

To kill or not to kill

by

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What does it do?

used to be

My neighbor, the farmer, is a hater of hawks. He shoots one at every opportunity because to him every harrier is (a "chicken hawk.") a menace to chickens.

standing in potato ground and the hawk.

"Don't you know that ground squirrels, gophers, rats, and field mice are a nuisance about a farm, and the hawks and owls are nature's real check against these pests? Is it any reason a hawk should be killed because he catches a chicken occasionally?"

Some catch a chicken occasionally. Some don't. Why not get some more

part of our life

much less

"But my chickens are valuable and they need protection," he said.

"That is true, but from a naturalist's standpoint a hawk circling below the clouds is really more interesting than an old hen. His photograph is worth ten times as much," I said. Although I had lived in the country, I had not started raising chickens.

moved to

Seems to me

The hatred of hawks is also deeply seated among sportsmen who go out to shoot grouse, quail, and ducks. Why should they have such a murderous intent? Is it not a selfish feeling so they themselves can kill more game? This, too, was before we began raising bobwhite and California quail to stock our ten acres.

Shoot quail? No! We loved to have them around. We liked to hear the calls of both of these birds. Besides, the

whole area for miles around where we live is a game refuge where the laws are enforced and no hunting is permitted. This meant we could raise quail and scatter them about the farms, for all of our neighbors like these birds, too. They know that they are good insect eaters.

*What does it
mean. Think - Estimation*

In the heart of every sincere naturalist, of course, is the eager desire not to see any species exterminated. A mountain lion or coyote is a most blood-thirsty hunter. Both of these animals prey on other forms of wildlife *at domestic bird farms* not equipped with claws and teeth to fight for themselves. Even so, one would not like to see these predators annihilated.

It is much the same with the sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks and also the great-horned owl. The first two live almost entirely on song and game birds. A naturalist is likely to have an interest in predatory birds as well as others. *get* Of course, from a humane standpoint one cannot help but feel for the many feathered friends that are not really equipped to protect themselves against hawks. *and should have our help*

through

When one begins to raise chickens, he may cease to be a naturalist. *In case* (This is when) the cackle of a hen or the cheeping of chicks become more alluring than the hoot of a great-horned owl. I am wondering whether it is not a mistake for a naturalist ever to raise chickens. During the summer of 1932, we had twenty-seven barred rock chicks. We were thinking too much perhaps of fresh eggs and fried chickens, and so were not in a position to take the right viewpoint of an old Cooper's hawk that got away with half of these.

*Why have we
parsons of no
chickens*

A naturalist is courting chagrin to try to raise chick-

ens living where we do on the banks of the Willamette River where the whole slope for a hundred yards down the river bank is in the wild with big Douglas firs pointing high above the chicken yard, and maples and alders surrounding. Another natural mistake that we fell into is living just across the river from another wild forested area where hawks and owls can breed unmolested. It seems impossible that a Cooper's hawk could take so many chicks out of our own yard, but he did. He knew exactly how to do it.

Another blunder was when we began keeping a flock of white king pigeons, because we liked to see them flying over our green fields, and liked their cooing calls. Then, if one wants excitement, it surely came twice when we saw a Cooper's hawk knock over a pigeon that was nearly as large as he was. By chance, both of these birds that were attacked escaped. One pigeon was at the edge of some bushes behind the garage. The bird, knocked to the ground, lost a bunch of feathers, and I ran up just in time to see him crawl under a bush. The second pigeon was hit in much the same way near the side of the chicken house, but got behind a box. The side of its breast was bleeding and torn, but its life was saved.

The following summer, we raised a covey of nine California quail. When these were nearly grown, we began letting two or three out at a time, as we wanted them to stay around the yard. Then we soon learned how quick and keen are both the sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks. They came from across the river. As silent as shadows, they swept through the maples and around an apple tree to catch the quail unawares. A big old barred rock rooster

4 others
killed

was the best warning against these hawks. Several times he saved a quail. ^{by his cackles} The last two quail escaped the hawks because they staid close to the chickens during the daytime and went into the chicken house at night. It was during the winter while we were away that ^{Franklin} the gardner reported that a larger hawk at three different times took a white pigeon on the wing and sailed across the river without even touching ground. The man was not a naturalist, but just a farmer type, so he shot a Cooper's hawk that got the next to the last quail.

*Mr. Gardner
The quail*

Our ten acres are still in a game refuge. The last California quail disappeared a year ago. We still have Cooper's and sharp-shinned hawks about because they are keen enough to escape the shotgun that the gardner always keeps loaded.

Late one season a friend brought us a little wild duckling. He had found it in a marsh in eastern Oregon. We put him in a small box in the study, as the weather was cold. A reading lamp kept him warm at night. Our police dog used to put his nose down in the box and the duckling would peck at it. They were soon close friends. The gardner furnished angle-worms.

Mrs. Finley made a pet of the duck during the winter. In the spring when I returned from the East, the duckling had grown into a fine mallard drake. Like any wild creature, he must have companionship, and he had taken to the dog. He had the run of the yard and gardens, and went waddling along after the dog, pulling his tail. Or if the dog lay down, he would nip his ears. I am sure when the dog was sleepy he would often have liked to eat the duck, for his looks plainly said his admirer was a nuisance. The only time the duck left the dog was when the gardner was dig-

ging and there were likely to be worms. He stuck under the man's feet and was on top of every shovelful of soil.

"This drake mallard needs a wife," I said one day. A few days later a friend gave us a hen mallard. One would naturally think a drake duck would take to a hen. He paid no more attention to his new mate than he did to a stick. He was a dog-duck. His whole life was centered around the dog. To bring him back to normal, each night we ^hstut him up in the chicken house with his new wife. A little later she had laid thirteen eggs. While she sat faithfully all day long, the drake followed the dog or was with the gardner. After keeping vigil over her eggs for a month, we discovered that not a single egg was fertile. It was the dog the drake wanted, not a wife.

For two years this drake was the clown of our place. Then one fall morning he was missing. On the hillside near the chicken yard his body lay, the head gone, the breast partly eaten. The nearby excreta and the signs surrounding were unmistakable evidence of a great-horned owl. The previous day a band of crows had been heard making a racket down by the river. They were talking owl. It did not occur to us that he was the culprit, as our ten acres had so seldom been visited by one of these big hunters.

Years of experience have led us to wonder just what the value of a game refuge is. Is it a sanctuary to protect the birds that really need protection and to keep hunters out? It has been a remarkable success for hawks because there has been no shooting. It is a refuge that would warm the hearts of all who love hawks and owls. We are still wondering whether as naturalists we owe

more to the quail that have been exterminated rather than to the predatory birds that have thrived on them. Not that we love hawks less, but the quail more.