

Toronto Field Naturalists' Club

May Meeting

Monday, May 7th, 1956, at 8:15 p.m.

at the

ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

This will be the annual meeting of the Club, and also members' night. The programme will consist of fifteen minute talks by several members of the Club, and a short report of the year's activities of the Juniors, given by Mrs. Mary Robson.

"Helicoptering in the Mackenzie Mountains" - illustrated with colour slides. Walter M. Tovell - Vice-President

"Orchids of Ontario" - colour slides by members of the Botany Group of the T.F.N.C.

Report on the Junior Field Naturalists
by Mrs. Mary Robson

"A Glimpse of African Animals" - illustrated with colour slides. Mr. & Mrs. H. T. Airey

"Birds of Seven Islands" (St. Lawrence River, Que.)
A motion picture by Alf. Bunker

SPRING OUTINGS

Details of all outings for the remainder of the season will be found in the Spring Outing folder. Additional copies may be obtained from the Secretary on request.

NATURE STUDY CAMP

If you are considering attending the F.O.N. Nature Study Camp, from June 30 to July 14 at Billie Bear, Huntsville, may we urge you to send in your application at once. The registrations are coming in well, and we should not like to have to turn anyone away through lack of room.

The fiscal year of this Club runs from September through to June. Anyone who wishes to do so may send in their 1956-57 fees now. The fees are still \$2.00.

John Mitchele,
President.

Mrs. J. B. Stewart
21 Millwood Road,
Secretary.

Toronto Field Naturalists' Club.



NEWSLETTER

Number 140.

April, 1956

BIRDERS' LUCK*

We were going to drive to Florida, Mrs. Outram and I, and right through the chain of keys or islands, to the City of Key West. Birding? Well, perhaps; but not as a first consideration. What we wanted was rest, leisurely driving, stopping when and where we felt inclined and long hours in bathing suits on ocean beaches. We had planned and arranged for a couple of years, for this trip, which should have started in December, 1955. Due to illness, we did not leave Toronto until January 20th of this year. We took Peterson's Field Guide to the Birds and no other bird book. We each took our binoculars and agreed to look at birds when convenient, but to make no special effort to find them. If we chanced upon three or four dozen species, all to the good, but bird watching as strenuously practised by some of our friends at present, and by us in the past was not for this trip.

Did we carry out our resolution to take it easy? We certainly did, but nevertheless we had most interesting avian experiences. We had already watched birds from Colorado to the Coast of Maine and from Lake of the Woods to Louisiana, but never before had we seen so many species and so many individual birds

Ed. Note: This article is the report by Mr. Alan Outram of a recent trip to Florida, taken for a rest, but nonetheless highly productive of fascinating sights, as the reader will discover. The Newsletter is delighted to have this contribution.

in an equivalent length of time, with so little effort. From dozens of Purple Gallinules to quite literally thousands of Snowy and American Egrets, we saw, or could have seen, most of our species from our car while on paved roads. Perhaps an account of our experiences with some of the rare and unusual birds may interest the readers of the Newsletter.

During our six weeks trip we spent fifteen lovely leisurely days on the Keys, with our headquarters at the town of Tavernier. About three miles to the south, on Plantation Key, the main highway runs beside huge mud flats surrounded on three sides by trees. We stopped here on quite a few occasions, as this was a popular morning feeding ground for many species of birds. They could be observed between 7.30 and 9 a.m. while we sat in the car parked on the shoulder of the road. Imagine a list one morning of 133 gorgeous pink Roseate Spoonbills, 25 White Ibis, 6 American Egrets, 12 Reddish Egrets, 12 Louisiana Herons, 1 Ward's Great Blue Heron, 1 Snowy Egret, 2 Greater Yellow-legs, plus many Cormorants, Brown Pelicans and Redbreasted Mergansers. All of these were in front of us at the same time, many quite close.

Interesting as this was to us, our highlight of the day was a flock of six white-crowned Pigeons which alighted on a tree at the edge of the mud flat. These birds are perhaps slightly bigger than our Mourning Dove. They are completely dark except for a pure white crown. Their range in the United States is confined to the Keys and the southern tip of the mainland, but only as a rule during the summer. Bob Allen of the National Audubon Society, who lives in Tavernier, told us that never before have they been recorded on the Keys in winter. Why they stayed, or returned early, no one knows. We were just fortunate to see them.

The Great White Heron is the largest American heron, with the most limited range of any. It is found, except for strays, only on the Keys and the extreme southern part of the Florida mainland. It is a spectacular bird, with all features white, and distinguished from the American Egret by its larger size and greenish-yellow legs. The American Egret has black legs. Alexander Sprunt, famous ornithologist of Charleston, South Carolina, believed in 1935 that it was reduced in number to about 150 individuals. While protection has permitted it greatly to increase, it is still far from common. Up to February 8th we had seen only seven and they were all on Keys far out in the Gulf of Mexico from the mainland, reached by boat, and even then identified only with the aid of binoculars.

On this day we were parked on Indian Key. This is a small, narrow island with the highway running down the centre, the

Atlantic on one side and the Gulf of Mexico on the other, each being about fifty yards from the road. There is plenty of room for cars to park in the shade of cocoanut palms beside either body of water. We were resting here until we were hungry enough to eat our picnic lunch. I noticed a white wader standing in the Atlantic a few feet from shore and supposed it to be just another American Egret. Then some fisherman roared past it with a small boat and an outboard motor. This disturbed the bird, but only enough for it to fly further along the shore and alight in shallow water much closer to us. Then we noted, without needing field glasses, that it was a Great White Heron. It was quite tame, had found a good feeding place and was staying there in spite of cars going by at all speeds, and picknickers like ourselves roaming about.

I stalked it with camera and took a picture from about thirty feet, just as it flew. The next day we came again to Indian Key, not for the bird but for another rest and picnic. No Great White was to be seen. After being there for an hour, I walked over to a tiny bay, surrounded by mangroves and scared him up. He had been there all the time, with cars whizzing by within fifty feet. He flew to the open water and I stalked him again and this time photographed him at less than twenty feet before he flew. We spent six more days about the Keys and never saw another Great White.

It was Sunday afternoon at Key Haven Motel on Key Largo Key. (How redundant can names get). We were loafing in bathing suits. Word came that we were wanted on the phone at the motel office. We found that it was Mr. George Stevenson calling. George is a resident of the Keys, we had met him by chance a few days before. Not only is he a very fine chap, but he is a good all-round naturalist. He had phoned to say that there was a Cattle Egret beside the main highway, about six or seven miles south of us, and would we like to see it. We said we certainly would and thanked him. Now this was one time, and I think the only time that we really hurried to see a bird.

You will not find the Cattle Egret in Peterson's Field Guide. It is too new to this continent. But Peterson and Fisher, in their delightful and informative recent book, Wild America, devote a chapter to it. This white bird is about the size of and somewhat similar to the Snowy Egret. It appeared in South America about twenty years ago, but no one knows how it got there. It apparently crossed from Africa to South America where the bulge of the continents make the distance comparatively short. A very few years ago it was found, almost simultaneously, in various parts of the United States, singly or in small flocks, one individual even being taken near Newfoundland. This constitutes our only Canadian record. It is still rare and is the greatest ornithological mystery and sensation of recent times. Its usual habitat is in pastures or ranges where it is closely associated with cattle, feeding on insects disturbed by the grazing mammals.

We changed clothes in record time. We drove down the highway; and, wherever the heavy Sunday traffic permitted, we were much in excess of the legal speed limit. (We need not have hurried; the creature stayed put for a week). We found the bird on the extensive grounds of a tourist attraction known as Hidden Treasure Museum. It was eating grasshoppers and paying no attention to pedestrians, or the stream of passing cars. Watching it were Mr. and Mrs. Bob Allen, George Stevenson and Andy Meyerriecks, a Harvard man who is working on feeding habit of herons for his Ph.D. Its method of feeding was most interesting. When it saw an insect in the grass, its head and long-extended neck, and sometimes even its body, wavered, snake-like, before striking abruptly for its prey.

We watched for at least an hour. I remarked that here was the rare Cattle Egret paying no attention to cars and people, and only our small group giving more than a passing glance to it. Said George, in his delightful southern drawl, "Well, you see, they don't know he's rare, and he doesn't know he's wild." Then the others left, but not the bird. We walked to our car. The Egret followed until he was staring at a rear fender from a distance of two feet. Said my wife, "He must think our car is a cow." I chanted, "I never saw a green cow. I never will, I hope." Just then another car passed, very close to us, and frightened our friend. He flew; away? No. Onto the hood of our car. He walked across the windshield wipers and tried to walk up the sloping glass of the windshield and then stayed for a quarter of an hour, digesting grasshoppers. He looked as thoughtful as a bird may. Had he been a mammal I might have said he was as contemplative as Buddha. Needless to say we photographed him in this pose.

It was through George Stevenson that we found the Wurdemann's Heron. George told us that one of these rare birds was frequenting a certain bay between Long and Greyhound Keys. On our next trip over these keys we kept watch for it. The race or sub-species of Great Blue Heron which is native to Florida is called Ward's Great Blue Heron. It is a little bit larger and paler than our race in Ontario, which is the Eastern Great Blue. Now the Wurdemann's is said to be a hybrid between Ward's Great Blue and the Great White. It looks like a great Blue, except that it is said to have a pure white head and to lack the plume. The keys are the only places it frequents and it is not common there.

Although we drove slowly, we did not see it on the way down. "Down" means towards Key West, and "Up" indicates towards Miami, on the Keys although much of the route is east and west. On the way up, that afternoon, we spotted it, just

where George had said. It was on a mud flat, but close to a dense grove of mangroves, and not over one hundred yards from the road. We watched it for ten minutes, at least. We noted that not only was its head white, but all of its long neck was the same colour. We were told later that the neck is not always white. Like the Great White on Indian Key, it had found a place that just suited and there it stayed. The National Audubon Society had discovered the whereabouts of this particular specimen, we found next day, and was making the most of it by having it a regular item on their conducted tours.

After fifteen days on the keys we started north, as there was much of Florida's mainland that we still wanted to see. At noon, one fine day, we arrived at the Town of Clewiston, on the south shore of huge Lake Okeechobee. After lunch we drove about trying to see some smooth-billed Anis. The Ani is an all-black bird about the size of a large grackle but there the similarity ends. It really resembles a cuckoo, to which it is related. It has a long floppy tail and short wings and a ridge on its huge upper mandible. There is no mistaking it, except at a distance when it looks like a Boat-tailed Grackle, for any bird in Florida. The Groove-billed Ani, a different species, with which it might be confused, is found in Texas, but not in Florida.

Peterson, in his Field Guide gives its range as "Occasional visitor to Louisiana and to Florida". About 1937 a flock appeared at Miami Beach, thought to have been blown there from the West Indies by a hurricane. They stayed there for some time. Since then they have occasionally nested in Florida, but Clewiston is the only place where they are known to have taken up permanent residence, and to nest each year. They have a communal nest in which a number of females lay eggs, in more than one layer, with leaves between.

We made enquiries and were directed to some fields in the town and told to watch for them feeding on the ground, but that they might be difficult to see, as the vegetation would partially conceal them. We drove slowly about and found none. We checked in at a motel at the edge of the town, had a rest, and at intervals looked again. Late in the afternoon, we noticed a car being driven slowly along back streets and found that it contained a Mr. and Mrs. Hobbs, who were touring and birding and looking for the same species. They too had been unsuccessful. We went back to our motel and washed up for dinner. As we emerged we found Mr. Hobbs looking for us. He had found them and kindly driven to every motel in Clewiston looking for our Ontario car license. We thanked him profusely. This is almost typical of the Field Glass Fraternity, but we certainly appreciated his kindness.

We went to the place he indicated. Again, no anis. They had moved on, in the interval. It was now time for dinner, which we ate, after which it was too dark for birding.

Check-out time at our motel was 10 a.m. Next morning we decided that if we had no luck by then we would move on. No bird was going to make us stay an extra day anywhere. After breakfast we looked again. No anis. But we did see an Audubon station wagon with the occupants dismounting, armed with binoculars. The driver and guide was a fine chap named Sprunt, son of the previously mentioned Alexander Sprunt. He said to follow him to another part of the town, to a place where these birds nest. This we did, but no luck, so he left with his party and we lingered on. By now I was chanting that very old, once popular song "Annie doesn't live here any more". In about a quarter of an hour he returned at full speed, shouted, "I found them. Follow me", and made off. He led us to and along a road which follows the top of a huge levee at the edge of the lake, leaned out of his station wagon, pointed and kept on going. There were the anis, four of them, quite close, in the tops of trees beside the levee, but in a habitat where they are not usually found. We appreciated Mr. Sprunt's courtesy as much as that of Mr. Hobbs.

It was now about 9.30 a.m. and we started back to the motel to check out. Mrs. Outram said "We have found almost all species by ourselves. Let's look again on the way back." This we did, and sure enough, Mrs. Outram spotted one on the ground, where we had first searched. We stopped and found a pair of them there. We checked out at 10 a.m.

We spent a week at or near Titusville. This town is on the east coast of Florida, and across the St. John's River, by bridge and causeway, one reaches Merritt Island. This is a very large island, with many miles of roads, some excellent citrus groves, much wild country and some fine ocean beaches. It was the last of these we wanted, where we would find few or no people, and bathe and bask. Now Merritt Island is the home of another rare bird, the Dusky Seaside Sparrow. It is found here, and nowhere else in the world, and may number only a few hundred individuals.

It was during our first day in this vicinity that we got lost. We were trying to find a certain beach and ended up in the tiny village of Allenhurst at the north end of the island. We went into a small restaurant, the only one in the village, to get directions and a cup of coffee. When we emerged and were about to enter our car we noticed a small flock of sparrows on the ground nearby. Dusky Seaside Sparrows. They were quite tame and easily identified. They are one of the sharp-tailed sparrows, heavily and darkly streaked. Well, we had

gone out of our way, but not to see them.

We saw many kinds of birds on Merritt Island during the week, including our first Florida or Scrub Jay, a bird found only in Florida, and only in a certain definite type of habitat there. The afternoon of our last day, we remarked that it was a good thing that we had gone to Allenhurst, as we had not seen another sparrow since, except for a very few Chipping Sparrows. We decided to give the trunk and rear seat of our car a much needed housecleaning and repacking, preparatory to continuing north early next morning. At a picnic area, on Merritt Island, just over the bridge from Titusville, we put all our belongings on a big picnic table and swept out the car and repacked. Just as we finished, we noticed four sparrows beside us, apparently feeding on crumbs left by picnickers. English? No! Dusky Seaside Sparrows.

January and February are not good birding months in Florida. It is too early for the waves of spring migrants. But to northerners like ourselves, the regular winter avian residents were of great interest. From the huge Man-O'-War Bird, the Wood Ibis and the Water Turkey, down to the dainty, sparrow-sized Ground Dove and fantastically beautiful Painted Bunting, we saw most of the usual birds. But we feel that in seeing, without much effort, White-Crowned Pigeon, Great White Heron, Cattle Egret, Wurdemann's Heron, Smooth-billed Ani and Dusky Seaside Sparrow, we were particularly fortunate.

(Signed) A. A. Outram

On March 12, 1956, a group of distinguished naturalists, representing the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, the Audubon Society of Canada, and other naturalist organizations, presented once again to the Fish and Game Committee of the Ontario Legislature the case for the protection of hawks and owls,

Dr. J. R. Dymond spoke on behalf of the F.O.N., Professor Baker, of the Ontario Agricultural College, talked from the point of view of an agriculturist, Mr. J. A. Livingston of the Audubon Society of Canada gave an explanation of the model law that was being proposed, Mr. J. L. Baillie of the Royal Ontario Museum talked on the food habits of these birds from a scientific standpoint, and Mr. Greg Clark gave an inspiring general picture in his own inimitable way. As Mr. Livingston described it to me recently, "Everything dovetailed, as you can imagine. The fact that J.R. spoke both as F.O.N. President and a Director of Audubon made it a very tidy cooperative effort".

This is indeed the kind of cooperation that is likely to achieve results in any project. It is, therefore, with this in mind, and in view of the fact that the T.F.N.C. has for many years been actively concerned to urge the protection of hawks and owls in Ontario, that we are pleased to set before the readers of the Newsletter the brief presented by Mr. Livingston as the contribution of the Audubon Society of Canada to this joint effort. It summarizes admirably the arguments placed before the committee, and it contains the model law which was recommended.

This project is one of great interest and moment to the members of this club, and should be supported by them as strongly as possible.

A presentation from the AUDUBON SOCIETY OF CANADA to the
FISH AND GAME COMMITTEE OF THE ONTARIO LEGISLATURE

March 12, 1956

This representation to the Fish and Game Committee of the Ontario Legislature is made in full awareness that such have been made many times before. In the belief, however, that a series of proposals in no way diminishes the virtues of the suit itself, the matter of Ontario's failure to protect the hawks and owls, except for the eagles and osprey, is again brought to the attention of this committee.

In the relatively brief history of wildlife study and scientific wildlife management, few subjects have come under more frequent scrutiny than the predators. This has been the case in this very Committee, and in other groups, of a similar function in other Canadian provinces. We will attempt in this representation to avoid too much ground too often trod, but at the same time we would remind the Committee that this is a question of very great importance, and that the arguments and proposals of such organizations as the Federation of Ontario Naturalists hold no less merit through restatement.

It is generally known, in the light of today's ecological findings, that it is becoming increasingly difficult to classify any living creature as "harmful". Continuing studies of the shifting, delicate structure which is called nature's balance indicate that disturbance of the essential status quo of water and soil and forest and wildlife should not be undertaken without the greatest caution and without proper scientific study.

The role of the predator in nature has been outlined many times, and will not be re-examined in detail. It is sufficient to remind the Committee that predation is only one of the many controls that nature exercises over all things living in the wild. It is one of the vital cogs in the Swiss-watch mechanism that guarantees a healthy economy in stream and field and forest. In the words of Harold Mayfield, "We are coming to appreciate more fully that every wild creature has its place (even with man on the scene) and that, by attempting to alter the natural relationships among wild creatures, we are tampering with a complex mechanism, where our fumbling efforts may be harmful, not only to the best interest of wildlife but to our own as well". Such things are well known to this committee, but are underscored at this time to re-emphasize the present importance of our maintaining an open, unbiased and intelligent view of natural predation.

That hawks and owls of many species are indeed to be actively encouraged will not be news to this Committee. The buteos, our wide-winged soaring hawks, are among the best friends the farmer has. Their rodent-destroying propensities are well known to nearly everyone, and if we require more tangible proof we need only refer to Taverner's "Birds of Canada". The history of mouse control which it is possible to read in Taverner's work is proof positive, and the point need not be labored.

Taverner used his series of stomach-content analyses to draw a number of conclusions which he summarized under the heading of "economic status", which it was popular then to

call it, for each bird. This was a revelutionary and forward step at the time, for if proof were needed, it graphically and dramatically illustrated the tremendous positive value of the buteos in particular, and certain owls, to Canadian agriculture. This was, let us say, two decades ago, and no doubt it opened a great many minds which had always unthinkingly condemned the so-called "chicken hawk". There is, of course, no such bird. References to this mythical creature are often traceable to an inoffensive red-tailed or red-shouldered hawk. Taverner's "economic status" was a significant contribution to conservation progress in Canada.

But it had its drawbacks. Although it could prove beyond question the incalculable value of the buteos and many others, it could not, unfortunately, show certain other predators in anything but an unfavorable light. For example, the stomach of a goshawk would contain game birds, perhaps, and the stomach of a Cooper's hawk, songbirds. But in order to prove his case in point for the buteos, which was so necessary at the time, Taverner had no alternative but to let his stomach analyses of the accipiters and the horned owl, for instance, speak for themselves. And that they did, eloquently. That was as far as it went.

This Committee knows that a great deal of time has elapsed since these stomach analyses were carried out, and we know a great deal more today than we did even a very few years ago. But it has been a continuous struggle to eradicate the unfortunate stigma that these early investigations attached to certain birds of prey. We know today that regardless of its habits it is no easy matter to arbitrarily classify any animal as either harmful or beneficial. Nothing in nature seems to be that simple. We have a structure in nature of the most terrifying complexity, with interdependencies so delicate that to pigeon-hole or categorize any single element is well-nigh impossible.

The bird enters, let us call them, such as the goshawk and Cooper's and sharp-shin, have evolved to play their own specialized role in the natural scheme of things. Certainly under natural conditions these creatures do take birds. So does the great horned owl, upon occasion. There is no argument on that point. But that is exactly what they are meant to do. Any biologist will tell you that the accipiters and others are the most efficient natural controls possible. That is why they exist. They have been devised for the good of the wildlife community - for the good of the species preyed upon. This Committee does not need to be reminded that any species, no matter how desirable on the surface, can without control become too abundant for its own good and for the good of its fellow creatures. We are possibly inclined to forget that ever since the beginning of time, there have always been game birds, as well as birds of prey. In days gone by, as

you will read in the literature, there were more game birds - many more. And there were many more birds of prey as well.

And the same is true of songbirds. Surpluses of these smaller birds are continually being cropped by the birds of prey and other predators. Populations of all wild creatures, as this Committee very well knows, are tied rigidly to available food supply. Without control of a given species, no matter what the species, any increase beyond the capacity of food supply is a guarantee of doom for the surplus. The predator helps to ensure that this situation does not come about, for starvation and disease would be the alternatives. The ideal population is closely attended to by the predatory species. These matters are known to the Committee, but are brought out here to lead us to the present submission.

If we agree, and agree we must, that in the wild the predators are essential and irreplaceable elements in the natural scheme of things, we must agree as well that their continued persecution and continued lack of legal protection would be, at a future time, detrimental to the welfare of associated wildlife. Indeed, to phrase it differently, we must agree that if we protect the hawk or owl, we are actually doing a service to the species it preys upon, because trained and experienced ecologists tell us that the predator is actually believed to tone up the vitality of the stock he preys upon, by the simple expedient of cropping off the less well-equipped or weaker individuals, helping to guarantee a perpetually healthy and vigorous breeding population.

All the foregoing, of course, concerns itself with natural, or wild conditions. Under these circumstances, the balance within the wildlife community looks after itself, provided the various components are unmolested. But there are various unnatural conditions which the presence of man has occasioned, and in man's best interests there are times when intervention is indicated. The most obvious of these is in the case of the poultry farm, or the farm or other property on which poultry are kept.

The question might be raised here that we have omitted one of the midway unnatural conditions, namely the desire of man to crop off his own share of the surplus of certain game birds. Our earlier comments about natural populations would seem to answer this. Competition between man and the predator for the game species is very probably much less significant than we may have thought in the past. Scientists tell us that the population of predatory animals is kept in very close harmony with the population of the preyed upon, and the more abundant the one is, so it is with the other. The question of competition between man and the natural predator may have been exaggerated.

There is no reason to believe that if the birds of prey were drastically reduced there would of necessity be an accompanying

increase in the population of game birds. In some areas, quite the reverse has been the case. Certainly serious diminution of the rodent-eating hawks has been accompanied by an abrupt drop in other bird populations. And we should not forget that there is a major segment of our own population which is composed of people who cherish the privilege of watching a grouse or a pheasant or an owl or a hawk, merely for the pleasure which the sight of a wild and perfect creature can bring to the observer. We would do well to remember that very few people are scientists, and relatively few are regularly active hunters. But a great many thrill to a glimpse of unspoiled nature.

Predators kill in order to survive, to fulfill their purpose and their destiny. They are beautiful and fascinating features of the natural landscape. For this alone they deserve guardianship.

Let us return to the only truly artificial situation which can have any major significance, the farm. There are times when depredations will be made upon poultry by birds of prey. When this happens, it must be stopped, and sometimes the only answer will be the drastic one. Keeping poultry properly penned is a help, of course. But offsetting the occasional losses of poultry are the many benefits every farmer derives from the presence on his property of a pair of soaring buteos - red-tailed hawks, for example. The quantities of crop-damaging mice they consume over a year are astronomical, and farmers who realize this are quick to encourage them. There are, of course, a few species which do occasional harm, and these represent the crux of the whole predator question.

In the belief that sportsmen, farmers, and general public alike appreciate the immense value, both material and aesthetic, of the vast majority of our predatory birds, the Audubon Society of Canada recommends that:

In Ontario, every hawk and owl should be protected, except that the owner of poultry or other domestic animals and the members of his immediate household and his bona fide employee may destroy by shooting any hawk or owl which is doing real damage to the said poultry or other domestic animals.

The implications of this proposal are obvious. When such a law has been enacted in Ontario, it will mean that the interests of the individual farmer or landowner or occupant are protected at all times against those few birds of prey which might attack his poultry. It will also mean that the birds of prey themselves, which an ever-increasing majority of our population understand and value, will be protected from persecution. Thirdly, it will mean that an enlightened Ontario

will be helping to assure itself of a perpetually healthy and thriving natural scene. It will also mean that the obviously invaluable mousers among the hawks and owls will be guarded against the shooter who mistakes them for "chicken hawks". And Ontario farms and the outdoors generally will profit from an up-to-date, realistic attitude on the part of its legislators.

No thoughtful person, it is submitted, could fail to appreciate the wisdom of protecting the beautiful birds of prey, except on an occasion involving specific damage to poultry. This is the only instance where their activities could possibly be harmful to man. Game birds and other wild-fowl cannot be construed as being the property of anyone save the public at large. Indeed they are the property, or rather the privilege, of everyone - hunters, naturalists, farmers, and public generally - but not that of any one individual or group of individuals. Man's proprietary interest in those birds which are not birds of prey can perhaps extend itself out of proportion. We should leave to the wild those things which arrange themselves best without our intervention, including natural predation. It follows that it should indeed be illegal to destroy any hawk or owl not in the act of committing specific damage upon poultry.

It is the opinion of biologists and naturalists in Ontario that this province is a full generation behind the times in matters of this kind. Ontario, though in the vanguard of Canadian provinces in so many respects, is well back in the rank and file in terms of treatment of the birds of prey. Although no Canadian province has yet adopted the ideal legislation in the precise form herein recommended (though it exists, in varied terms, in many of the United States), there are three which are notably advanced: Nova Scotia, Manitoba and Alberta. In Nova Scotia, all hawks and owls are protected except the goshawk, sharp-shinned hawk and great horned owl. In Manitoba, all hawks and owls are protected except the goshawk, sharp-shinned hawk and snowy owl. In Alberta, all hawks and owls are protected except the golden eagle. Ontario ranks third last among the ten provinces. This is no credit to Ontario, but can easily be corrected.

It is interesting to note that very recently certain factions in Alberta have sought to have the law altered to reopen legal shooting of hawks and owls. The Government of Alberta, to its very great credit, has a most realistic and intelligent appreciation of the predation factor in nature, and despite misguided pressure in recent weeks, contemplates no change in its existing legislation. During the recent discussions, two of the most emphatic defenders of the birds of prey, and the existing law, have been the two major farm organizations in the province, the Alberta Federation of Agriculture and the Farmers' Union of Alberta.

In summation, let it be said that the submission to this Committee on the part of the Audubon Society of Canada is as follows: that the hawks and owls of this province have for many years been subjected to savage and unreasoning persecution, and that they have suffered seriously from lack of legal protection; that the natural role of our birds of prey, in the light of the modern study of ecology, is of very great importance to the general well-being of the wildlife community; that Ontario should forthwith correct this most regrettable gap in its wildlife legislation.

Ontario must cease to condone the
destruction of one of its most
valuable and most interesting forms
of wildlife.

At the 1955 meeting of the Fish and Game Committee of the Ontario Legislature, similar representations to the foregoing were made by the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, representing thirty-two member clubs in the province, supported by the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters and the Conservation Council of Ontario, and are being made by the Federation again today. Since 1932, many such representations have been made, by a wide and varied list of individuals and organizations. In full cooperation with these organizations, the Audubon Society of Canada, on behalf of Ontario's forward-looking naturalists, sportsmen and general public, urges the Fish and Game Committee to make its prompt and favorable recommendation to the Legislature of Ontario.