

# Photographing the Aerie of a Red-Tailed Hawk

By William L. Finley, With Pictures Taken in the Tree-Top by Herman T. Bohman.

IF THERE is another red-tail in the county that has found a nesting site higher than the one in the cottonwood over on the bank of the Columbia River, I have never seen it. A red-tail picks out a high, commanding site just as a mallard searches the sodded grass about the pond for a home. This pair of hawks surely found it. We would never have discovered the aerie had we not searched the bottom when the trees were leafless. The finding of a hawk's nest in this land of tall trees is often difficult, but nothing as compared to climbing and photographing it.

Few nests are absolutely beyond human touch, although it may take a deal of scheming and a risk of life or limb to reach them. Three years passed after we found this aerie of the red-tail before we succeeded in leveling our camera at the eggs. The nest tree measured over 14 feet around at the bottom. There was not a limb for 40 feet. The nest itself was lodged just 120 feet up. It was out of the question to clamber up such a tree with ladders, ropes or anything else, but we had at last studied out a plan.

A young cottonwood stood 12 feet away. This might serve as a ladder, so we cut away till it began to totter. With ropes we pulled it over. The crown lodged in the crotch of the first large limb of the nest tree, full 40 feet up. This formed a good aerial bridge, up which we clambered a foot of the distance to the nest. The

anticipation led us on. We lassoed upper branches, dug our climbing-irons into the bark and worked slowly up.

**Strongly-Built Nest.**

We found a stack of sticks the size of a small-sized hay-cock. They were not pitched together helter-skelter. A big nest like a hawk's or heron's always gives me the impression it is easily thrown together. I examined this one and found it carefully woven as a wicker basket. It was strong at every point. Sticks over a yard in length and some as big as your wrist were all worked into a compact mass. In the hollowed top on some bark and leaves lay the two eggs.

I never saw a more commanding stronghold. It overlooked the country for miles in every direction. From where the hawk-mother brooded her eggs I looked out far up the Columbia, where I could see the cavernous slopes of Mount Hood. Extending to the westward was the long line of ponds and lakes, the red-tails' favorite hunting ground, while to the north extended the broad expanse of water and in the distance loomed up the dome-like peak of St. Helens, covered with perpetual snow.

**Photographing Under Difficulties.**

How could we ever secure a good series of pictures at such a distance from the ground? It looked impossible at first, but a careful examination revealed a rare arrangement of nest and surroundings. If we could but hold our equipment there was no question as to photographs. Eight

feet below the nest the trunk of the tree branched and spread in such a way that we could climb to a point just above the nest on the opposite limb. We strapped the camera in a crotch that seemed built for the purpose, with the sun coming from the right direction. The rub came in focusing the instrument. One hundred and twenty-five feet is not such a dizzy height when you look up from the ground, but strap yourself to the limb of a tree and dangle out backward over the brink. No matter how strong the rope, there's a feeling of death creeping up and down every nerve in your body the first time you try it.

**Attached to Their Home.**

The wild life of the redtail fascinates me. He has an individuality that is as interesting as a person. He has a character as clearly marked as in any feathered creature I ever studied. The bleak winter winds that sweep the valley of the Columbia and drive the other birds to the Southland never bothers him. This is his permanent home. He is not a vagabond. He is local in attachments and habits. This is his hunting ground. He won't it by years of defense. He beats over the field and along the edge of the woods as regularly as the fisherman casts his net. He has his favorite perch. He watches the pond for carp as closely as the farmer watches his orchard. His routine of life is as marked as any inhabitant along the river. Nor can I believe he is lacking in the sentiment of home. He adds sticks to his house and enlarges it year by year. Each season it is fraught



THE PHOTOGRAPHER AT WORK ON NEST, (STRAPPED TO TREE)

has been known to catch chickens, but this is rare. Those that have been killed at the chicken-yard are young and inexperienced birds, unable, as a general rule, to cope with wilder game. But even granting that the redtail's food is an occasional chicken, as a robin takes cherries, is it not a righteous exchange for 20 times as many squirrels, gophers and other birds? Hawks and owls that are found on the coast, only two hawks, the sharp-shinned and Cooper's, are directly injurious to the farmer. These two feed largely on poultry and game. After a critical examination of the stomachs of 221 other hawks and owls, made by the Department of Agriculture, it was found that 86 per cent contained mice and other small mammals, 27 per cent insects and only 2 1/2 per cent poultry and game birds.

We made a close study of the redtail's home in the tall cottonwood. He was always a successful hunter. In all our visits we never saw the time when his larder was empty. Nor did we ever find that he had to resort to the chicken-yard for food. The first visits we made to the aerie, while the young were in down, we found the remains of mice, rats and squirrels that the redtail's family had eaten. Almost a case of hawk eat hawk. Later in the season, when the banks of the Columbia were bare and covered most of the surrounding country, the old hawk did not abandon his own preserve. He turned his attention entirely to fishing. Where the carp and catfish fed about the edge of the ponds he had no trouble in gaining a livelihood. Twice we found carp over a foot in length in the aerie. On the last visit we picked up the head bones of seven.

WILLIAM L. FINLEY.

### Man and the Thing.

Westminster Gazette.

And Rutyard penned a poem, and he sent it to the Times; and they printed it just as he wrote it—Ancient MS.

(In respectful imitation of Mr. Rutyard Kipling's verse in yesterday's Times. It is humbly suggested that the imitation is at all times not more unimpeachable than the original.)

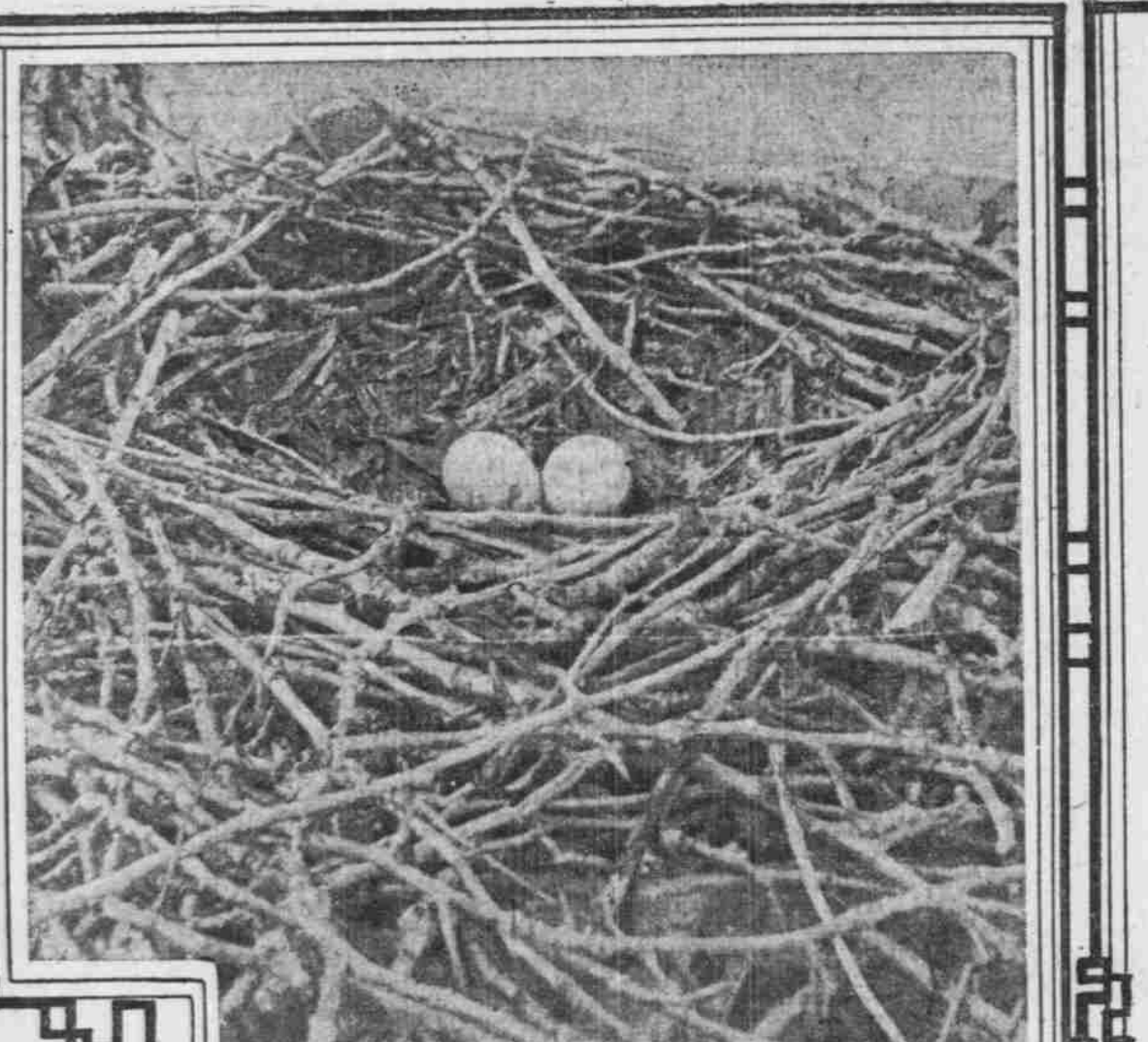
Oh ye who hold your cricket blue  
Or on the game have written things,  
Not this time do I you pursue,  
You fanned fools, with flouts and things  
Look! Here in print the poet sings  
The oddest tale since Earth began  
With rhyme and rhythm wrayings—  
"Once on a time there was a man."

Republican his darts he threw  
Once on a time at Thunes and Kings.  
He later with his family crew  
From Birmingham to town took wings.  
He cursed them, he pulled the string  
He worked the wires, he launched 'em  
And prompted all No End of Things—  
Once on a time there was a man.

The peace of party wallings flew  
Before his Irish questionings.  
He smashed the party straight in two  
And snugged the party wires and springs  
He headed desert wanderings.  
Until at last he got his clan  
Well settled in the Swim of Things.  
Once on a time there was a man.

Tariff Commission blocks the view  
With paragraphs by underlines.  
No cute Historian deems them true.  
Nor heeds the song that H. W. sings—  
The just "simple" song that brings  
The urbs to bee, the rus to ban;  
The more you tax you cheapen things—  
Once on a time there was a man.

A puzzled world demands a clue,  
The peddler full erie swings,  
And Liberal dreamers dream anew  
Of Herts and Shropshire harvestings.  
To him at grips a people cling  
In grim embrace, to thwart his plan.  
The People just won't have his things!  
Once—for our time—his's not the man!



NEST AND EGGS OF RED-TAIL HAWK

## American "Jim the Penman" in Real Life

Most Remarkable Criminal of the Age Who Counterfeited \$50 Bills With an Ordinary Pen.

WASHINGTON, Sept. 6.—(Special Correspondence of The Sunday Oregonian.)—Chief Wilkie looked around the walls of his den in the Secret Service Bureau in the Treasury Department and pointed to the photograph of Emanuel Ninger. "He was the most expert penman I ever knew, or that the secret service officials ever come in contact with," said Chief Wilkie, and then he declined to talk further for quotation, because it is the policy of the secret service never to do anything to display to the world the criminal record of a man who is apparently trying to live down the "black pages" of his life.

Chief Wilkie was right. Emanuel Ninger was the "Jim the Penman" of real life, and in a way the most remarkable criminal of the age. He had no extensive plants for engraving and printing counterfeit notes, and his only stock consisted of paper, ordinary writing pens, pencils, red, green and black inks. With these he baffled the secret service officers of the Government for 15 years, and was finally detected by mere accident. The wet fingers of a New York saloonkeeper came in contact with the ink upon one of the freshly made bills of "Jim," the Penman, and the ink blurred. The fact, added to suspicions of the saloonkeeper, led to the immediate arrest of Ninger, who was served his sentence and is a free man somewhere, no longer engaged in counterfeiting the currency of Uncle Sam, but always under suspicion by the organization over which Chief Wilkie presides.

**Detection Accidental.**

It was in New York City, in March, 1888, that "Jim, the Penman," of the counterfeiting profession, came to grief. He started from his little home in Flieg-town, N. J., Saturday morning, March 28, 1888, and had in his possession six \$50 notes and one \$20 note, which, together, were the product of 15 weeks' work. His wife and four children did not ask him any questions when he left home that morning. He had been a mystery to them for many years. He forbade them entrance to the room in his home in which he worked, and he said nothing to anybody about his business. He had no confederates, and even his wife did not have any idea about what he was doing. Ninger experienced no difficulty in passing five of the \$20 notes. The sixth one came near getting him into trouble. He went to John Weyman's grocery store, 132 Third avenue, New York City, called for a bottle of whiskey and gave the \$20 note remaining in payment. Shortly after her departure the cashier, in counting up her cash, noticed the blurred condition of the number upon the note when it passed under her moistened thumb, and, quickly realizing that something was wrong, had an investigation made.

By that time Ninger had gotten out of



YOUNG RED-TAILS IN DOWN.

eight. He walked rapidly down town to a saloon at 87 Courtland street. There he got a glass of Rhenish wine and a cigar, and asked the bartender to change the \$50 note for him, stating by way of explanation that he wanted to pay off his farm hands. He was accommodated, hastily gathered up his change and hurried on. He seemed to be somewhat excited, and the bartender became suspicious and took the bill from the money-drawer for closer examination. In doing so his wet finger passed over the serial number and the result was the blur. Putting on his hat he started in pursuit of Ninger and found him in the New Jersey Central Railroad ferry-house counting over the change he had just received.

**The Truth Sweated Out.**

Ninger displayed no surprise when approached by the bartender and informed by that individual that he was going to have him arrested. Ninger told the man he would return the \$50, and offered at the same time to make the bartender a present of \$5 more. The offer was refused and Ninger was turned over to a policeman and escorted to the Church-street Police Station, where he gave his name as Joseph Gilbert, and stated that he lived in Wilkesbarre, Pa., and that he was not married. He claimed that he had received the counterfeit bill from a man in the corridor of the Union Trust Bank building, to whom he had sold two United States \$50 bonds. Secret service officers in New York were notified, and when they saw Ninger and the notes which he had been passing they were convinced that he was the man who had caused them so many sleepless nights. The fact of his arrest, however, did not solve the whole question by any means.

**Worked Fifteen Years for a Clew.**

Ninger's first work turned up at the Treasury Department in the redemption division in 1873, in a batch of notes from one of the subtreasuries, and was a \$20 counterfeit. The expert counterer detected the spuriousness of the note, and at once began an investigation. A careful scrutiny under a magnifying glass revealed the fact that the note was a free-hand



FULL GROWN RED-TAILS

drawing with pen and ink, and the perfect likeness of the note was so wonderful as practically to defy detection at the hands of any but an expert. Secret service officers were at once notified, but they were unable to do anything because the tellers of the subtreasury from which the note was received were unable to tell how the note came into their possession. For more than 15 years afterward these marvelous works of art turned up at more or less frequent intervals, usually arriving at the Treasury in remittances from banks, where they had escaped detection. They came from all over the country, every section contributing its share to these now famous notes. Secret service detectives worked night and day, but they could obtain no clew. The general appearance of the notes were so good that no shopkeeper hesitated about accepting them, and when they reached the banks the chances were even that they would again escape detection, so the officers were blocked at every stage in endeavoring to trace them from hand to hand.

The chief of the Secret Service Bureau and his assistants advanced every theory. One of them was that the maker of the notes was a person of leisure, gifted with the faculty of imitation, who developed this strange fad as an amusement, and that it pleased him to lead the secret service into a merry chase in pursuit. Until November, 1883, all the notes received at the Treasury Department were \$20 and \$50. Then a new specimen of "Jim the Penman's" handiwork turned up. It was a \$100 legal tender issue of 1880 bearing the portrait of Lincoln, and, like the first, received in a remittance from a subtreasury. Warnings of this counterfeit, as of the others, was given the widest publicity. Numerous points were given wherein they differed from the genuine, and how to detect them. One of the suggestions was that by passing a moistened finger over the serial number the ink would blur, while in the genuine notes this was not so. It was in the accidental application of this test that finally caused Ninger's downfall.

The secret service officers attributed Ninger's long immunity from arrest to the fact that he worked alone, having no confederates, and that he did not attempt

to put many bills on the market at the same time. The first thing Ninger did was to procure bond paper of about the same quality as that upon which genuine notes are printed, with the exception, of course, that this paper was without the silk threads to be found in the genuine. Cutting the paper the exact size of the regular notes, Ninger immersed it in a weak solution of coffee. This imparted to the paper the appearance of age, and as having passed through several hands. While the paper was still wet, it was placed over the face of a genuine note, the edges being exactly together. The two were then placed flat upon a glass, and every figure and letter, portrait and vignette, together with the signatures and seals, were brought out in bold relief, and could be plainly seen through the transparent bond paper. The pane of glass was then placed against the window frame at an angle of about 45 degrees. The light shining through rendered the tracing of the genuine engraving quite distinct. In this position the counterfeiter commenced work, first with an extremely sharp and hard-pointed pencil. With it he carefully traced all outlines on the original note. After the note was thoroughly dry the same ground was gone over with pen and ink. It was here that the marvelous touch and skill of the penman was displayed, testing the accuracy of his eye and the steadiness of his nerve. The colors on the note were applied with a camelhair brush, and these colors so closely resembled the colors on the genuine note as to contribute materially to the appearance of the counterfeit. Red and blue ink marks were made to take the place of the silk threads which are worked into the pulp of the Government paper. The Treasury seal, which is placed on all paper currency, is almost invariably placed over a portion of the main design of the note, thus adding difficulty to the tracing of these difficult lines, but Ninger kept at it with wonderful skill and fidelity. The same care and attention were not devoted to the back of the note. It was usually executed with a brush. In doing this the artist relied mainly upon the coloring to add to the deception.—(Copyright, 1904, by the Washington Press Association.)

J. MARTIN MILLER.