their usual practice and select a hill instead of a tree for nesting purposes, even when trees are available. On the plains farther west they do not have so much choice in the matter, and in consequence they are obliged, if they nest at all in such places, to be contented with a hill or river bank.

As I have previously pointed out, on several occasions, there are few more useful hawks, in our Canadian west, than this species. Years ago, in his "Birds of Manitoba," Thompson Seton suggested the name gopher hawk for this bird, and I know of no more fitting title. This does not suggest, however, that these birds live only on such animals. Those of us who know them well are aware that they are by no means partial in this choice. Young grouse, meadowlarks and other birds certainly form a portion of their diet, as do also, occasionally, young poultry. But observation also teaches us that at least 80 per cent of the food is made up of noxious rodents, and that is surely an excellent showing, well entitling the bird to protection.

In former times these handsome dashing hawks frequented the plains in considerable numbers, seeking and obtaining an easy living among the gopher population. As time went on, however, the persecution they were subjected to by farmers and others greatly thinned their ranks, so that to-day they are restricted to a few isolated or unsettled districts, where they are permitted to rear their young in comparative safety. I am pleased to say that one such district occurs in the neighbourhood of my home, it being situated on one of the Dominion timber reserves. It is there that I have been privileged to watch the birds for a number of years past, and have gleaned some interesting information relating to their habits and life history. Some of this information I have already related in a previous volume of THE OTTAWA NATURALIST. I shall here, therefore, chiefly confine myself to some observations made last summer, while I was out on some of my usual Sunday afternoon rambles.