

SCREECH OWL.

The Screech Owl is not a common habitant of our gardens, but it is often found nesting in neglected orchards where hollow trees give opportunity. It is a small owl, not greatly exceeding a robin in size, but of apparently greater bulk on account of its heavier build and more fluffy feathering. Its colour may be a fine pattern of either ash grey or burnt sienna red, with prominent ear tufts and yellow eyes. It is carnivorous of course, and undoubtedly takes a certain number of small birds, though mice form its principal fare. On the whole, it is much more a friend than an enemy of man. It may sound inconsistent to allow a bird of prey to build in the garden, much more to advocate building a nest box for it, but it is an attractive little fellow with many pretty ways. It is a gross libel to call it "screech" owl for whatever its song is it is not a screech, but a very pretty whistled tremolo, and as soothing a sound as can be imagined. If one can be induced to stay within easy hearing distance from the house, its many other conversational themes will well repay the listener for his attention and will add an interest to the night that other bird voices give to the day. But if the owl interferes with other song birds? Well, it is mostly after mice and prefers them when it can get them; besides Martins, and other birds that can be coaxed into boxes, are probably safe inside when the owl is hunting. I would really hate to have to choose between a Screech Owl and the other birds—Martin colony excepted of course. Almost any one can have wrens and swallows in the garden, but the presence of a Screech Owl gives a cachet of distinction that I would hesitate to relinquish. To fall asleep at night to the love making song of the Screech Owl, to be awakened in the morning by the pleasant gurgles of Purple Martins and pass the day to the songs of wrens and voices

of Tree Swallows makes a modern commonplace garden approach in some degree at least that from which we are supposed to have fallen.

SPARROW HAWK.

The Sparrow Hawk is hardly to be classed as an inhabitant of the garden. The smallest of our hawks, scarcely larger than a robin, and the brightest coloured of all our raptorial birds, the blue blood of the falcons runs through its veins. Such a bird cannot be expected to confine itself to the formal restrictions of suburban life. Its home is the open fields, and there it combats grasshoppers and mice in true knightly fashion. Its chateau is in some high flung limb of a tall dead tree. As a nobleman of the old regime it cannot be expected to descend to the manual labour of the carpenter's and mason's trade, but inherits its residence from that useful commoner the Flicker, in whose abandoned or pre-empted stronghold it raises the cadets of its line. With all its nobility or perhaps because of it the Sparrow Hawk is still man's humble though often misjudged friend and it slays the grasshoppers and small mammal dragons of husbandry without let or stint. Though in the east there is probably little need to erect special quarters for it, as its natural habitat is still well supplied with suitable stubs, on the prairies of the west such accommodation is lacking, and it is often driven by necessity to occupy such prosaic sites as telegraph poles. Think how hard pressed a noble falcon must be to descend to such plebeian usage; but *noblesse oblige*, and for the sake of the family line pride is swallowed. In such localities it is a sentimental and esthetic as well as an economic duty to provide this brave little fellow with facilities in keeping with his needs and traditions. The Berlepsch house is the best type and it should be erected as high as possible, over or near what shrubbery is available.

