

OWLS

Why kill the "Hoot Owl?"

That great 20-inch bird, greyish brown in color with large round head and dark brown eyes. It looks, in certain postures, as though it wore a monk's hood. Barred Owl is its book name because of transverse markings on its neck and breast. This is the owl that says, "Who, Who are You! Who, Who are You!—You! When a pair of them are engaged in private conversation from opposite sides of a river bottom, they set up a racket that results in some of the most startling sounds to be heard in nature. "There's gwine ter be a party out ter-night. Where at? Down ter Jim Young's. Who's gwine to be dar? Jim Young, Liza Young, Hester Young, and the Lord knows who, a-who all! a-who all!" This owl is resident of the state at all seasons and the most abundant of our large owls. It lives regularly where sometimes seen but more often heard. It is not a hobo or forest owl and it is one of the least harmful of its kind. It is a bird of the lowlands and creek bottoms, or wherever there are large tracts of wood land. Of 109 stomachs examined (by Fisher) only 5 contained game birds or poultry, while 46 contained mice.

Why kill the Barn Owl?

An 18-inch light colored owl that looks almost white in the gathering darkness of a barn loft. Its "monkey face," small black eyes and long legs, identify it at once. It is a most interesting and harmless bird and a great mouser. The farmer who has a pair of these owls on his place, in winter, is a lucky man. They are always on the job after dark, while Puss may be found in the kitchen waiting to be fed, or in the parlor posing as a fur-bearing animal of the tiger class, but friendly to man. The barn owl is usually shot on sight as a curiosity.

Why kill the Short-eared Owl?

A 15-inch medium sized owl, brown and yellowish in color, with round head and yellow eyes. Its ears are too short to be seen at a distance. This owl might be classed as a "Big Owl" in a judgment that hankered for a "snap-shot." It is a bird of the fields, high meadows and marshy places where it hunts field mice. It flies from the ground and returns to it to roost. It winters in this part of the state from November until February. It is not shy and on cloudy days often goes about. When flushed it rises from the ground and sometimes alights on a slight elevation, and watches the hunter in an intent half human manner, that in owls, at least, is becoming.

Why kill the Long-eared Owl?

Another medium sized owl, that might be considered a "Big Owl" by

a gunner who is out with his imagination. It looks like a small sized Great Horned Owl. Like the Great Horned Owl it has conspicuous ear tufts, and yellow eyes, but it is much smaller—14 inches against 22 inches in length for the larger bird. Anyone ought to recognize this difference in size with a ten-inch robin in mind for a measuring stick. It never hunts in the day time but hides in an evergreen top or alder swamp. Crows and Blue Jays sometimes locate it for "real folks and others." It is a very modest, unobtrusive owl, not here in summer so far as known.

Kill the Great Horned Owl!

There is no mistaking it—a 22-inch bird, with ear tufts 2 inches long, throat white, and great yellow eyes. This is the only "Big Owl" native to the state that is likely to do real harm, and in Moore county it must be rare, for it retreats before civilization that destroys the forests in which it lives. Its specialty is skunks, but rabbits are its favorite food. Chickens roosting in the trees, in summer, may fall victims to its prowess. It is a wary bird and sees well in the day time. We are supposed to kill this handsome owl on sight in spite of the fact, like some of us, it has many virtues.

All owls are night birds of prey. That is what they were designed to be—hunters at night—for that is when field rats and mice and other small destructive animals are abroad looking for something to eat. The owls described hunt where their food is most abundant and easiest caught: in the fields and meadows and marshy places, with the exception of the "monkey faced" barn owl. If we had more owls we would have less rats and mice in our homes in winter. They come in from the fields. If we all possessed the reputed wisdom of owls, and looked as wise and as handsome, there is only one owl in this region we would kill. The rest we would better let alone 'till found guilty. The old Spanish law declared every man guilty to be proved innocent. Some of us have gotten beyond that. The flight of owls is slow and wavering, and not at all like that of hawks.

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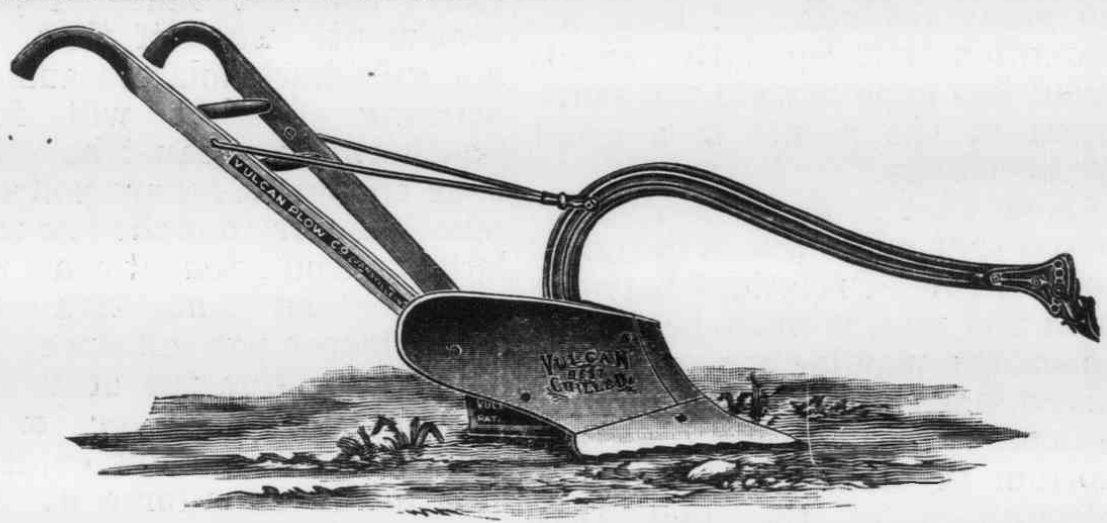
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