

## Canadian Natural History.

## Buzzards.

(Buteonina.)

**B**UZZARDS resemble hawks and falcons in having short wings, and the bill crooked from the base. They, however, differ from them both by the possession of a beak somewhat larger and weaker, and by the absence of the tooth on the upper mandible. The third and fourth quill feathers of the Buzzard are the largest; while in the falcons, the second; and in the hawks, the fourth, have that distinction. Buzzards are sluggish and inactive in their habits, and in hunting their prey, rapid pursuits and quick movements are not

well as on the young of fur-bearing animals. Respecting the method adopted by this bird in capturing its prey, Audubon remarks—"They now and then pursue a wounded one; but the greatest feat he had seen them performing was scrambling at the edge of the water to secure a lethargic frog." The same eminent authority also frequently shot them "long after sunset, as they sat patiently waiting for their prey at the edge of a ditch." Notwithstanding its constitutional laziness, the Rough-legged Buzzard is a powerful bird, and can do wonders when it chooses to exert itself. "When roused by hunger it will not be content merely with frogs and mice, but addresses itself to the capture of large game, such as wild-ducks and rabbits." The head, neck, throat, and breast of this bird are yellowish white, with broad triangular spots. The throat is marked with lengthened streaks of

catch attention. The doomed creature is borne off in the claws of its remorseless destroyer before the victim is even aware of the presence of its enemy. The Buzzard is frequently described as watching from an eminence or from the summit of a decayed tree, remaining for hours in one situation, and from thence sweeping down on the prey when it is discovered. We never had an opportunity of seeing it so employed, and have always regarded its long stationary perches as the result of repletion. However this may be, the same station is frequently taken up day after day, and the hours are patiently passed in a motionless pose. "When roused from this perch, or during the season of incubation, the flight is slow and majestic. The bird rises in easy and graceful gyrations, often to an immense height, uttering their shrill and melancholy whistle. At this time, to a spectator



COMMON BUZZARD.

ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD.

employed. The expansion of the wings is ample, but of that rounded and hollow construction which is unfavourable for great activity. The plumage is loose and downy, and bears a certain resemblance to that of the owl.

**THE ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD.**—(*Buteo lagopus*).—Is so named from the circumstance that its legs as far as the base of the toes, are covered with feathers. On this continent, it ranges over the northern districts, migrating from one neighbourhood to another, and extending to the fur countries and the plains of the Saskatchewan. It breeds on lofty trees, and the nest is formed of sticks, with a slight lining. In disposition, it is more shy and wary than the Common Buzzard, shortly to be described. It delights in low-lying hunting districts, and it preys on the small quadrupeds, such as field mice and ground squirrels; the inferior orders of reptiles, newts, frogs, lizards, and snakes, as

brown, while the head and neck are narrowly streaked with markings of the same colour. The under parts of the body, in front of the thighs, is of a deep amber brown, and the feathers are edged with yellowish white, tinted with reddish. The upper tail coverts and base of the tail are white—the latter seems a constant character in all the specimens we have had an opportunity of examining. We have observed in some individuals a slight difference in the intensity of the brown and the broadness of the markings of the bird, and one or two actually had the head nearly spotless.

**THE COMMON BUZZARD.**—(*Buteo vulgaris*).—Like the bird just described is sluggish and inactive in its habits. The flight is heavy but buoyant, and when hunting, it is performed in low sweeps. While softly sailing along in its noiseless flight, it surveys the ground and pounces on any thing living that may

underneath, and in particular lights, it appears of immense size. The motions of the tail, when directing the circles, may be plainly perceived, as well as the beautiful markings on it and on the wings." An eminent authority describes the bird as follows:—"Bluish black bill, darkest towards the point; the under parts are sometimes pale yellowish white, streaked on the throat and breast with shades of brown of different intensity, and on the belly and vent crossed by broad irregular bars. Sometimes they are of a uniform tint, nearly as dark as the upper surface of the body and being little interrupted. The plumes of the thighs are generally dark, crossed with reddish. The tail is slightly rounded, and is crossed by a broad bar of amber brown near the tip, and by seven or eight narrow ones of the same colour." The length of male specimens are about twenty inches, that of females being about twenty-three inches.