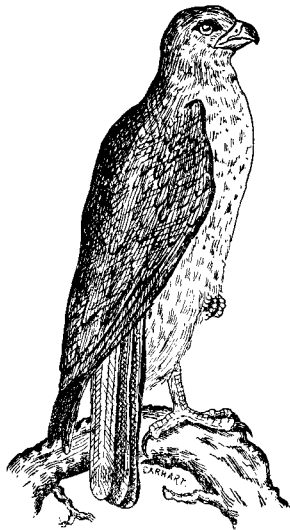


HOW THE COOPER'S HAWK HUNTS HIS PREY.

BY H. H. BRIMLEY, RALEIGH, N. C.

I have, on four different occasions, had the pleasure of being a close spectator of a Cooper's Hawk in pursuit of his prey. The way he did it was much the same in each case; below I give a short description of how it was done.



COOPER'S HAWK.

About four years ago this fall I was hunting along a small creek in some rather thick woods. Suddenly from the rising ground behind me I heard a succession of whistling notes—I might almost say screams—giving me the idea of a bird in great fright. Turning quickly, I saw the maker of the music, in the shape of a Towhee, darting through the bushes for all he was worth, while not more than three feet behind him sailed a Cooper's Hawk, likewise apparently doing all he knew in the way of flying. The scene was a novel one to me then, having never previously seen any hawk in pursuit of its prey at such close quarters, and I watched the chase for a moment before mak-

ing any move in the matter. The Towhee continued his screams and the Hawk kept up the chase; both, seemingly flying at a tremendous pace, the Cooper looking extra long and thin as he stretched out in pursuit of his quarry. What the result would have been I cannot tell as a shot from my gun at the Hawk (which I missed) stopped the race. In this case the shadow was rather deep in the woods and I did not have as clear a view as on subsequent occasions but the idea given me by what I did see was that both birds were flying very fast and that the Hawk was gaining.

Chase No. 2 was after a Bob-white. I was returning from hunting one morning, following a wagon road through the woods,

when suddenly several scattered quail crossed the road just in front of me flying low and very rapidly. Perhaps fifty yards behind the first comers came a single one, screaming as he came, and close behind him flew a Cooper's Hawk. Anyone who knows how fast Bob-white can travel when well scared can guess at the gait of the two birds, the hawk apparently keeping up with the quail. Just before crossing the road, which they would have crossed within twenty-five yards of where I stood, the quail darted into a thicket of bamboo briars and the Cooper swung onto a perch a few feet from the ground and not far away. I watched for a few minutes to see if anything else would occur, but as the play seemed to be over, I shot the hawk and so broke up the combination.

Spring before last I was egging in rather a rough piece of country—swamp would not be a misnomer. It was some distance above the head of a millpond, but the water backed up far enough to cause the creek to run in several channels and to make the walking between a mixture from ankle to knee deep, wading in sand and mud. I was toiling along in this elysium when a solitary Sandpiper dashed by me from behind, and as in the previous cases mentioned, he was pursued by a Cooper's Hawk. But he seemed to have his wits about him and dodged and darted back and up and down with lightning-like rapidity. The hawk was in close chase and I thought he was about to take his quarry when the Sandpiper gave a quick dart downward and out of sight behind some bushes—a splash in the water—and a few seconds afterwards I saw the hawk flying quietly away. I don't think he got the "piper," but I am not certain. I think that the Sandpiper, getting hard pressed, dashed downward into the creek and dived, this being the splash I heard. This Sandpiper worked hard for his liberty and I hope he got what he so well deserved.

Fourthly and lastly. I was hunting around some marshy ground last spring, a particularly favorite place for Wilson's Snipe. I was after King Rails at the time and snipe were not my object that morning. The marshy ground was fringed with a thick growth of alder willows, some twelve or fifteen feet high. My dog was working along the edge of the willows and flushed a snipe. Most people know with what a "get there" kind of flight a snipe rises from the marsh, and when I say that the snipe

had not cleared six feet of space before a Cooper's Hawk, that had been sitting in the bushes just above the snipe's stamping ground, was in full chase, one can imagine how quick and watchful the hawk must have been. The snipe let himself out for all he knew in flying but as they passed me at about thirty yards distance the hawk seemed to be gaining rapidly, although to all appearances not flying half as fast as the snipe. The hawk appeared to get within three feet of his prey when I was completely astonished by his sheering off the line of flight, and sailing gracefully round to return from whence he came, giving up the hunt just as his prey seemed within his grasp. He sailed by me as he came back within easy shot, but I let him go. I thought he deserved his life after his disappointment.

I gather from the foregoing experience that Cooper's Hawk has to work hard for a living and is subject to many bitter disappointments. Also that he flies about twice as fast as he appears to when pursuing other birds.

JULY PRIZE QUESTIONS.

Last July's "Ten Prize Questions" were not so earnestly contested for as the preceding ones and we have decided to drop them altogether. Following is a list of the winners and the prizes they received:

Mr. Chas. E. Cram, Davenport, Iowa, won the first prize, an egg of the Snowy Owl; the second prize, a set of eggs of the Carolina Chickadee, went to Mr. W. E. Burnett, Bradford, Pa., and the third prize, a copy of the O. & O. SEMI-ANNUAL, went to Mr. D. H. Van Pelt, Lansingburgh, N. Y.

We would be pleased to give a list of many other competitors worthy of mention, but space will not allow.