

Protection of Hawks and Owls

Recent trends toward general protection of all hawks and owls indicate an increasing awareness of the unsound practice of classifying any form of wildlife as "harmful." The States of Connecticut, Michigan, and Indiana now protect all species of hawks and owls except when doing specific damage. (Copies of a detailed survey of recent protection laws by K. D. Morrison may be obtained from the National Audubon Society, 1130 Fifth Avenue, New York 28, New York at 10c each, 3 for 25c, or 10 for 50c) These new laws are an encouraging sign of progress in public education and should stimulate us to increase our efforts to bring about similar changes locally. The following digest of an article that appeared in *The Minnesota Naturalist* (Vol. III, No. 3, March, 1953) describes one landowner's attitude toward these birds — we hope many readers will agree with his philosophy.

A Digest of "BANDITS OF THE PINE BARRENS"

By Herman J. Brown

For fourteen years Herman J. Brown raised turkeys and chickens on a farm on the banks of the St. Croix River near Grantsburg, Wisconsin. The farm reached back into the Jack Pine Barrens, two or three hundred square miles dominated by jack pine and scrub oak, with a belt of deciduous forest covering the river lowland. The proximity of this wild area, with its full quota of hawks and owls, gave Mr. Brown an opportunity to work out the relationship between domestic poultry and the various predatory birds.

The farm buildings were grouped on the river bank, just between the pines and the deciduous trees, and the laying flock of turkeys, from December to May, was penned nearby. Young poults were kept in runs until they were six to eight weeks old. Then they were transferred to portable roosts, roofed but open on three sides, and allowed to range in the clearings that lay beyond a belt of woods, a quarter to half a mile away. The turkeys were moved

about on these ranges until late November or early December, when the unmarketed birds and breeding flock were moved once more to pens near the buildings. This routine exposed at least some of the birds to predation throughout the year.

Hawks and owls were common in the area. Brown saw and positively identified the Goshawk, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Marsh Hawk, Bald Eagle, Sparrow Hawk, Screech Owl, Saw-whet Owl, Short-eared Owl, Northern Barred Owl, Snowy Owl, Great Horned Owl.

Of the resident predatory birds, some species were more harmful than others to the operations of the poultry farm. Ravens were uncommon visitors and never approached the domestic birds, but crows were plentiful and during some years raided the turkeys' nests persistently. Losses from crows amounted to five or six dollars a year.

The Bald Eagle, Osprey, Marsh Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk and Broad-winged Hawk did not interfere with the poultry. As might be expected, however, the accipiters displayed a different attitude, all the members of this group showing an interest in the turkeys and chickens. Perhaps because it was present in fewer numbers, the Sharp-shinned Hawk never actually took a bird, although it was seen hovering over the screen porches on which the young turks were running. The Cooper's Hawk, which appeared in the neighborhood two or three times a week during the spring and summer, was caught killing turkeys only twice during the fourteen years. On both occasions the individual hawk returned once or twice to kill another bird and was shot. No chickens were taken, and the loss for the fourteen years totalled five, seven or eight-week-old turkeys, valued at about ten dollars.

The Goshawk, which occurred in the area only in the winter when the turkeys were well grown, was known to upset the flock by swooping upon them, but never attacked. It did, however, take chickens if they were not penned early in the