

IOWA CONSERVATIONIST

VOLUME 2

OCTOBER 15, 1943

NUMBER 10

Museum Director Writes Interestingly Of Shore Birds

By JACK W. MUSGROVE

Museum Director

State Dept. History and Archives

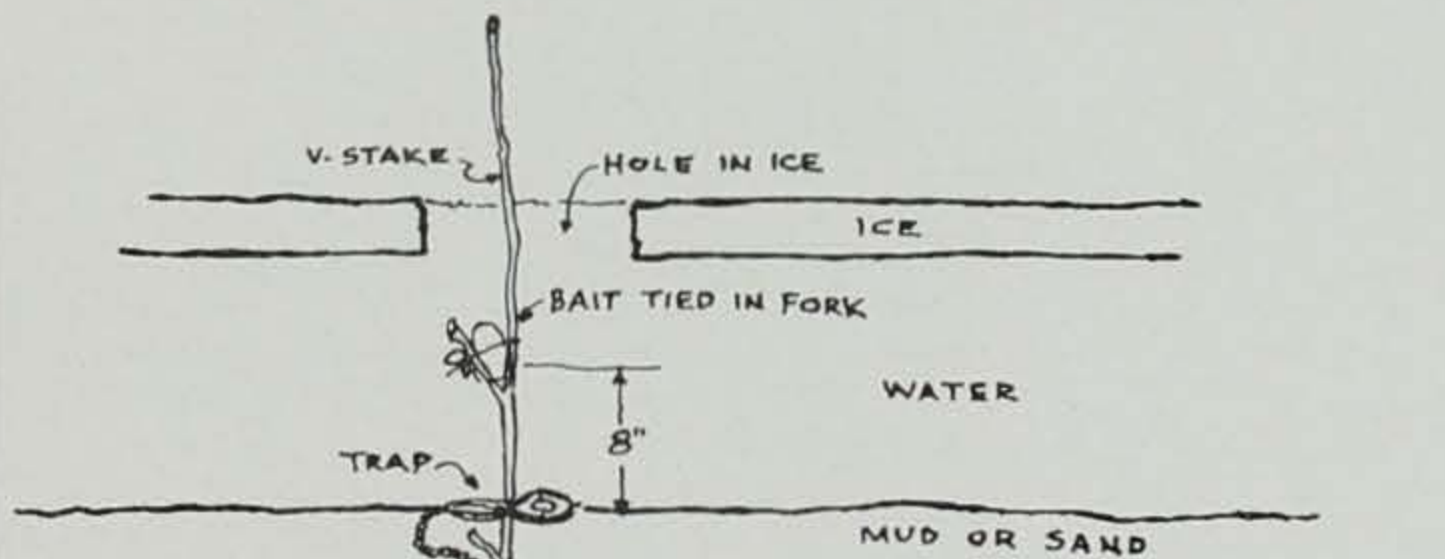
Within a few years after the disappearance of the large flocks of passenger pigeons that formerly shut out the sun as they migrated to the Michigan woods where they nested by the countless millions, the disappointed market hunters looked for another source of game that might be easily secured in order to supply the markets with barrel upon barrel of the bodies of edible wild fowl. They found this in the numerous flocks of golden plovers, Eskimo curlews, and other shore birds that in some areas rivaled the passenger pigeon in abundance.

Such was probably the case in many of the prairie regions of Iowa when countless numbers of golden plovers, their black breasts shining in the sun, wheeled in unison over their fallen comrades, only to have 20 or 30 of their number drop at each blast of the muzzle-loading shotgun. So numerous were they that a thousand or more was a common bag in a day, and Audubon, saddened by the sight, recorded a group of hunters who bagged 48,000 in a single day. Not for long were the ranks of the plover able to stand this bombardment, and within a few years they dwindled until public-minded citizens, remembering what had happened to the passenger pigeon, were able to pass laws giving the shore birds protection.

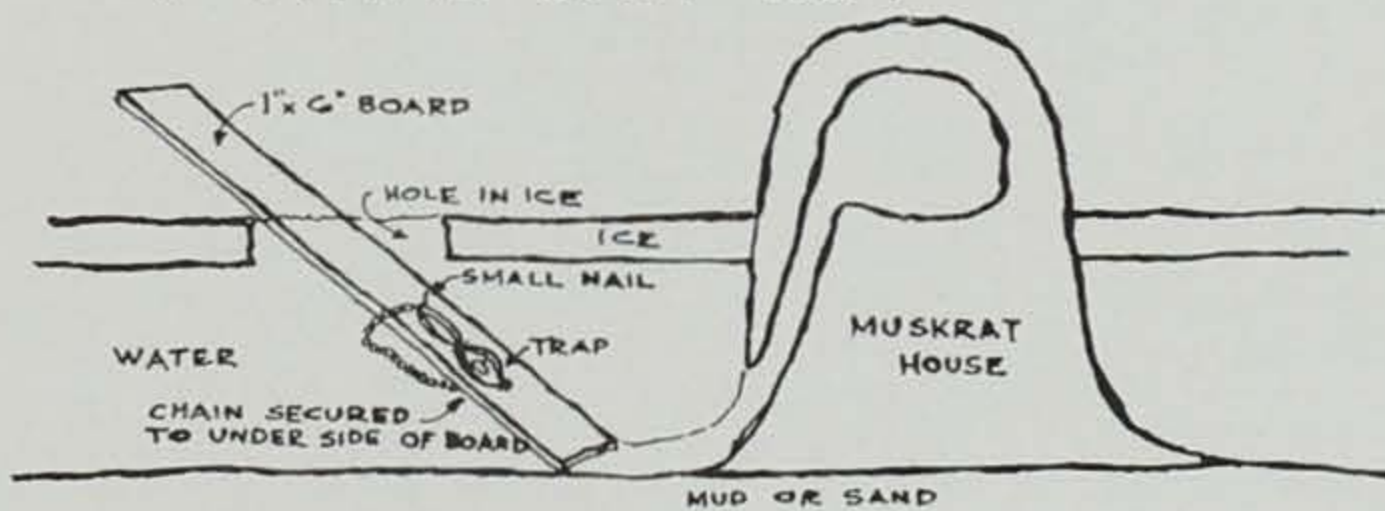
Even then their number was continually decreasing, partly because the first game laws were poorly enforced and most people still considered wild game a resource that could not be exhaust-

(Continued to Page 74, Column 1)

Under-Ice Trapping For Muskrats, Most Valuable Fur-Bearing Animal



V-STAKE BAIT SET



SLANTING BOARD SET

Commonly used under-ice trap sets for muskrats.

Iowa Ornithologists' Union Observes 20th Birthday

By FRED J. PIERCE

Editor of "Iowa Bird Life"

An ornithologist is far from being the dried-up, scientific-minded recluse that he is often pictured. Sometimes his urge for scientific investigation carries him to lengths that are not understood by his neighbors, but he is nevertheless a very human individual who gets a lot of fun out of life.

The word "ornithologist" is difficult to define in terms of the persons who follow the sport of ornithology—or bird study, in popular parlance. The ranks of these people include all types of observers, from the amateur or beginner to the seasoned veteran who has many years of painstaking work behind him.

Speaking in general terms, the ornithologist or bird student has

(Continued to Page 79, Column 1)

Daily Life and Habits of Small Mammal Revealed

By FRANK TELLIER and GLEN YATES

Conservation Officers

Muskrats are the most valuable fur resource in America because of their abundance, wide distribution, and because of the steady demand for their fur. This year muskrats, or marsh rabbits as they are known in the meat markets, will find widespread use as food in many sections of the United States where formerly the flesh was wasted.

These small aquatic mammals are found throughout the state in lakes, marshes, rivers, and creeks—in fact, in almost any location where there is a permanent water supply.

Johnny Muskrat lives in two types of homes, the first a long, upward sloping burrow in the bank of a lake or stream, usually with an under water front door, opening into a living chamber well above the normal high water level. In this chamber the muskrats live.

The second type of dwelling is the so-called house, usually located in shallow water in which there is little or no current. The house is made of marsh vegetation and, like the bank home, has one or more under water entrances and a sloping tunnel that opens into a roomy den above water level.

The muskrat is chiefly a vegetarian, eating a wide variety of plants. When Papa Muskrat tells

(Continued to Page 78, Column 1)

Shore Birds

(Continued from Page 73)

ed. For many years the ranks of the golden plover were so thinned that it was doubtful that the bird would ever make a comeback, but adequate protection has, within recent years, allowed these birds to multiply so that once again during the spring months flocks of golden plovers may be seen in the regions they formerly inhabited, though not in countless numbers as before, for where millions were then found, flocks numbering now a hundred or more may be seen. What a sad remnant of a once great army!

The golden plover is one of the most remarkable birds of this continent, one that makes the longest non-stop migratory flight of any bird, traveling 6,000 miles between its summer and winter home and following a different route each season. From their winter home in South America the birds migrate overland, crossing the Gulf of Mexico, up through the Mississippi valley, to the arctic tundra north of Hudson's Bay and stretching to Alaska. Here, where the snow remains on the ground even during the months of June and July, they spend two short months, courting and raising their young. By August the adult birds leave their young and fly southeast toward Labrador and Nova Scotia, where they congregate, and during the last of that month, head for their winter home across the ocean to South America, 2,400 miles away. The young are left in the Arctic until their flight feathers are fully developed; some may accompany late flocks of adults, but the greater portion of these young birds will pursue their way to South America by a leisurely flight following the same route as the adults did during the spring. Often they are still in migration in November or early December.

It is indeed remarkable that so small a bird can store enough energy in its body to last for a flight of 2,400 miles. What a shame it would be had this bird been destroyed by the market hunters so that the bird student and sportsman today would know it only as he does the passenger pigeon—in records of the past.

The Eskimo curlew, dough bird or prairie pigeon of the market hunter, rivaled the passenger pigeon in numbers before 1885, and hunters have filled their wagons to overflowing, so that the birds fell off as the wagon jolted along over the rough prairie. Today we know the Eskimo curlew only from museum specimens and from records of hunters of other days. It is believed that the last Eskimo curlew was killed January 11, 1925, in its winter home in the Argentine.

These Little Fellows Are Melodious Pipers



"Iowa Bird Life," Sept. 1940—Photo by Bruce Stiles.

The tiny piping plover recently found nesting in Iowa is protected by law, but at one time was considered a "game" bird.

Several sight records have since been recorded, but it is probable that these were a mistaken identification of some other shore bird.

The upland plover, formerly an abundant bird only in the prairie regions, was extensively hunted for the market. Unlike the golden plover and Eskimo curlew, they did not have the habit of being found in great flocks but were still sufficiently abundant to attract the attention of market shooters. Many hunts of the upland plover are recorded in which the birds were shot in July and August while the young were still unable to fly and the hunter's boy amused himself by capturing the still flightless young. The plowing of the prairie soil discouraged the nesting of this bird and only in late years has it adapted itself to nesting in cultivated fields.

The protection of the upland plover must never be relaxed, and hunters who in the summer months while target practicing are tempted to shoot at the strange looking bird as it sits on a fence post in some grassy pasture, must resist the temptation. It would be well for all sportsmen to know the upland plover on sight, to observe its actions, and to hear its melodious call, one of the most beautiful calls of any wild bird. Any sportsman or ornithologist may be thrilled in some spring evening when upland plovers pass overhead in the darkness and the long-drawn, weird, melodious whistle floats to them from above.

The largest of the shore bird group, the long-billed curlew, is another vanishing species. It is doubtful whether this bird will ever approach its former numbers. East of the Mississippi river it is practically extinct at this time. Considerable numbers remain in the western United States, and it is believed that only with the best of protection will these numbers be maintained. The curlew is not only one of our

largest but one of our handsomest shore birds, and its long sickle-shaped bill, more useful for catching grasshoppers and other insects than for probing for food as other shore birds do, make it an outstanding individual.

There are many other forms of shore birds once so numerous that there was little thought that some day they might be classed as a group greatly in need of protection. These are the yellow legs, the other common sandpipers, the dowitchers, and even in the last few years the Wilson's snipe has been added to this list. With the exception of the Wilson's or jack snipe, these were never very sporting birds to hunt; they were shot only by those who desired a full bag rather than the sport of hunting. Many could be killed at a single discharge of the gun, and it is still a great temptation for some hunters to fire into flocks of "peeps" for the mere sport of seeing how many can be dropped with a single shot. Such action is prohibited by law, and any sportsman guilty of shooting these beautiful and useful birds may expect to find himself in the hand of the authorities.

Some of our shore birds were never common. The Hudsonian godwit, one that Audubon himself never saw alive, one that he painted only from specimens that he obtained in the market, is probably now in a worse state than it was at his time. Iowans are fortunate in being in a region where the Hudsonian godwit can be seen in numbers, and anyone interested in birds can enjoy the privilege of watching this interesting and beautiful bird during the spring migration.

All hunters are acquainted with one of the oddest of the shore birds, the woodcock, one of the finest sporting birds that has ever been found in this region, one that had all the qualities that could be desired in any game bird. It held well for dogs, and many were the pointers and set-

ters that were trained exclusively on woodcock. Breeds of dogs such as the cocker spaniel and springer spaniel were developed particularly for this type of hunting. The woodcock is reduced to such low numbers that very few states allow an open season.

This bird did not inhabit the shores and mud flats of its relatives, but made its home in the deep, damp woodland, where it probed the soft ground with its four-inch, flexible-tipped bill obtaining earthworms and often eating twice its weight in a day's time. On a diet of grubs and earthworms, young woodcocks attained their full size in 25 days. In the past during migrations these birds would often, at night, alight in suitable woodlands by the hundreds and all night long the whistle of their wings could be heard. Nature provided the woodcock with a perfect camouflage, its feathers matching the dry leaves so well that the bird often could not be seen even when the person knew exactly where it was.

One of the most peculiar of the shore bird group, and probably the most beautiful of all, is the little-known Wilson's phalarope, a beautiful sandpiper having tight plumage, one which swims like a duck and often was called "fairy duck" by the old-time hunters. Seldom was it molested and is still found in its former abundance. The habits of this bird arouse curiosity, for the female is larger and more beautiful than the male in this species; she also courts the male during mating season; and after the eggs are laid the male is in charge of the incubation while the females gather in flocks by themselves, taking little interest in the care of their young.

One of the last of the shore bird group to have its life history completely known is the solitary sandpiper, which receives its name from its solitary habits. It is found only as individuals or pairs, and scattered over a wide area. Ornithologists were at a loss for years to explain where this bird nested; only recently was it found that it nested in old birds' nests in trees, often 20 to 30 feet off the ground.

There are many other shore birds that are both beautiful and interesting. It is surprising that this entire group was once classed as game, as some of them are so small that even the English sparrow's body would contain more flesh. Yet they were hunted extensively. How fortunate the sportsmen and bird students of Iowa are that these birds, for the most part now increasing in numbers, are protected so that they may add to the beauty of the marsh and lake shore, and make even a silted stagnant pond a place of beauty and interest.

"Waterfowl In Iowa" Receives High Praise In Many Quarters

"Waterfowl in Iowa", by Musgrove, published by the State Conservation Commission, has received a splendid welcome by sportsmen and bird students. Although designed primarily for Iowans, its reception outside of the state has been almost startling.

Lincoln A. Werden in a New York Times review says in part:

"This new book, prepared by Jack and Mary Musgrove, proves to be an invaluable aid in identifying waterfowl over a wider area than Iowa alone. Its accurate color plates show the plumages of ducks not only in the full or spring plumage, but in the eclipse and plumages of fall, the latter especially important for duck hunters.

"It undoubtedly will be useful to them as well as to bird lovers and students of wildlife, for the material is so edited that considerable data is devoted to habitat, behavior, and field marks, along with appropriate color plates. It will probably have a place in classrooms, too, for it should serve as an excellent introductory on waterfowl to the younger generation."

Carl Riemenschneider, in his outdoor column in the Rock Island Argus, says:

"So someone finally decided to publish a book on ducks, 'Waterfowl in Iowa', that Shotgun Charlie could pick up and get complete information on without wading through a lot of Latin terms—and can you beat it, they've even kept the colored illustrations in the plumages of ducks during our hunting season! It's mutiny, I tell ya.

"Joe's going to have a chance to paint those decoys right this time. He used to say that sometime he'd bring the boosters home from the blind and sit down in the basement and paint them just like the ducks he shot that morning. He never got to it—always too tired after the hunt or was afraid there would be a north-west wind the next day and he'd have to use them again. Can't blame him, but what excuse will he have when we show him this new volume, 'Waterfowl in Iowa'? For the first time he can go to camp with a few buckets of paint between seasons, and this duck hunter's bible—and do the job right.

"Catfish Zeke sez, 'Wal, fellers, they made one mistake when they printed that thair "Waterfowl in Iowa" book. Too bad. My boss, "Outdoor Outlook", takes a copy down ter the city this forenoon and the fust two boys that seed

it seys they wuz gonna rite in fer one. Yep, they'll never git by with printin' only 5,000—and that's a bad mistake, sez I. They done ahellofa good job, but mark my word, they'll hafta print more.'

"Congratulations to the Iowa Department of Conservation for another job well done."

In an editorial in the Burlington Hawkeye-Gazette, headed "A Commendable Work", the editor writes, "'Waterfowl in Iowa' is the title of a new volume just off the press, giving detailed information about Iowa wildlife as it pertains to waterfowl. It is well done and also replete with process color plates depicting ducks and geese in their natural colors. Men who gathered the data sought to give first hand information on the appearance and habits of these birds. Some old sportsmen say it is not literally correct, but we suspect most any deviations from nature are not consequential.

"Unfortunately the issue is definitely limited in number of volumes published because of lack of funds for the purpose. It would be well for a copy to be in every classroom in the State of Iowa and in all public libraries. Likewise thousands of sportsmen would like copies.

"We believe the people of the state should be well informed about their state, its history, its people, its resources, its industries, its wildlife—in fact, everything about it. We believe this is a proper function of our educational system to so instruct classes as they progress through school.

"'Waterfowl in Iowa', as just prepared by the Conservation Commission, is strictly an Iowa product. The art work, the printing, the binding, and all were done within the state. To Walter Sharp of Burlington, member of the State Printing Board and to those associated with him in its production, we are happy to say, 'You have done a good job.'"

Copies of this 130-page book are still available from the State Conservation Commission, 10th & Mulberry, Des Moines 8, Iowa, for one dollar each postpaid.

"I am enclosing my personal check for \$3.00 in payment for three copies of your book 'Waterfowl in Iowa'. Unless there are restrictions on the number of copies one person may buy, it is my intention to present a copy to my son in service and one to my regular duck hunting crony."—Mansfield, Ohio.



Pheasant Management Project No. 497
Iowa Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit
By GEORGE O. HENDRICKSON, Leader

Conservation officers were asked to observe pheasants in cornfields in the spring, 1943, and to collect pheasants which were suspected of destroying young plants. The analyses of recognizable food contents of crop and gizzards from collected birds follow.

1. Collected in Bremer and Butler Counties by Leo Logan.

a. Male pheasant crop contents: 8 waste soybeans; gizzard contents: 4 waste soybeans, 9 smartweed seeds.

b. Male pheasant crop empty; gizzard contents: crushed clover leaf, 1 clover-leaf worm.

c. Male pheasant crop empty; gizzard contents: crushed clover leaf, 68 smartweed seeds.

d. Male pheasant crop contents: 94 bright, clean butt and tip kernels, probably picked up from shelled corn strung along field edge; gizzard contents: 3 bright, clean butt and tip kernels, crushed clean fresh corn.

e. Male pheasant crop contents: 8 sprouted corn kernels, 7 waste corn kernels, 11 waste soybeans, 1 wireworm, 2 ground beetles; gizzard contents: crushed corn and soybeans, 2 ground beetles.

2. Collected in Emmet County by E. M. Wogen.

a. Hen pheasant crop contents: 38 sprouted corn kernels, 28 waste corn kernels, 3 waste oats, 1 white grub, 133 clover-leaf worms; gizzard contents: crushed corn, 1 June beetle, 5 ground beetles, 1 cutworm, 1 clover-leaf worm.

3. Collected in Winnebago County by L. F. Tellier.

a. Male pheasant crop contents: 125 waste corn kernels, 6 waste oats; gizzard contents: crushed waste corn and oats, 1 great ragweed seed, 4 ground beetles, 1 cutworm.

b. Male pheasant crop contents: 57 waste corn kernels; gizzard contents: crushed green grass leaf, crushed waste corn, 1 rose seed.

4. Collected in Worth County by L. F. Tellier and Harold Cole.

a. Hen pheasant crop contents: 8 waste corn kernels, 4 earthworms, 5 snail shells, 32 wireworms; gizzard contents: crushed waste corn, 2 wireworms, 1 leaf beetle, 3 ground beetles.

b. Hen pheasant crop contents: 1 clover leaflet, 63 waste corn kernels, 15 snail shells, 2 cutworms, 277 clover-leaf worms, 2

ground beetles; gizzard contents: crushed waste corn, 1 June beetle, 4 ground beetles, 1 cutworm, 100 clover-leaf worms.

c. Male pheasant crop empty; gizzard contents: chaff from corn and oats kernels, fragments of several ground beetles.

d. Male pheasant crop contents: 30 waste corn kernels, 1 grain weevil; gizzard contents: crushed green grass leaf, crushed waste corn.

e. Male pheasant crop contents: 19 fresh, yellow corn kernels and 1 fresh, yellow rodent-gnawed corn kernel from ears strung along field edge, 1 dandelion flower head and portion of stalk; gizzard contents: 1 waste soybean, 1 clean corn kernel, 1 clean rodent-gnawed corn kernel, 4 smartweed seeds, portion of dandelion leaf.

f. Hen pheasant crop contents: 21 waste soybeans, 1 soybean sprout 1 in. long; gizzard contents: 1 bluegrass leaf, 2 kernels fresh yellow corn, probably from lathe-fence crib in field, crushed corn, crushed beans, 4 waste beans in halves.

g. Male pheasant crop contents: 6 waste corn kernels, 8 waste soybeans, 4 clover-leaf worms; gizzard contents: 2 crushed clover leaflets, parts of 2 ground beetles, 2 clover-leaf worms.

h. Male pheasant crop contents: 63 fresh, yellow kernels from ears strung along field edge, 2 sprouted corn kernels, 1 waste oat, 2 waste barley kernels, 1 clover leaflet, 4 clover-leaf worms; gizzard contents: 5 fresh, yellow corn kernels, ground fresh corn, 1 foxtail seed.

i. Hen pheasant crop contents: 1 clover leaf, 1 millipede, 2 young grasshoppers, 1 corn billbug (beetle), 1 ground beetle, 48 clover-leaf worms; gizzard contents: 3 crushed clover leaflets, 2 leaf beetles, 3 clover-leaf worms.

j. Male pheasant crop contents: 83 fresh, yellow corn kernels from ears scattered at field edge, 7 rodent-gnawed fresh yellow kernels, 2 flies, 1 clover-leaf worm; gizzard contents: 6 fresh yellow corn kernels, crushed fresh yellow corn, 3 flies.

k. Male pheasant crop empty; gizzard contents: 1 waste oat, 2 crushed clover leaflets, parts of 3 ground beetles, 2 cutworms.

l. Male pheasant crop contents: 44 fresh yellow corn kernels from ears at field edge, 2 kernels sprouted corn; gizzard contents: 4 fresh kernels corn, crushed fresh corn, 6 smartweed seeds.

Summary: In the crops and gizzards of 15 male and 5 hen pheasants, 1,567 food items were recognized. Of these items 728 were waste grain and corn fed to pheasants, 634 insects harmful to agriculture, and 93 weed seeds and leaves. Of helpful or neutral value were 4 earthworms, 1 millipede, 28 ground beetles, 20 snails, 50 sprouted corn kernels, and 9 grass and clover leaves.

Iowa Conservationist

Published Monthly by
THE IOWA STATE CONSERVATION
COMMISSION

10th & Mulberry—Des Moines, Iowa
JAMES R. HARLAN, Editor
F. T. SCHWOB, Director
(No Rights Reserved)

MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION

- F. J. POYNEER, Cedar Rapids, Chairman
- J. D. LOWE, Algona
- F. W. MATTES, Odebolt
- MRS. ADDISON PARKER, Des Moines
- E. B. GAUNITZ, Lansing
- R. E. STEWART, Ottumwa
- A. S. WORKMAN, Glenwood

CIRCULATION THIS ISSUE - 21,155
Subscription Rate - 40c per year
Subscriptions received at Conservation
Commission, 10th and Mulberry, Des Moines,
Iowa. Send coin, check or money order.

Conservation Commission Military Service Honor Roll



BIRD NOTES

By Kate B. Glover
Keota Eagle

This department, "Conservation Columnists", is to give each month a little sketch of one of the columnists who write outdoor columns regularly for newspapers. These writers are widely known for what they write, and we know that you will enjoy these briefs of what and who they are.

It isn't every day that a one-candle power columnist is invited to write for publication, and when Mr. Harlan paid me that compliment I jumped at the chance—figuratively. I couldn't jump literally because I am afflicted with arthritis and walk with a cane when I travel under my own power.

Webster defined "spinster" as "an unmarried woman of uncertain age." That definition would

fit me perfectly if there was even a little uncertainty about my age. There isn't. The Keota Eagle sees to that. When I was a wee lass I had birthday parties and the Eagle gave them publicity. I liked it then. Now that same Eagle digs up those parties in their old-time locals. It doesn't require a mathematical genius to deduce that if I was six years old on December 6, 1876, I was born in 1870. The family record corroborates the deduction.

I was born on a farm in Washington County, Iowa, but my temperament and personality had their beginning in Ireland 130 years ago when James Glover married Isabella Thompson in Belfast and set sail for America. My grandmother kissed the blarney-stone before she left Ireland and transmitted its efficacy to me through my father, James Glover the second. And by the same route I was endowed with my grandfather's love of nature. My father's eldest brother, William Glover, "knew more about toads and frogs than any other man in Washington County". So said his friend, H. A. Burrell of Washington County Press fame.

Small wonder I once had a "Thimble Theatre — Featuring Popeye". The theatre was a terrarium in the bottom of a large stone jar, and the cast were tiny toads a boy brought to me. The boy, his pals and I learned much about toads that summer. With a background such as mine how could I fail to be interested in all ramifications of nature — bugs, spiders, butterflies, moths, birds, bats, trees, flowers?

I have the reputation of knowing much more about all these things than I do know. Mole crickets, click beetles, hellgramites, and other strange "bugs" are brought to me for identification. A praying mantis was sent from Missouri. A trap-door spider's "nest" was sent from San Diego. Butterflies, moths and their larvae, bats and their young are brought in. Did you ever feed a mother bat cream from a medicine dropper? Try it some time. It's fun.

It is a pleasure to know the constellations and where and when to look for them and to be able to call the fixed stars by name. I was born under the constellation Sagittarius — the little dipper in the Milky-Way. I like to know the flowers and trees, and I should have liked delving into geology but never had the opportunity. If one could live to the ripe old age of Methuselah there would still be wonderful and interesting things to learn about nature.

Of all the different phases of nature in which I am interested the birds are the easiest to know. They are in your door-yard the year around. You can make friends with them; they will come

Being able to blow a duck call correctly takes an enormous amount of practice and a comprehensive knowledge of duck language.



at your call and may be tamed to eat from your hand.

The first bird story I wrote for publication was the story of a pet robin. It appeared in the Washington County Press in 1910.

The "Bird Notes" which appear weekly in the Keota Eagle are the aftermath of a "bird column" which had its beginning 25 years ago. The small boys of Keota were killing birds indiscriminately and in large numbers. I discussed the matter with the Eagle editor (who is a lover of birds), and we decided to try to interest the boys in the birds from a different angle. As a result an item appeared in the Eagle inviting the children to send in stories about the birds, their nesting and feeding habits, and any unusual thing they saw a bird do. The stories were to be sent to me, and I was to edit the column.

It was a perfectly good idea, but we got off on the wrong foot! The first story was sent in by a dear little four-year-old girl. After that when boys were asked to contribute they scoffed, "Oh, that's just for little kids!" Having put my hand to the plough, so to speak, I could not turn back. It was up to me to write the column. I did. The response was gratifying, but it came mostly from older persons who telephoned their stories for me to write for the column.

The children took it up from an unexpected angle. They began bringing to me all the sick or injured birds they found. My home became "the bird hospital" and I the "bird woman". In the past 25 years hundreds of birds have been brought to me. Some were cured and released; some had to be killed; others were kept in cages, the wards of the "hospital". Among the patients have been rails, grebes, gallinules, coots, cormorants, hawks and owls, as well as songbirds of many species. Last spring an old-squaw duck was brought in, a male in full courting plumage. He found his way to the museum at the state university.

After running for a number of

Duck Calling Requires a Lot of Painstaking Practice

I don't know of anything more useful to a duck hunter than the ability to blow a duck call correctly.

Since the departure of live decoys the success of a duck hunt depends almost entirely on the ability of the hunter to convince wild ducks that the wooden decoys in front of his blind are the real thing and that their presence is urgently requested.

Being able to blow a duck call correctly takes an enormous amount of practice and a comprehensive knowledge of duck language. No one is able to buy or make a call and immediately produce sounds that resemble duck language. If you don't think this is true, try it. A hunter is no more able to do this than a musician could play a tune the first time he had a violin in his hands.

The most important thing to know is the language. Learning how to chuckle is not hard, and the quack is comparatively easy. Practically all calls are a takeoff from the quack. Most important to know is the "alarm call", and of course this should never be sounded under any circumstances if you expect ducks to decoy.

Just as important to know what to blow is to know when to call and when not to. This is acquired only through experience. Generally speaking, after the ducks' attention has been called to your decoys and you have them coming your way, it is time not to call—if on the other hand they go by, the art of persuasion must again be resorted to.

I have heard some men blow a duck call that I didn't think sounded so hot, but was fooled when it got to a duck blind because they sure knew how to bring them in. Then I have found the opposite situation of sounding good but "no catchem ducks".

(Continued to Page 79, Column 4)

(Continued to Page 80, Column 4)

Stiles Gives Brief History of Iowa Wildlife Legislation

By BRUCE F. STILES

Chief, Division of Fish and Game

(Editor's Note: This is the second of three articles relative to legislation and events affecting wildlife in the State of Iowa. The first part, in the September issue of the Iowa Conservationist briefed legislation and events from 1883, when Iowa became a territory, through the Thirteenth General Assembly in 1870, when the first legislation in the state concerning fish in general was passed.)

1872—Fourteenth G. A.

A law was enacted by this session establishing a closed season on beaver, mink, otter and muskrat between April and November 1 of each year.

1874—Fifteenth G. A.

On January 28 of this year, the Senate appointed a standing Committee on Fish and Game. The next day the House appointed a similar committee.

We might say that the forerunner of the present State Conservation Commission was in 1874, when for the first time any personnel was provided to look after fish and game matters. In this session of the legislature, Representative Jacob W. Dickson, from the Sixth Congressional District, introduced a bill known as House File 222, which provided for the appointment of three men to serve as Fish Commissioners. This was recommended for passage by the Committee on Fish and Game, and was placed on the House calendar for consideration on "Friday, March 13, at nine and one-half o'clock in the morning". It passed the House on that date without difficulty, and passed the Senate on March 19, 1874. It was signed by the Governor on March 31, 1874.

A note of economy crept in when an amendment was introduced by Representative L. O. Haskell of the Eighth District. The original bill provided for a salary of \$200 a year for each commissioner. Haskell proposed to strike out the \$200 and insert therefor \$100. This motion, however, was defeated. Governor Carpenter appointed Mr. B. F. Shaw to serve as Chairman of this Commission.

The sum of \$3,000 was appropriated by the Fifteenth General Assembly for the propagation of fish, and \$1,000 was appropriated for the Fish Commission "to procure and distribute 500,000 eels in the waters of the state".

The first fish hatchery, a small wooden structure, was established at Anamosa.

1876—Sixteenth G. A.

The three-man Fish Commis-



—Photo by State Dept. of History & Archives.

The beginning of wildlife conservation in the modern meaning was in 1897, when the attention of Dr. W. T. Hornaday, one of America's pioneers in wildlife protection, was first called to the plight of our big game animals. Hornaday was brought up in Iowa and lived here during the formative period of his life, three to 20.

sion was doomed to be short lived, for this session of the legislature changed the law striking out the words "three competent persons" and inserting "one competent person". A salary was set at \$1,200 a year, and the appointment went to Mr. B. F. Shaw.

This session passed a law placing a bag limit of 25 a day on grouse, prairie chickens, snipes, woodcock and quail. It also prohibited the shipment of prairie chickens for sale at any time.

An appropriation of \$8,750 was made by this assembly for the construction of a permanent fish hatchery and the purchase of the site on which the then temporary hatchery stood. This was completed in 1878.

1880—Eighteenth G. A.

A law was passed providing for the appointment of an Assistant Fish Commissioner at an annual salary of \$600. Authority was delegated to him to enforce the fish and game laws.

In June of this year, the Governor called upon B. F. Shaw, State Fish Commissioner, to select a site for an additional fish hatchery in Dickinson County. The site of the present hatchery at Orleans was chosen

and the building was completed that year.

1884—Twentieth G. A.

An attempt was made to abolish the Fish Commission in this session, and two bills introduced for that purpose were defeated.

1886—Twenty-first G. A.

Another attempt was made during the Twenty-first General Assembly to abolish the Fish Commission. The following quotation from debates on the floor of the legislature is typical of the argument in favor of such action.

"I understand from the report of the present Fish Commission that the stocking of the creeks and rivers with fish from which the people were to reap benefit sufficient to pay them for the money expended has proved a total failure. With nearly \$40,000 expended, ten years of experience ought to be sufficient to satisfy the most credulous that the Fish Commission is a failure."

This session did, however, succeed in securing the discontinuation of the fish hatchery that had been established at Anamosa.

1897—Extra Session of the Twenty-Sixth G. A.

The Twenty - sixth General

Assembly that convened in 1893 went into an extra session in 1897. Legislation was provided for the appointment of Iowa's first Fish and Game Warden at a salary of \$1,200 a year. This appointment went to Mr. George E. Delavan, who served until April 1, 1901.

This session passed a law prohibiting the use of more than one hook on a line in pole and line fishing, and down through the years in spite of recodification this law still remains on the statute.

To digress a bit from the text, this, the year 1897, is worthy of note. It marks the beginning of an era, the birth of true wildlife conservation. While laws affecting wildlife date back to medieval times and earlier, the beginning of true conservation was in 1897.

In 1897 the attention of Dr. W. T. Hornaday, one of our pioneers in wildlife protection, was first called to the plight of American big game animals. Hornaday was brought up in Iowa and lived here during the formative period of his life, from three to 20.

Major John F. Lacey, author of the Lacey Act, began work on that bill about this time. Major Lacey was the famous congressman - conservationist from Oskaloosa after whom Lacey Keosauqua State Park was named.

1898—Twenty-seventh G. A.

In this session of the legislature, \$6,000 was appropriated for fish culture. According to the State Fish and Game Warden, neighboring states at this time were receiving appropriations for the same purpose of from \$16,000 to \$40,000.

1900—Twenty-eighth G. A.

A bill was passed requiring non-resident hunters to procure a license to hunt.

Because of the importance of the Lacey Act, it should be mentioned as the first piece of constructive Federal legislation affecting wildlife ever to become a law. This bill, first introduced in 1894 by Major Lacey, finally passed the Congress of the United States on May 25, 1900. The Lacey Act placed inter-state shipments of game under Federal control.

The first pheasants were introduced to the wild in Iowa this year when in September a wind storm destroyed the fence on the game farm of William Benton of Cedar Falls.

1901—During the Term of the Twenty-eighth G. A.

George A. Lincoln was appointed State Fish and Game Warden by His Excellency Governor Leslie M. Shaw effective April 1, 1901. Mr. Lincoln served until July 1, 1912, when

(Continued to Page 78, Column 4)

Mr. and Mrs. Muskrat Had Better Beware ❖ These Traps Really Work



In shallow water trapping a rubber mitten is often used. This mitten is shoulder length and made by vulcanizing a piece of inner tube onto the cuff of a rubberized mitten.

Many successful trappers use a stool. A 6x6-inch platform on which a trap is set is fastened to a stake. The stake is then set through a hole in the ice so that the shelf is about six inches below the lower surface of the ice. Photo by L. F. Tellier.



Muskrats

(Continued from Page 73)

the Mrs. that his large family of eight or 10 rapidly growing "kits" are "eating us out of house and home", he is not using a figure of speech. He is speaking the truth, for a large part of his dome-like house is made of edible material.

Johnny Muskrat is comparatively easy to trap, but to be successful the trapper must know the habits of his quarry. The more intimate his knowledge of the daily family life, the more trapping success he may expect.

The late 1942-43 trapping season, along with the early freeze-up, handicapped many trappers who usually depend upon open water sets to secure their winter catch of muskrats. The trappers in the northern part of the state were not bothered by the freeze-up. In fact, many of them prefer to trap after the marshes and streams have frozen over.

There are many methods of trapping under the ice, varying according to the thickness of the ice, water depth, etc. The success of many of the methods depends upon locating the live runs used by the animals as they move from one den or lodge to another and while in search of food.

In winter runways are indicated by trails of white air bubbles that occur under the ice over the runway. Slides on the sides of the houses made before freeze-up also serve as an indication of the direction of the runway.

In shallow water trapping the use of a rubber mitten (shoulder length, made by vulcanizing a piece of inner-tube onto the cuff of a rubberized mitten) is very common. In making a simple shallow water run set a hole is chopped through the ice, a stake set, and the trap placed in the bottom of the run. By using a tall stake and marking it with a colored cloth (different colors indicating traps of different trappers), the trap line can be run quickly and the traps are easily identified. By running the traps twice a day in cold weather the ice can be kept thin at the set,

thereby eliminating much of the hard chopping.

In shallow water den sets in streams, the den is usually located before freeze-up and marked. After the freeze the ice is cut through and the trap placed in the throat of the tunnel.

In deeper water it may be necessary to use a stool. A stool consists of a heavy trap stake one and one-half inches in diameter and four to six feet long, depending on the depth of the water. A shelf about six inches square is fastened about midway on the side of the stake, and the trap is set on the shelf and camouflaged lightly with weeds. Then the stake is set through a hole in the ice so that the shelf is about six inches below the lower surface of the ice. Best results are obtained by fastening the trap chain below the shelf, allowing just enough slack to set the trap on the platform. This insures the drowning of the rats, thereby cutting down the number of pull-outs.

A slice of carrot, duck potato, or some other favorite muskrat food is sometimes fastened to the pan of the trap for bait.

One advantage of the stool set is that the ice will usually freeze clear and the trap line can be run without chopping out all the sets. Only those in which a rat has moved the trap will have to be cut out and reset.

A trapping method coming into widespread use by both river and marsh ice trappers is the slanting board set. A six-inch board about three to six feet long is used. The trap is hung on a small nail near the top two-thirds

of the board with the spring up. The board is then set at a slant through a hole in the ice with the lower end resting on the bottom in or near a run. The muskrat climbs the slanting board and must cross the trap to reach the top. Bait is sometimes used on these sets but is not necessary.

Another very effective under ice set, good in both streams and marshes, is a "V-stake bait set". A stake with a fork is cut with a trunk 14 to 18 inches long. One arm of the V is cut short, the other left long enough to stick out through the ice to mark the trap location. In the fork a peeled potato is tied with string. A hole is cut in the ice where rats are known to frequent. The trunk of the stake is slipped through the trap ring (chains should be shortened in order to keep the rat from floating up against the ice and freezing in). The stake is then pushed into the bottom and the trap adjusted so that it is directly under the bait and some eight inches below. This set is most effective in from two to three feet of water.

All of these sets are designed to drown the captured muskrat, are simple to make and humane.

Many misses are due to poor trap adjustment. Time can be well spent in keeping the traps in good mechanical condition. The amount of tension needed to release the spring varies somewhat according to conditions and also may be a matter of personal opinion of the individual trapper. However, most trappers seem to favor a "hair-trigger" adjustment with the pan setting high.

His Home Is Good to Eat . . .



When Papa Muskrat tells the Mrs. that his large family of kits are "eating us out of house and home", he is speaking the truth, for a large part of his dome-like house is made of edible vegetation.

Wildlife Legislation

(Continued from Page 77)

he was succeeded by E. C. Hinshaw.

1906—Thirty-first G. A.

In this session, Senator Courtwright introduced Senate File 126 and secured its enactment into law. It provided "that all wild birds both resident and migratory in this state shall be and are hereby declared to be the property of the state".

1909—Thirty-third G. A.

This was an important session as far as fish and game were concerned. For the first time in Iowa, resident hunters were required to have a license. House File 296, "Resident Hunters License Bill", passed the Senate easily and after considerable opposition passed the House on March 27, 1909, primarily due to the effort of Mr. Harry Barmeier of Dubuque, who was then head of the Game Protective Association. The counties of Dickinson, Worth, Pocahontas, Montgomery, Clay, Clarke, Decatur, Floyd, Howard, Clayton, Wright and Iowa voted against the "Resident Hunters License Bill".

Among other fish and game legislative acts, the Thirty-third General Assembly also prohibited the sale of game and placed a limit on ducks that could be killed in one day, setting that limit at 25 with a possession limit of 50. Thus legal market hunting of any kind, except for rabbits, came to an end in Iowa.

They also abolished the old fee system of compensating deputy game wardens and placed them on a salary with police powers.

"Enclosed please find \$1.00 for one copy of 'Waterfowl in Iowa'. My customers and myself have enjoyed reading the 'Iowa Conservationist' as much or more than any magazine I take. It is a real education in Iowa's wildlife and is enjoyed by the ladies as well as men. I am glad to have it in my barber shop."—Burlington, Iowa.



FRED J. PIERCE

Fred J. Pierce, as editor of Iowa Bird Life for 13 years, has been largely responsible for the bird students' organization known as the Iowa Ornithologists' Union. Fred farms just east of Winthrop, Iowa, along Highway 20, where he also operates a filling station. If you go to visit him (and Fred enjoys visitors), you will quite probably find him in his overalls at work.

Mr. Pierce spends his spare time observing birds and reading and writing about them. He has the finest private bird library in the state.

* * * * *

Ornithologists

(Continued from Page 73)

much in common with the sportsman; in fact, he can rub elbows with him on any hunting trip and get as much sport as the hunter. The hunter and the bird student reach a very similar goal—the main difference is in the approach. There is the spirit of the chase—stalking the game, capturing the sought-after prize, and receiving the benefit of outdoor relaxation. The hunter brings back a dead bird or animal. The ornithologist may bring back a sight record accompanied by carefully taken notes, a photo of his bird if he is a camera fan, or an indelible mental picture to entertain him anew many times in the future. The sportsman glories in his guns and rods. The bird student thrills to the feel of a pair of fine binoculars in his hands, or prides himself in the possession of fine cameras or other equipment.

The hunter's days are numbered by law. The bird student can follow his hobby every day of the year. You will find him trudging the snow-laden woods in search of winter birds. During the spring months he is absorbed with the great spectacle of birdland—migration. In summer the nesting birds challenge his ability to discover family secrets; then in a few short weeks fall migration is in full swing, offering many interesting identification problems in the changed fall plumages. Bird study is one of the

most flexible of hobbies. Its devotees can dip into it only slightly for relaxation, or they can make it a lifetime study. Its many angles can include camping, canoeing, hiking, picture-taking by movie or still camera, bird banding, laboratory work, drawing, and sound-recording. Observations may be and are made on foot, from auto, train, steamship or airplane.

In 1943 the Iowa Ornithologists' Union, our only state-wide bird study organization, celebrated its twentieth birthday. It was organized at Ames, Iowa, on February 28, 1923. A small group of bird enthusiasts headed by Dr. T. C. Stephens, Charles J. Spiker and the late Walter Rosene believed that Iowa needed a bird society. History was made at that Ames meeting, for out of it grew an organization that has had staying power and has made a good record for itself. Founded on worthy purpose, the organization for two decades has made its influence felt through valuable accomplishments.

The Iowa Ornithologists' Union though having a formidable name, requires no union card, has no hour schedule, no wage disputes. Its constitution sets forth that **"its aims shall be to promote the study of ornithology by more closely uniting the students of this branch of natural history and to encourage the study of birds in the state of Iowa"**. Its membership roll includes the names of persons in many different occupations and professions—doctors, lawyers, teachers, farmers, ministers, school boys and girls, businessmen, housewives, and service men. All that is required for membership is an interest in birds. The ornithological fraternity recognizes few of the limitations imposed by other organizations and is broad in its scope and sphere of influence.

The Iowa bird society has sponsored directly or indirectly various forms of investigation of bird life. Careful migration records and studies have thrown valuable light on the travels of birds. On several occasions the Union has assumed a militant attitude and presented a united front to secure state legislation for the protection of certain species of birds. A number of the members of the Union have gone far up the ladder as ornithologists and conservationists and have become well known wildlife technicians.

An annual two-day convention in May has been a popular feature of the Union's activities. These are held in various cities of the state, usually where there is an active local bird club. At these conventions there is a program of papers, lectures by wildlife specialists, a showing of movies and slides, an ornithologists' banquet, and a half-day field trip. The conventions are always well attended and highly enjoyable.

Brings Back a Sight Record . . .

The ornithologist can rub elbows with a hunter on any trip and get as much sport as the sportsman. The successful hunter, however, brings back a dead bird or animal, while the bird student may bring back a sight record, a photo of his bird if he is a camera fan, or an indelible mental picture to entertain him in the future.



In spite of wartime restrictions of various kinds, and the entry of members into the armed forces, the 1943 spring bird census sponsored by the Union was a decided success. Fourteen localities in Iowa were represented, 133 persons took part in this field day, and 25,514 birds of 198 species were counted.

The Union's official publication is "Iowa Bird Life", published quarterly at Winthrop, Iowa. (sample copies are sent free to persons interested in becoming members of the organization). This is an illustrated magazine containing both popular and scientific articles, as well as book reviews, news of local bird clubs in the state, biographies and other timely matter. Well-rounded in ornithological information, the magazine carries census reports and bird lists, articles on migration, bird banding, habitats, food and nesting habits, and the results of investigations along various lines. The illustrations are made from carefully selected photographs and drawings of birds. "Iowa Bird Life" has been published for 13 years. The store of

valuable information its printed volumes contain is a testimonial to the careful work of the state-wide group of members who are always enthusiastic in their bird work and ever loyal to their organization.

The Iowa Ornithologists' Union is always anxious to increase its membership and thus broaden its influence and usefulness. Noted for its informal gatherings and friendly atmosphere, it invites all persons with an interest in birds to become members. Dues are one dollar a year for adults, 50 cents for those under 16 years. The magazine is mailed quarterly to all members.

Bird Notes

(Continued from Page 76, Column 3)

years the bird column was discontinued. However, the general public is bird conscious and there was a demand for bird news. At the request of the editor the writing was resumed under the heading, "Bird Notes". I also write the society notes and do a little other reporting for the Eagle.

Not a Musical Score--Just Birds . . .

The hunter's days are numbered by law. The bird student may follow his hobby every day of the year. During the spring he is absorbed with the great spectacle of migration. In summer nesting birds entertain him with their family secrets. The fall migration offers many interesting identification problems because of changed plumages.



Look Out For That Beak . . .



Red-tailed hawks are big, heavy birds with broad wings. These beneficial birds are protected by state law. This one has been marked with a leg band and will soon be released. Photo by Richard F. Trump.

What's a Hawk?

By RICHARD F. TRUMP

Hawks have names—just like people and fishes and airplanes. And there is just as much difference between one hawk and another as there is between you and your neighbor, or between a pike and a carp, or a helicopter and a flying fortress.

Your neighbor may call any big bird that flies in the daytime and kills what it eats a "hawk." That's all he calls it. Maybe you know better; but even among wide-awake sportsmen there is considerable confusion about the birds of prey. An eastern zoologist double-checked that idea by asking 11 "intelligent sportsmen" to examine and name seven mounted specimens. The winner of this little brain derby knew five of the seven hawks; but five of the contestants failed to identify correctly a single one!

Some of these winged predators are among the sportsman's and farmer's best friends, and all except three species are protected by state law. So before drawing bead on another such target it would be just good sense for every gunner to find out how well he can answer the question, "What hawk is that?"

To begin with, remember that the differences in design of hawks are of great importance to man. The red-tailed, the sharp-shinned, and the sparrow hawks are built on different plans; they eat different foods. And since we are interested in hawks chiefly because of what they eat, it will pay to examine the design and habits of the groups found commonly in Iowa.

The Buteo or "mouse hawks" are big, heavy birds with broad wings and short fan-shaped tails. The red-tailed and red-shouldered

are the most common Iowa Buteos; the rough-legged hawk winters here, particularly in the northern part of the state, and several other species migrate through Iowa. Although not built for speed, the Buteos are masters of soaring. They take advantage of updrafts of warm air and favorable winds, soaring over woods and open fields in their relentless search for small rodents. When conditions for soaring are poor, they frequently perch on an exposed dead limb or post and scan the fields for food.

These big fellows are gifted neither with speed nor the ability to turn abruptly, and as you might guess, the Buteos in general are not bird catchers. After checking the stomach contents of over 5,000 hawks, the United States Department of Agriculture gives the following averages for the red-tailed hawk's diet: rats and mice, 55 per cent; insects, 10.5 per cent; rabbits, etc., 9.3 per cent; small birds, 9.2 per cent; poultry, 6.3 per cent; and other miscellaneous food, 9.7 per cent.

Compared with this, the red-shouldered hawk eats three times as many insects, fewer rodents, more frogs, and a negligible amount of poultry. The rough-legged hawk is a superb mouser; it feeds also on grasshoppers, but only very rarely on birds.

The Accipiter hawks, in contrast to the Buteos, are much smaller. Their short, thick wings and long, slender tail are adapted for tremendous bursts of speed through woods and thickets. As one might expect, predators which are able to fly rapidly and turn abruptly tend toward a diet of birds. Such is true of the Cooper's and sharp-shinned hawks, the only Accipiters one is likely to see in Iowa. The goshawk, a northern species, comes into the state rarely in winter. These are

the three hawks unprotected by law.

The little sparrow hawk is our only common representative of the Falcon family. With their long pointed wings, the Falcons are quite different in appearance from the Accipiters. Yet they, too, are primarily pursuit jobs, capable of very rapid flight. The diminutive sparrow hawk feeds largely on mice and grasshoppers and other large insects. This hawk is commonly seen perched on posts along Iowa roads, and it spots its prey from a relatively short distance. Frequently it hovers momentarily, perhaps waiting for a suspected victim to show itself, before striking.

The marsh hawk belongs to still another family, the Harriers. Feeding mostly on mice, cotton-tails, and other rodents, and to some extent on birds, it hunts while flying low over the fields, taking its victims by surprise attack. It has a long tail somewhat like that of the Accipiters and Falcons. However, it is larger; its wing tips are moderately blunt; and it has a habit of gliding with its wings uptilted above the horizontal plane of the body. The turkey vulture, which habitually soars with uptilted wings, is much larger.

Many people are surprised to learn that two of the smaller hawks are considered destructive, while the big Buteos are beneficial. But of course it is not size but design and habits that count. Ignoring this, uninformed gunners have taken a terrific toll of our most beneficial species. The Buteos are big, slow birds—easy shots—and to make matters worse for them, they are often rather tame, perching in exposed places within easy range. The destructive Accipiters, on the other hand, are small, fast-moving birds, sticking to the denser cover and seldom affording easy shooting.

For this reason most of the states which have tried a bounty system to control undesirable predators have given the system up as unworkable; they have found that most of the birds brought in for bounty are on the protected list!

Extensive research in Iowa and Wisconsin shows that even the bird-eating hawks may be pres-

ent in normal numbers without reducing the population of game birds. Dr. Paul L. Errington has found that the predators take only the surplus population of quail, which if not taken by predators would be removed by disease, hunger, or exposure. Dr. Errington says that your favorite hunting ground is somewhat like a pasture built to hold only a certain number of cows; if you put too many cows in the pen, some will be crowded out and will die.

Man usually works up his biggest appetite for the things that are scarcest. Hawks take the things that are most abundant. This is all to their credit as friends of man. For when meadow mice are a plague in the orchard and cornfield, that is the time when it is most important that they be preyed upon. Or if rabbits become unusually abundant, that is the time when man can best afford to spare a portion of the crop.

Taking the food that is easiest to get, predators sometimes act as scavengers. Therefore an analysis of stomach contents is sometimes misleading from an economic standpoint. Observers have pointed out that too often when a farmer throws a dead chicken over the fence into the orchard, his well-meaning son catches a red-tailed hawk "eating a chicken" and blows it to bits.

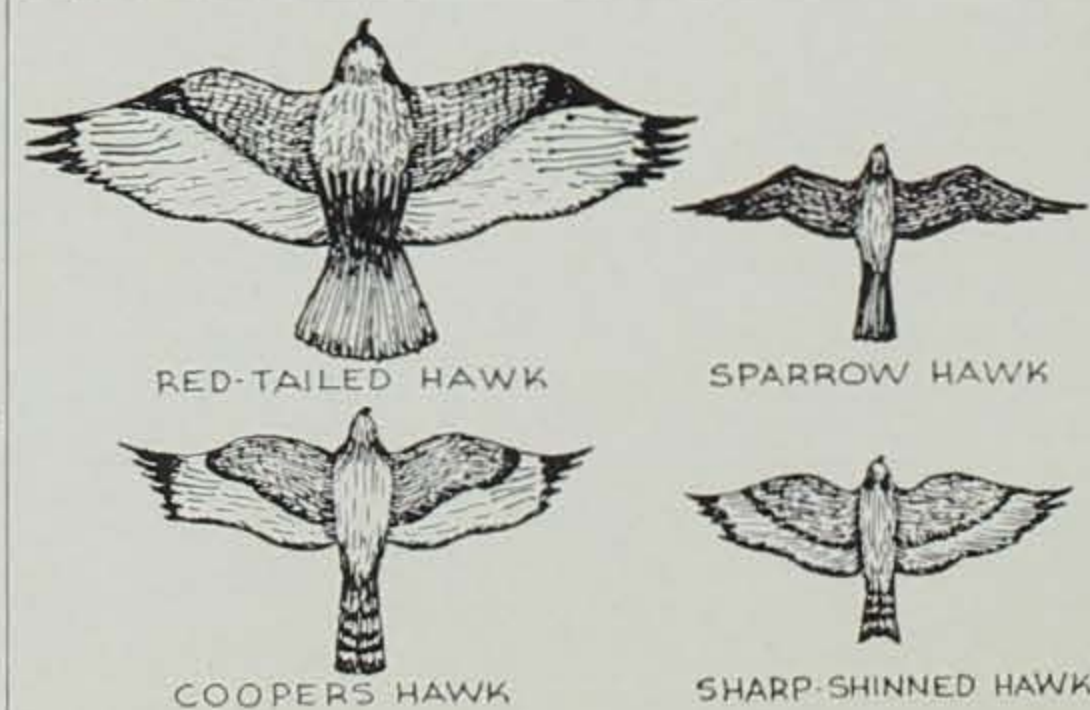
When you use the word "hawk", remember that far more of them are good than bad, and that for even the most destructive species the best policy is to declare war only on the specific individuals known to be working against man's purposes.

Duck Calling

(Continued from Page 76, Column 4)

So as parting advice today, buy your duck call now and practice every day, and when the season comes if you haven't mastered it leave it home when you go hunting, because you will do more harm than good. When you have learned how, I know that you will get a tremendous kick out of it. —Burlington Hawkeye Gazette.

"Please mail me one copy of the book 'Waterfowl in Iowa.'—Lititz, Pennsylvania.



Silhouettes of hawks aid in their identification. The red-tailed and sparrow hawks are two of our beneficial birds of prey. The Cooper's and sharp-shinned hawks are the only two unprotected hawks commonly found in the state. Even they have a place in nature's biological balance.