

THE BIRDS OF PREY OF NOVA SCOTIA.

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IN making this list I have personally identified, with one or two exceptions, every species in it. I will not say that no other specimen may be added, but that if hereafter noted, it will be a very rare one to have escaped my notice of more than thirty years. Personal identification of each species also by the writer, even if in a narrow limit, adds always to the interest and value of a paper. In classification I have used Key to N. American Birds, by Dr. Cones, 1872, of the value of which it scarcely needs any mention from me. I have found, with one or two exceptions, all the birds of this Order common to North Eastern America, in Nova Scotia, and noticed those I expected to find and failed. From their nature and food they are rare everywhere, and one who has witnessed the scarcity of all animal life in our forest, and the little bird life even in our cultivated fields, is not surprised by finding a greater scarcity of this Order. The innumerable flights during the autumn of what are called shore birds, chiefly composed of the Genera TRINGA, TOTANUS and closely allied species in their autumn migrations, attracts numbers of the Genus FALCO. Our marshes, especially after mowing, which lays bare the runs of field mice, and the haunts of frogs, snakes and other reptiles, attracts the harriers and buzzards, and the sea shores of the Bay of Fundy, at ebb tide, left in far-reaching and muddy flats abounding in stranded fish, bring the eagles and fish hawks for their prey, the latter seizing its living prey from the shallow pools, whilst the former, when not plundering the fish-hawk, contents himself with the dead and stranded fish. Except the grouse, the hare, and perhaps shrews in the depth of the winter forest, or a white weasel or jay bird, or a red squirrel now and then, the stern winter has locked in snow and ice everything that makes food for the few owls that hibernate with us. The few eagles and fish-hawks I have dissected, I have found fat, even in winter; the hawks generally thin. I have never identified any kites in Nova Scotia, but my son has observed fork-tail hawks in the air, which I have also seen, but very rarely, most probably the Genus NAUCLERUS.

LIST OF RAPACIOUS BIRDS OF NOVA SCOTIA.

FAMILY STRIGIDÆ—(Owls).

Bubo Virginianus—Great horned owl.*Otus vulgaris* (var. *Wilsonianus*)—Long-eared owl.*Brachyotio palustris*—Short eared owl.*Syrnium lapponicum* (var. *cinnereum*)—Great grey owl.*Syrnium nebulosum*—Barred owl.*Nyctio nivea*—Snowy owl.*Syrnium ulula* (var. *Hudsonia*)—Hawk owl.*Nyctale Tengmahlia* (var. *Richardsoni*)—Tengmahl's owl.*Nyctale Acadica*—Saw-whet owl.

FAMILY FALCONIDÆ.

Circus cyaneus (var. *Hudsonia*)—Marsh hawk.*Accipiter fuscus*—Sharp shinn.*Accipiter Cooperii*—Cooper's hawk.*Astur atricapillus*—Goshawk.*Falco sacer*—Gersfalcon.*Falco communis*—Jack hawk.*Falco columbarius*—Pigeon hawk.*Falco sparverius*—Sparrow hawk.*Buteo borealis*—Red tail hawk.*Buteo lineatus*—Red shoulder hawk.*Archibuteo lagopus* (var. *Sandii Johnstonis*)—Hough logged buzzard.*Pandion haliaetus*—Fish hawk.*Aquila chrysaetos*—Golden eagle.*Haliaetus leucorhynchus*—Bald eagle.

You will find in this list, taken as regards its nomenclature from Cones' Key, that many generic as well as specific names are changed from Wilson, Audubon, Nuttall, Richardson, and even Baird, or other recent writers. The greatest change is with the specific. Whilst we accept the changes from the older authors as the necessary progress in the science, yet we can see in the differences from the modern ones that one principle rules them, a nearer return to truth, to the principle of returning to the specific given by the first discoverer of the species, allowing him the exclusive right of naming, and finally in birds almost identical in both continents the allowance of geographical variation from one common origin. This of course is the most philosophical way of settling points beyond our reach. Field naturalists can scarcely be allowed the privilege of criticising, which must be the result of intimate knowledge of large collections and libraries, and, as respects the author of the Key, still larger experience of field life. Yet one may be allowed to say that anything that reclaims the science from the divisions of sub-families and sub-genera, and innumerable lists of synonyms made, not for truth but for personal exaltation, must be hailed with pleasure by all true naturalists. Of the family of owls which inhabit our Province, the Halifax museum, with the exception of the great grey owl (*S. lapponicum*), contains an excellent collection of every species I have identified myself. The great grey owl was taken some years ago in Pictou County, and a specimen was in the collection of the late Dr. McCulloch, of Pictou town. This is the only recorded instance I know of its being here. The great horned owl (*B. Virginianus*)