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* KNOW IOWA HAWKS *
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Only Six of the 73 Kinds of
Hawks and Owls
Are Destructive and Injurious.

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"Only six of the 73 species and subspecies of hawks and owls of the United States are injurious. Of these, three are so extremely rare they need hardly be considered, and another (the fish hawk) is only indirectly injurious, leaving but two (the Sharp-shinned hawk and Cooper's hawk) that really need be taken into account as enemies of agriculture. Omitting the six species that feed largely on poultry and game, 2,212 stomachs were examined, of which 56% contained mice and other small mammals, 27 contained insects, and ONLY 3½ PER CENT POULTRY OR GAME BIRDS."

The foregoing statement is made by Dr. C. Hart Merriam in a letter of transmittal in Dr. Fisher's "Hawks and Owls of the United States" and will prove astonishing to many who have hitherto looked upon the birds of prey as one and all worthy of destruction. Stoddard, because of his interest in quail, and whose observations and deductions on destructive hawks are worthy of consideration, says: "In considering bird enemies of quail one naturally thinks of hawks and owls, and many assume that if these were all killed off quail would thrive. This is far from the truth for many of these birds are actually beneficial rather than harmful to quail interests as a rule, thanks to their wholesale destruction of creatures that eat quail or quail eggs. For instance, there is ample scientific basis for classing Red-tailed, Red-shouldered, and Marsh hawks as mainly beneficial, for all are eaters of snakes, rodents, and others that prey on quail to an extent that more than offsets the damage the hawks themselves do to these game birds."

"The majority of the game birds caught by the slow soaring hawks are sound, diseased, or otherwise defective individuals that react slowly to danger. Although we can give the bulk of the hawk tribe a "clean bill of health" we cannot do it for all, for Cooper's and Sharp-shinned hawks, fast-flying, bird-killing species, commonly known as "blue darters" or "blue tails" may be rightly classed as the most destructive of all known quail enemies.

Sparrow Hawk Best Known

Phil. A. Du Mont, ornithologist, Des Moines, an authority on hawks, furnishes the following information regarding hawks which are not destructive in nature. Mr. Du Mont says:

"Of the nine or ten hawks found more or less commonly in Iowa, no doubt the best known is the small Sparrow hawk, frequently seen poised in mid-air, with wings fluttering, watching for grasshoppers or mice on which to plunge. This hawk, hardly larger than a Blue Jay, is our most common and one of the most beneficial.

"The Red-tailed hawk, Red-shouldered hawk and Broad-winged hawk are well known, large, conspicuous hawks, frequently but incorrectly referred to as "chicken hawks" or "hen hawks". These birds found perched in tops of trees or seen circling in slow spirals out over the fields may be recognized by the broad expanse of wings and shorter fan-shaped tails. These hawks feed almost entirely on rats, mice, snakes and larger insects. Occasionally during the breeding season chickens or game birds are taken for feeding nestling birds, but this is over-balanced by the rats and mice killed by them.

"The Marsh hawk in either the gray plumage of the adult

or the brown of females or young is a conspicuous long, narrow-winged and long, straight-tailed bird, always with a white patch at the base of the tail. It finds its food of rats and mice by "beating" low over the meadows and marshes.

"The Osprey or "Fish hawk" is found about the rivers and lakes. Its conspicuous black and white plumage and long, flapping wings serve to distinguish it.

"The Turkey Vulture or "Buzzard" is too well known as a scavenger to need comment. The unfeathered red head may be noted, if the bird is seen nearby, but at any distance the Vulture may be recognized in flight by the characteristic tipped-up wings forming a wide "V".

"Of the three remaining, the Cooper's hawk and Sharp-shinned hawk are the best known, while some winters the larger Goshawk may come down from the north in numbers. In the intervening years it may be lacking entirely or rarely seen. These three are responsible for the greater share of the blame placed upon hawks in general for the destruction of poultry."

How To Identify Destructive Hawks

In order that farmers and sportsmen may identify these destructive species of hawks, the following descriptions are given in the hope that such descriptions may serve as an adequate method of identification:

COOPER'S HAWK --Familiarly known as a "Blue darter" and classed with the Goshawk and the Sharp-shinned hawk in its destructive power to upland game birds.

Courses over the country at great speed and captures its prey by sudden darts, usually from concealment in trees. "Blue

darters" have long tails, but should not be confused with Marsh hawk, who flies slowly and may be recognized by his white rump. The "darter" group often take their prey in full flight. This hawk is preeminently a "chicken hawk". It is said by some to be strong enough to carry away a full-sized chicken, grouse, or rabbit. It is medium sized, slaty or brownish in color, with long, rounded tail, streaked or barred beneath. Usually found in second-growth timber, among the scattered trees of brush-grown pastures, in the vicinity of streams and sloughs. It is conceded generally by ornithologists that Cooper's hawk may well be reduced in numbers. Some feel that it should not be exterminated altogether. But it is of the greatest importance that those who attempt to reduce its numbers be able to distinguish its nests, eggs and young.

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK -- Sometimes known as "Little Chicken hawk" and Slate-Colored hawk". This hawk is small, slender-legged, brownish or slate colored, with rounded wings and long, square-tipped tail. Usually seen along hedges and the brushy margins of timber lands, pursuing small birds. Flight feathers barred with dusky color. Below, heavily barred with reddish buff on a white background. Common in all parts of Iowa, especially during spring and fall migrations. Do not soar like the larger "buzzard hawks", but fly with short, quick wing strokes at no great height. Exceedingly alert, and depending on their slyness and dash in capturing prey. Call is similar to that of the Cooper's hawk. This hawk feeds largely on small birds, many of which are seed eaters.

GOSHAWK -- Sometimes known as the Big Blue Hen hawk, Big Blue Chicken hawk,. Closely related to the Cooper's hawk and the Sharp-shinned hawks, but much more powerful than either, and also bolder and more daring in pursuit of its prey. It is slate colored and

with a dark crown; grayish below; tail long and wings rounded. Large powerful feet. Found in Iowa in late fall, winter and spring. It is ordinarily only a rare visitor. It has a white line above and behind the eye. Tail has five indistinct dark bars. Below, everywhere barred closely with slate-gray and white, the feathers showing black shaft-lines. Found in or near timber, although it comes to the farm-yard fearlessly in search of poultry. Evidence gathered shows that this species is extremely destructive.

Compiled by H. J. Metcalf, Director of Information, State Fish & Game Commission, from FARMERS' BULLETIN, No. 497, U. S. Dept. Agriculture; Iowa Geological Survey Bulletin, No. 6; Iowa Birds of Prey, 1918; and from information furnished by Phil A. Du Mont, ornithologist, Des Moines, an authority on hawks.