

Joe the Fox

by SPECIAL CONSTABLE J. S. JENKINS

The raison d'être of hens is primarily to lay eggs; here, however, they help catch a poaching miscreant. Fowl play!

IN Prince Edward Island all poachers are not named Joe; nor are all Joes poachers. It is merely coincidence that 'Joe the Fox' bears the same monicker as 'Joe the Poacher'.*

Both men had one thing in common; each was on my books for a considerable time before being liquidated. True enough, Joe the Poacher presented quite a problem; but this was nothing compared to my difficulties in apprehending Joe the Fox.

The Fox lived with his father and an aged uncle on a lonely third-grade road at the head of St Peter Lake. The lake's outlet is in the north of the province. From here it runs approximately two miles inland to a shallow cove within seventy-five yards of Joe's barn. I named the cove after Joe.

The lake was a favourite breeding-ground for black ducks. After the birds learned to fly, they seemed, for some unknown reason, unwilling to leave Joe's cove. Like Murphy's pool-room, the place was a regular hang-out. Choice flocks of black ducks favoured the shallows in the dawn or dusk of late-summer days. The heavy blueberry barrens that lined the east side of the lake provided an ideal feeding-ground for the birds; often hundreds of ducks could be seen working diligently to fill their crops.

Although Joe had been poaching for some time he was brought to my attention first in 1935. He shot a quacker belonging to a resident of the district. That was a mistake—a bad mistake—for Joe.

"This Joe," the quacker-owner complained, "is bad for the ducks. He don't raise any on his farm. When he wants one, he shoots it; but he shouldn't have shot my quacker." (English 'call ducks' are generally known as quackers and were employed as live decoys before the practice became illegal).

I examined Joe's cove closely; it was a natural poaching site. A thick growth of fir and spruce lined the banks; and a path from Joe's barn ended in a natural blind. It was a simple matter for Joe to stroll down to the cove at dawn or dusk, make himself comfortable, and pick his shot—simple as falling off a log.

I thought it would be just as simple to bag Joe. But I was mistaken. August dawns broke sublimely on St Peter Lake. Ducks tipped up and gabbled in Joe's cove. And I grew more and more impatient as I waited for the thrill of an easy capture. The setting assumed a sameness. Dawns, ducks, smoke from Joe's chimney curling lazily above the tree tops into the clear air, sounds of activity in the farm-yard; but no gunfire, no unusual disturbance . . . no Joe.

After each failure the bitter thought crossed my mind that another negative patrol must be written off.

I never showed myself near the cove. Later I learned that Joe was totally unaware of my interest in him. During my many forays I discovered much about my poaching friend. He never indulged in his 'marketing' oftener than twice a week, and in some instances cut it down to once. Apparently he was not a union man; for he worked either in early morning or late evening. No consistency

*An account of 'Joe the Poacher's' activities was contained in the January, 1940, *Quarterly*, page 246.—Ed.