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WILLIAM COUPER, Editor.

OWLS.

Two beautiful specimens of the rare cinereous owl were sent to me in March. One was a female shot at St. Remi, the other a male, secured in the neighbourhood of Huntingdon, Que. Two owlets of this species were procured about three years ago, from a nest found in a tree in the new settlement of Ponsoby, a wild region not far from Montreal. From these facts, it is evident that the great cinereous owl is becoming more resident in the woodlands of Quebec. Formerly it was considered a visitor during winter, like the snowy owl, coming from the lands inhabited by the Leming. Although it is only of late years that this owl was discovered in the latitude of Quebec during summer, we have no authentic knowledge of its habits during the nesting season. Why is this powerful bird so rare, while the barred owl, a smaller species, is generally abundant? The young of the latter were found on the ground in a forest near Quebec, and the adult birds are common in our woodlands at all seasons. There appears to be a great difference regarding the positions whereon a few of our owls make their nests. Mr. W. G. A. Brodie says "that the long-eared owl and the snowy owl nest on the low trees in Manitoba," while we have been informed by other observers that the latter species deposits its eggs in a nest on the ground. The information that the snowy owl constructs its nest on trees in Manitoba is new and interesting to us, as it was formerly supposed to return to the far north to bring forth its young. The Great North-west is, however, becoming settled by intelligent observers of nature, and in a few years we will doubtless obtain a clear and correct record of its *fauna* and *flora*. The barred owl is probably the only American species having dark eyes. Why is the bird thus an exception in its class? The other owls possess bright yellow eyes, and they have also the power of dilating and contracting their black pupils to suit the glare of light in which they may be placed. Generally speaking the yellow-eyed owls are not so common (at least in the eastern

portions of Canada) as the dark-eyed species. Those possessing the yellow iris may possibly range over a larger extent of territory, while the barred owl may be more local in its *habitats*. The great Virginian owl is not in any way a common species, especially near the habitations of man; the same may be said of the hawk, Tengmalm's, saw-whet, the long and short-eared owls which have a yellow iris to their eyes. These birds generally glare and stare at a person when approached in day-light. We would be pleased to have the opinions of ornithological students regarding the above questions, with remarks on the peculiarities which may have been noticed in the economy of owls—for instance—stratagem or modes by which they procure their food; giving also statements regarding the correct use of the black-bordered transparent membrane so conspicuously connected with their eyes.—C.

NOTES ON THE NATURAL HISTORY OF MANITOBA.

BY W. G. A. BRODIE.

(Read before the Natural History Society of
Toronto.)

One of our characteristic rodents is the "Sand Rat," northern pocket gopher, the *Thomomys talpoides*, Rich.; it is about the length of a house rat but heavier and of a more clumsy build; usually the color is dirty grey varying to nearly black. The cheek pouches open on the outside of the mouth, are hairy inside and will hold a handful of grain. The ears are short, placed in the centre of a dark patch and the sense of hearing is acute. The incisors are large and sharp, the molars sharp around the edges. The legs are short and the toes have long claws and they are good diggers. They are strictly nocturnal in their habits but this is of little value in the struggle for existence for their nocturnal enemies are many—owls, coyotes, foxes and badgers. Another is the northern chipmunk or *Tamias asiaticus*, Gmel; it is common in all wooded sections, is very variable but easily distinguished from its near congener in Ontario the *Tamias striatus*, Linn. The ground squirrel, *Spermophilus Richardsoni*, Sabine,