

RED TAIL HAWK.

100T
DUT

If there is another Red-tail in the country about Portland, Oregon that has found a nesting site higher than the one in the cotton-wood over on the bank of the Columbia river, we have never seen it. A Red-tail likes a high commanding sight, just as a duck searches the sedge-grass about the pond for a home. This pair of hawks surely found it. We had tramped the county almost from one end to the other, but we would never have discovered this aery, had we not searched the river bottom when the trees were leafless.

2* We have found few nests that are absolutely beyond human touch, but it has taken a deal of scheming and a risk of life and limb to reach some of them. We schemed for three different summers, after we found this aery of the Red-tail, ^{IN THE TOP OF A COTTONWOOD - COLUMBIA RIVER} before we finally succeeded in leveling our camera at the eggs. The nest-tree measured over fourteen feet around at the bottom. There was not a limb for forty feet. The nest itself was lodged just one hundred and twenty feet up. It was out of the question to clamber up such a tree with climbers, ropes or anything else, but we had another plan.

3* We had "spotted" a young cottonwood just fifteen feet away. This might serve as a ladder so we chopped at the base till it began to totter. With ropes we pulled it over. The crown lodged in the branches of the first large limb of the nest-tree, full forty feet up. This formed a shaky, arial bridge, up which we clambered a third of the distance to the nest. The anticipat-

ion led us on. We lassoed upper branches, dug our climbing-irons into the bark and worked slowly up.

4*
EXP
How could we ever secure a good series of pictures at such a distance from the ground? It looked impossible at first, but a careful examination revealed a rare arrangement of nest and surroundings. If we could but hoist our equipment, there was no question as to photographs. Eight feet below the aery, the trunk of the tree branched and spread in such a way, that we could climb to a point on the opposite limb just above the nest and only five feet distant. We strapped the camera in a crotch that seemed built for the purpose, with the sun coming from the right direction. The rub came in focusing the instrument. One hundred and twenty feet is not such a dizzy height, when you stand on the ground and look up, but strap yourself to the limb of a tree and dangle out backward over the brink. No matter how strong the rope, there's a feeling of death creeping up and down every nerve in your body the first time you try it.

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(This picture of the camera in position, leveled at the nest, and the photographer ready to make an exposure, was secured later in the year when the tree was well leaved out, with a small pocket kodac, by climbing out on another limb twenty feet away.)

When we first succeeded in scaling the tall cottonwood and got our first view of the aery, we found a stack of sticks the size of a small hay-cock. They were not pitched together helter-skelter. A big nest like a hawks' or a herons'

always gives me the impression that it is just thrown together. I examined this one and found it as carefully woven as a wicker basket. It was strong at every point. Sticks over a yard in length and some as thick as your wrist, were all worked into a compact mass. In the hollowed top, on some bark and leaves, lay the two eggs.

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I never saw a more commanding stronghold. It overlooked the country for miles in every direction. From where the hawk-mother brooded her eggs, I looked out far up the Columbia, and could see the cavern-cut slopes of Mt. Hood. Extending to the westward, was the long line of ponds and lakes, the Red-tail's favorite hunting grounds; while to the north, lay the broad expanse of water, and in the distance loomed up the dome-like peak of St. Helens covered with perpetual snow.

OUT

(If you watch the branch above the nest in the following pictures, you will note its gradual change.)

The Spring of 1902, the young birds hatched on April 20th. The third day of May, thirteen days after they were born, we found the nestlings warmly clothed in white down. From the first, they showed an instinctive fear of man.

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We never approached the aery that we did not find one of the parents on guard about the nest. They always saw us long before we reached the tree and they darted out with a loud warning scream, that sounded a mile above high C. When we climbed the tree, they circled in the air above but never once attacked us.

8 * The third photograph in the series was taken on May Eighteenth, fifteen days later, when the heads of the hawklets were still covered with downy white, but the bodies well feathered out. The nestlings were still crouching in the nest.

9 * We made a close study of the Red-tail in the tall cottonwood. He was always a successful hunter. In all our visits, we never saw the time when his larder was empty. Nor did we find that he had to resort to the chicken-yard for food. There was plenty of wild game. On the first visits, we found the remains of quail and pheasants in ^{THE} aery. One morning, we saw the legs and claws of a screech-owl; almost a case of hawk eat hawk. (They may be seen in the picture.)

10 * When the banks of the Columbia over-flowed and covered most of the surrounding country, the old hawk did not abandon his own preserve. He turned his attention entirely to fishing. Where the carp and cat-fish fed along the edges of the pond, he had no trouble in catching plenty to eat. Twice, we found a carp over a foot in length in the aery. (The tail-end of a carp shows in this picture.)

By this time the hawklets were almost full-grown. How they watched us (with those eyes of grey,) such serious, earnest eyes! They saw every move we made. For all their savage nature, they never struck at our hands when we petted them.

OUT | On the first day of June, we again visited the cottonwood. After wading through the bottom for half a mile, we found

OUT

the base of the tree entirely surrounded by water. With our field glass, we could see the hawklets watching us from the nest edge. When we climbed to the large crotch below the aery, both the chieftains spread their wings and quietly sailed out over the tree tops, following their parents off up the Columbia. In the nest, we picked up the head-bones of seven cat-fish.

OUT

Our work at the Red-tail's nest illustrates well the neccessity of a good series of lenses, especially when one is photographing in the tree-top. The camera was fastened in a crotch five feet from the nest, where it could be moved neither forward nor back, yet by using the wide-angle lens, we pictured the aery as if some distance away, showing its size and getting a prospective of the tree tops in the distance. The regular lens takes the nest as in an ordinary picture. By using the rear lens alone, we got a near view of one of the hawks, showing the piece of fish in the nest. Besides this, of course, we have a tele-photo lens that is valuable in bird photograpy, but it magnified too much to be used here where we were less than six feet away.

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The wild life of the Red-tail ^{HAS A} fascination ^{FOR} me. He is a useful resident of any farming community. He has an individuality that is as interesting as a person. The bleak winter wind that sweeps the valley of the Columbia and drives the other birds to the Southland, never bothers him. This is his permanent home. He is local in attachments and habits. This is his hunting ground

11 *

He won it by years of defense. He beats over the field and along the edge of the woods as regularly as the ~~as the~~ fisherman casts his net. He has his favorite perch. He watches the pond for carp, and the field for moles and gophers, as the farmer watches his orchard. His routine of life is as marked as any inhabitant along the river. Nor can I believe he is lacking in the sentiment of home. He adds sticks to his aery and enlarges it year by year. Who can say that the old nest is not fraught with many hawk memories of the past?

Hawks are of economic value, owls even more so
Among the ^{other} birds of prey, the owls are perhaps
the most the most interesting from a comical
point of view —