

the three days we were there in 1934.

Our next trip to the Rail territory was from May 23-26, 1935. One bird was heard on May 23rd, at 10:30 p.m., and it ticked only a few times during a period of 20 minutes, with long intervals between each tick. We heard one along the bank of a creek at 10:45 a.m., on May 26th. This was the first time we had heard one in the forenoon.

On June 2nd, while at Willow Point, I heard two birds at 3 p.m. and again at 3:20. Each time it was for only a few seconds.

At Grant's Lake one was heard at 4:50 p.m., on June 9th, and, with others heard during the day, it was for only a few seconds. The territory here was different from that of the other localities, the growth being heavy coarse grass in five or six inches of water.

On June 16th, it was heard again at Willow Point. This territory is similar to that of Libau, a mixture of fine and coarse marsh grass, and the water is only two to four inches deep. It was heard three times between 5:30 and 6:00 p.m.

The time for our annual trip to Libeau was drawing near, so we planned to try and collect the "ticker" if possible. We left for the lodge on June 29th, Angus H. Shortt, Orland P. Gibson and I. That evening we were out until 8 to 9 p.m. just before sunset. The wind was very strong and we heard the bird but a few times, so we decided to wait until after dark and make a second try. By 10 p.m. the wind

had dropped considerably, so we started out armed with two "410's" and three strong spotlights. We did not have any luck but learned that talking did not seem to disturb it very much, the ticking being fairly continuous. The next day we set out a little before 11 p.m. and spent the next hour in testing the surroundings and planning our attack. Finally it was arranged that we should spread out in a semi-circle and cross-focus the light on the sound. We could not see the bird or the slightest movement in the grass, but we could follow its course easily by the incessant ticking sound. When I was about 150 feet away my beam seemed to drive it towards Shortt. It seemed to be only about 15 feet from him and in moving back to get a proper range he frightened it in the direction of Gibson, who was between the two of us. Shortt and I had our beams crossed as the sound receded from him. At last when it was some 40 feet from Shortt, and 90 to 100 feet from me, Gibson fired from a distance of about 30 feet. He ran forward while we held our beams on the spot, and it took him but a minute or so to find the bird. Finally we had satisfied ourselves as to the cause of the ticking, it was the Yellow Rail.

The specimen was in excellent condition, having been struck in the head with a single pellet. It was taken back to Winnipeg and has been mounted by Shortt, and is now on exhibition in the Manitoba Museum, Winnipeg Auditorium.

## FEEDING HABITS OF BALD-HEADED EAGLE

By THEED PEARSE



THE BALD-HEADED EAGLE gets much of its food (certainly on the British Columbia coast) from the water, by picking it up with its talons as it swoops down but, in my experience of several years, I have never seen an Eagle actually settle on the water until the other day.

On the evening of the 25th May, 1935, at Elma Bay, near Courtenay, Vancouver Island, I was watching a Bald-headed Eagle that was evidently after some prey off shore. The bird was some 500 yards away and it was much too dark to see if it was a duck it was after, in fact it was so dark that when first seen I thought the bird must be a Horned Owl and so dark that the outline of the bird was almost lost when flying against any background. I

have never seen an Eagle feeding so late.

The bird was making the regular swoop and, on reaching the water, striking at something with its talons; it did this two or three times and, on the next swoop, evidently connected with its prey and, in doing this, plunged into the water. The next thing was the Eagle flapping its wings on the surface of the water, trying to lift the catch in which it had its talons fixed. After attempting this unsuccessfully it looked as though the bird conceived the idea of struggling to shore with its prey and it attempted to progress by means of its wings, bringing them forward over the head and back. It continued doing this for quite an appreciable time but made no progress and both my companion and I came to the conclusion the bird was drown-



ing (as the result of being unable to disengage itself from its prey.) This thrashing of the water stopped and the Eagle then began to make for the shore at a steady pace; it was too dark to see its manner of propulsion beyond that the neck was being continuously extended forward and drawn back.

We watched the bird till it was lost to sight behind a point and, when we saw it again it was standing on the shore; it saw us and rose, flew round behind us to a favorite perch on a dead fir, some 50 feet up. The bird had not been much more than a dark object on the shore but as it flew round to its perch it passed quite near and was then, and when perched, clear against the sky and not 200 yards away. I was using 9 power prismatics and with these could not see that the plumage looked wet and the bird seemed quite unconcerned; however, by then, the light was very poor.

We estimated the distance from the shore to where the bird struck its prey to be, at least, 400 yards and that the time it took to reach land was ten minutes. From the pace it went, after freeing itself from the catch, it must have been using its feet for propulsion. The tide was coming in but would not have helped much as, here, the "set" tends to be along the shore line; the evening was quite calm with no wind. The Eagle reached the shore entirely by its own efforts, in fact, had it been at all rough it is doubtful if it could have made it. When progressing the bird looked to be resting easily on the water and I would suggest that it was holding itself up with the wings held away from the side and using its feet to do the propelling.

The next afternoon I had a further experience with, probably, the same bird. A Bald-headed Eagle was beating up and down the edge of the out-going tide, evidently looking for food (he had made a couple of swoops at some marine bird, likely to have been a Loon, which does not seem to have the same fear of an Eagle as do the Ducks); seeing something interesting he swooped to the surface but did not strike and continued on, soon returning to the same spot (just in front of where I was sitting) where he executed a most spectacular manoeuvre. The bird turned a somersault, then, with wings and tail fully spread, righted himself and swooped down to the water. It is difficult to describe the manoeuvre; it all took place in a second or so, but it rather suggested an aeroplane looping the loop and then turning into a side slip; at one time the whole undersurface was

in view, as it turned on the "side-slip". I had the impression that the tail was very much a controlling factor.

As on the previous evening, the bird appeared to plunge into the sea and, when doing so, quite an amount of the bird must have been submerged, the bird keeping its wings loose from the body to prevent sinking. At first it rested on the water with the wings partly stretched out. It looked as though the strike had been futile, as the Eagle, then, quite unconcernedly, drew in its wings and rested on the water without a movement for two or three minutes, long enough to cause one to wonder if it was going to get up at all; it appeared to be sinking gradually. There was no movement until, with much flapping of the wings, it rose from the surface with the fish and flew to a nearby pile where it commenced to eat it in a quite unconcerned way and not at all as though hungry. After a few minutes it flew off with what remained, towards where it was nesting. The fish was, I am practically sure, a Bull-head about eight inches long (this species is plentiful); in carrying it the Eagle grasped the head, with the tail dangling behind in the manner of the Osprey.

During this whole episode this Eagle was never more than 250 yards away and, when in the water, less, and I had it in view with glasses the whole time. Again the sea was quite calm but the tide going out.

The distance from the edge of the out-going tide to where the bird struck and settled on the water was not far, 100 feet or so, and it is possible that when the bird rose from the water, the tide had sufficiently receded to enable it to touch the ground and so get the necessary impetus for flight; it did not, however, give the impression of doing more than rise from the water by means of its wings.

I had the nest of this bird under observation from time to time and was able to notice the growth of the young birds.

There are two Eagles's nests in the vicinity: one a bulky affair, in a solitary Fir; the other (the occupied one) much flatter, in the branches springing from the broken-off top of a Douglas Fir, not very tall; this nest looks much older. The area has been logged over (hence the solitary fir) though the other nest is in a clump of conifers that were left. The respective distances from the sea would be about half a mile and a quarter of a mile, and they would be about a quarter of a mile apart.



I made my first visit on 2nd June, actually intending to go to the bulky nest as this had been reported as occupied. An old bird first appeared when between the two sites and, from the unusually shrill call, I recognized it as the bird which had given the aquatic performances. She was soaring around the site of the second nest, hidden then in the trees; flying with her was a last year bird at which, every now and then, she would make a swoop, especially when it approached the clump of trees. The yearling going off, the old bird took up its stand on a dead stub nearer the first nest, anticipating as it turned out the return of its mate from this direction.

Shortly afterwards the other bird (which I call the male, the first bird I assumed, from its greater care of the young, to be the female) appeared carrying food and was vociferously welcomed, both birds flying together to the clump of trees. It took me a few minutes to get this nest into view, owing to the bad going, then I could see the female bird standing on the nest tearing at the food and swallowing portions. When she saw me she flew to a close-by tree, occasionally crying but never at all excited, even on my going below the nesting tree. On my moving away she flew to a dead tree close to the nest and remained there. The male occasionally called, perched 300 to 400 yards away, but the yearling did not appear again on this or on any subsequent visits. On this occasion it was only possible to make sure of there being one young bird, which lifted its head above the rim of the nest, flapped its wings and once stood up to evacuate; it looked about the size of a small banyard hen. Though the nest looked to have a flattened top the cup was sufficiently deep to hide the old bird when brooding.

On the 1st and 2nd of July I was at the nest. Only one young bird was visible perched, immovable, on the edge of the nest. During the two days I spent 3 to 4 hours at the nest without any food being brought.

On July 7th two young birds were visible. One was sitting well out on the rim of the nest, the other behind. The parent brought a fish, going into the nest with it, and the second bird attacked it, flapping its wings, the other bird, on the outside, was indifferent. Later both birds resumed their side by side position on the rim.

15th July. One young bird was perched on a branch by the nest; when the parent brought food this one took no notice beyond crying once as she flew in, the other then came flapping in from a neighbouring tree. There was much crying and the parent bird remained in the nest with the latter young bird for some minutes before flying away. Later the young bird climbed out of the nest to a branch and wiped its beak, the other never moved. There was a considerable difference in the size, the bird that had fed being the larger, especially in the length of the tail.

21st July. No sign of young birds at the nest, but one in the look-out tree, 100 yards or so away, from its size and length of tail, I judged, to be the smaller.

28th July. Both young birds perched on piles on foreshore about three quarters of a mile away. No noticeable difference in size. After this date old and young left the nesting area but a young bird was back on 8th September. On each occasion of visiting the nest I looked for remains of food; the only thing I found was the tail of what had been a good sized flounder.

## NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

GOLDEN EAGLE AND RICHARDSON'S OWL IN BRANT COUNTY, ONTARIO.— In November 1935 I was privileged to see the eagle, mounted, in a hardware store, in Paris, Ontario. It had been mounted by my friend Dr. W. H. J. Gould and had been killed in the township of South Dumfries, just a few weeks before. The white band across the tail which is wide and conspicuous in the juvenal, was quite narrow, showing that the bird was of a considerable age.

In the Doctor's office there was also a very small owl in a case with other birds, and only a second glance was required to determine that

it was a Richardson, doubtless the rarest of owls in Ontario with the single exception of the Great Gray. The last occurrence that I remember in lower Ontario was some five years ago when Robert Lindsay captured one alive in the willows on Fisherman's Island at Toronto. Mr. Lindsay was as much surprised when told that he had brought this great rarity to the meeting of the Brodie Club as was Dr. Gould, who naturally concluded that his bird was a Saw-whet. One of this latter species was picked up dead on a London street about December 22, 1936.—W. E. SAUNDERS.





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