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THE SPARROW HAWK

In the literature of all nations, the hawk has appealed to the imagination of mankind. In the middle ages, falconry was one of the popular sports. It dates back to the unwritten past. The early Egyptians and Persians pictured it in frescoes and sculptures.

When firearms were invented, this proved to be a quicker and less expensive way of getting meat. So the use of hawks for hunting gradually disappeared.

In recent years, as the country has settled up, and more people have taken to hunting, game birds have become scarcer. It has become a habit of many sportsmen to lay the blame of disappearing game birds to everything but themselves. Inasmuch as hawks and owls are predatory and hunt for a living, sporting and commercial interests have urged the shooting of all birds of prey on the ground that such killing will increase game. It is true that some species of hawks like the sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawk and the great-horned owl are destroyers of many birds, yet the many other species live largely on insects and rodents and generally do more good than harm.

Among the various hawks of the Northwest, the sparrow hawk is the smallest and most brightly colored. From his name, one might think that he made a business of killing sparrows. This is not true. Grasshopper-hawk would be a better name as he lives largely on insects and small rodents like field mice. He may be recognized by his reddish-brown back and black bars. This color extends on to the tail with a black band near the tip. The white throat and two black stripes down the side of the head are the easiest marks

of identification.

This little falcon is a bird of the open country. One often sees him alighting on the top of a telephone pole, his tail moving up and down with an easy motion. He hunts over the open fields, sometimes hovering in mid-air with rapid wing beats, watching for some little animal in the grass below. His nest is usually in a hole in a dead tree. During the breeding season, the male flies about with a high-pitched call note that sounds like "killy-killy-killy-killy." In the South this note has given him the name of killy-hawk.