

about twenty-six inches across built at the base of three large limbs and against the tree trunk about twenty feet up in an Aspen Poplar which would measure about fourteen inches at the base. One Great Gray Owl was sitting on the nest, and the mate on a limb close by. When I was about twenty yards from the tree with the nest, the owl sitting on the limb lowered its wings, ruffled its feathers and started to snap its beak. The owl on the nest did not leave. There was no way to climb the tree to see whether there were eggs or young. Since spring work had started on the land, I did not get back to visit the nest again.

The nest tree was located in a small poplar bluff with trees of varying sizes, surrounded by a thick stand of spruce. The poplar and spruce together covered five acres, an area surrounded on three sides by open meadows. The protection offered by the bluff, and the plentiful supply of mice in the meadows nearby, made this an ideal nesting site.

All my observations of the Great Gray Owl prompt me to say, to farmers in particular, and to all wildlife lovers and big game hunters—do not kill this owl; it should be fully protected.

FURTHER REPORTS OF GREAT GRAY OWLS

By Maurice G. Street, Nipawin

With a number of reports of Great Owls coming in this year, I believe you will be interested in the following. In November (1959) Miss Ann Matthews of Nipawin saw four Great Gray Owls in a distance of one mile while driving north of the C. Stuart Francis farm at Torch River. They were all seen sitting on tree stumps quite close to the road. Also in November, Walter and Billy Matthews came upon a Great Gray caught in a trapper's mink-set, while hunting along the Torch River. This bird was removed from the trap, one damaged leg was amputated, and the bird was then released in quite good condition. The Matthews also saw another Great Gray in December, in the same general region.

On November 20, 1939, I saw my first Great Gray Owl (in the wild state) 14 miles northeast of Nipawin. This one was also sitting on a tall tree stub overlooking an unharvested grain field. The time was late afternoon. Then on December 17, shortly after dark, one sat for a time on my television antenna which is 65 feet above ground level. I saw it quite clearly in the beam of my flashlight.

When I was speaking to Louis Aasen, a trapper in the Mossy River area, recently, he told me large owls were very abundant along the Mossy River north of the Torch River. These owls may have been Great Horned Owls or Great Grays, or both. Great Horned Owls are very scarce here about Nipawin and along the Torch. There are great numbers of the Snowshoe Rabbit throughout this entire region.

Editor's Note: Note also C. Stuart Francis' record of the Great Gray Owl at Spruce Dale Farm (Torch River, Sask.) on page 3 of this issue.

CONTROL OF MAGPIES BY GREAT HORNED OWLS

The role of the Great Horned Owl in controlling magpie populations is shown in a recent study of magpie ups and downs made in Montana by Dr. John Craighead, Leader of the Montana Co-operative Wildlife Research Unit (Robert L. Brown. Magpie ups and downs. Montana Fish and Game Dept. Info. Bull.#3, not dated). The extent of predation by Great Horned Owls was studied by tethering young owls on the ground below their nests. Both adult birds continued to feed and protect their young; hence food remains and pellets could be examined to see what the young owls had been fed. In this way it was found that 57 magpies were included in the food items of eight young owls during three weeks of the nesting season (1956, 1957). Few people appreciate the role Great Horned Owls play in reducing annual magpie surpluses. [Ed.]