

Along The Trail

by
ken legg

A baby fawn, just old enough to be dry, standing in the forest, bathed in filtered sunlight — standing uncertain upon the edge of an unknown future! A convoy of yellow, fluffy ducklings laying ever-widening V's and soft ripples upon the mirror-surfaced water, these are the sweet things of nature.

To the true naturalist the fierce events are as heart-reaching. This is a story of fierce nature.

October. The grebes have not arrived yet but gulls are plentiful below the perch of our duck hawk. On the trail to Big Dome point enough feathers to fill a pillow are strewn. They are the

gray of an immature gull. His meatless skeleton lies amid the feathers, red-bloody, but hardly enough left for the maggots to feed upon when they hatch from eggs already placed.

Even the head is clean picked and the eyes are missing from their sockets. The two mandibles are disjointed. This is familiar work of our falcon.

The bones surrounding the body cavity encase a stomach, both liver lobes, and a heart — nothing more. One wing is intact, but likewise meatless. This gull lost his flesh this morning, and while its predator rests and digests on the cliffs nearby, others of the gull's kind swarm over a spot below where I sit, and prey on things which live in the sea, and perhaps until the grebes arrive one of these will, tomorrow morning, make the day's fare for our falcon.

Everyone who knows the duck hawk thrills to his speed and wild fierceness. He is all predator; one of the most efficient killing machines in the bird world. Still, we should not overlook the fact that this fierce hawk is a great part of wild America. His numbers are few and should be guarded, for he has some important role in the scheme of nature. Maybe one of these is to relieve the suffering of wounded waterfowl. Hunters have told of shoot-and wounding ducks, and having duck hawks come in and take them. Very few of these falcons are seen over the duck marshes, and hunters who shoot hawks killing kites and marsh hawks, two of the best friends man ever had, for they feed almost exclusively upon rodents.

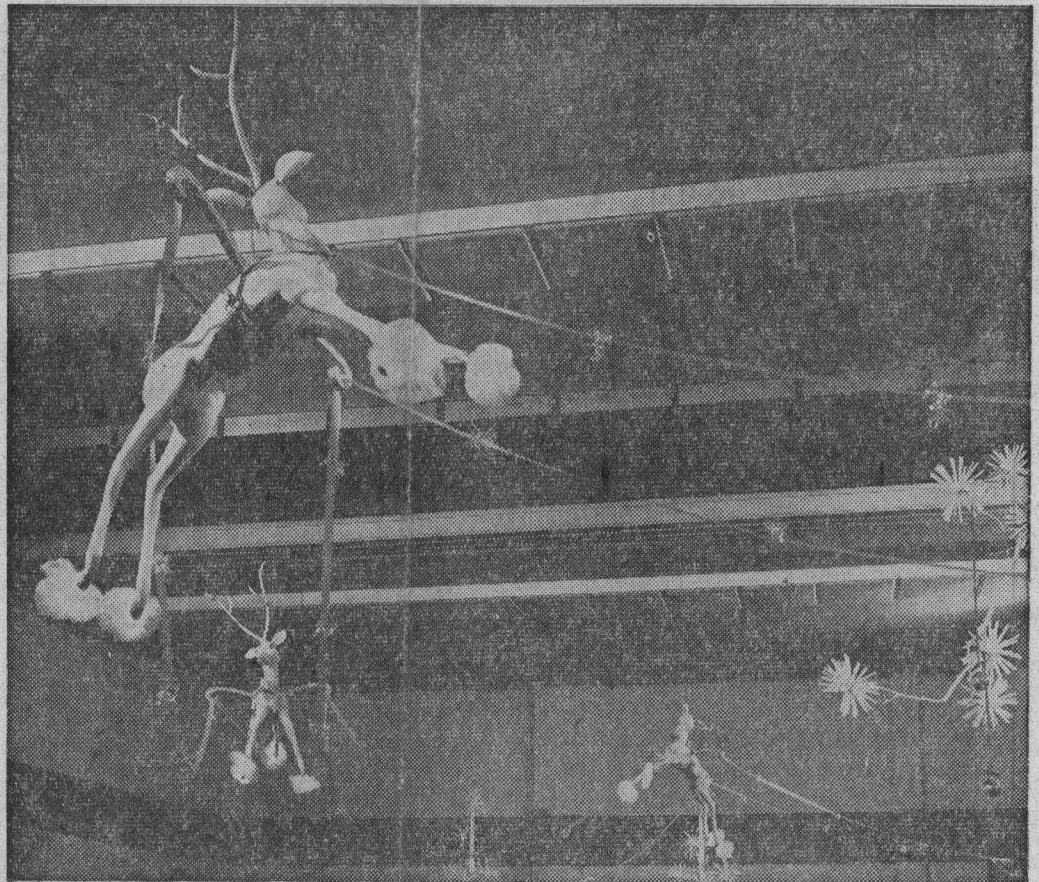
Perched, the duck hawk appears as a hump-shouldered, thick-chested, chunky bird. In flight, he is all grace and speed, as a pair of pointed wings propel him through the air. Again, in November, I visited a pair that I knew.

At 7:32 a.m., the sun was bright and flooding; the wind strong from the north. I had arrived at the foot of Big Dome at 7 and found one falcon soaring on the strong north wind. Directly it began diving and calling, apparently to its mate which was perched somewhere near the Dome top. Shortly it joined the other one and the two began engaging in aerial acrobatics over the Dome. From high over the tree tops, they would fold back their wings and plummet downward to where I could not see them pull out of the dive, for it was out of sight on the far side of the hill.

They would quite often execute a half twist and again a side slip. There was no calling except when one called the other into the air.

Once both birds quit their circling and headed off toward Cypress point, to the northwest, and though I didn't see them return, both were soon again circling above the Dome. This was, it

Prancer And Dancer Have Feet Full Of Snow



Their dainty hooves filled with snow as a result of their travels from the North Pole, Santa Claus' famed reindeer

still are happy to cavort across the ceiling of the Morris Abrams store. The unusual handling of the traditional Christmas decorating theme was in-

stalled by Display Manager Frank Galvin who designed and made all the figures, using liquid plastic as the medium.

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE TO CREDITORS No. 14,682

In the Superior Court of the State of California, in and for the County of Santa Cruz.

In the Matter of the Estate of ALFIA A. WEBSTER, Deceased. Notice is hereby given by the undersigned, ORVILLE L. WEBSTER and ETHEL F. ROSS, administrators of the estate of ALFIA A. WEBSTER, deceased, to the creditors of, and all persons having claims against the said deceased, or said estate, to file them, with the necessary vouchers, in the office of the Clerk of the above named Court (which said office is situate in the Court House in the City of Santa Cruz, in said County and State), within six months after the first publication of this notice made on the 25th day of November 1956, or present and exhibit them, with the necessary vouchers, within said period, to the said administrators at the office of attorney Emmet L. Rittenhouse, Room 4, Rittenhouse Building in the City of Santa Cruz, County of Santa Cruz, State of California, which said last named office, the undersigned selects as the place of business in all matters connected with said estate.

ORVILLE L. WEBSTER and ETHEL F. ROSS, Administrators of the Estate of said deceased.

Dated November 21st, 1956.
EMMET L. RITTENHOUSE,
Attorney for said Administrators.
Nov. 25; Dec. 2, 9, 16

PHONE

GR 5-2144

for

SERVATIONS
y dining at

BINI'S

seemed, a short unsuccessful food trip. Again, one dived to the water's surface at the foot of the rocks just at the point, but if it was for prey, it was not successful.

Both then made a bee-line out across the bay toward Cypress point and went out of sight. Again I did not see them return, for they must come back low, and they are lost in the shadows near the water.

My attention was called to one circling and diving and calling near the top of Big Dome. It seemed to be excited about something on or near the ground. I clumbed up and looked off to the east where I watched one of the falcons circling at about 300 feet, with what I took to be a small grebe in its talons.

The sun was now above the eastern hills and bathing the Dome in reddish glows. The falcon soared, effortlessly it seemed, around and around. Feathers were flying from the prey and drifting off on the wind in bunches, and against the sun, looked like pink snow. The falcon's cargo was carried streamlined — no dangling of wings to impede its programs. The wings were pinned to the back; it looked like a plane with a torpedo slung from its belly. The grebe's neck dangled from about mid-way the hawk's belly, its feet hung downward, and it was borne right side up and front part forward.

Finally the hawk went down into the pines just south of the

cove. Its mate went in behind it and I wonder if both birds fed on this one breakfast which one bird freighted in from across the bay while the other had returned empty taloned. Today's actions indicate they go forth in search of food after considerable exercise and when the sun is just risen.

The following month was winter, and in December I was back to watch the hawks. It was a morning following a storm. The sun's rays were streaming through holes in the black clouds and the air was full of salt spray. It was still damp and cold and a heavy mist hung over the land. Great fans of white water collided against the rocks and threw suds into the air. An oyster-catcher stood with two gulls, on top of the highest rock, and out of reach of the combers. Two western grebes dived in the white water, surf scoters floated at the edge of foam-balls which were rafted together, and smaller grebes stayed close in to the breakwater.

But I came to see my friend falcon and as I climbed the stone steps, he flashed around the point and made one pass over the cove with its floating duck hawk breakfast. I stopped suddenly, motionless, waiting, at last, to see him take one, but he went on to the knoll just above me and settled in the dead pine top. I never moved and was prepared to wait him out until he again made a pass at one of

the waterfowl, for I wanted to see how he did it.

For five minutes he sat there, looking from side to side. The black mark down each cheek gave his face a fierce countenance.

But his territory was the Big Dome, and as he chases the other hawks from it, a sparrow hawk claims this knoll and does not like this intrusion.

Three times the sparrow hawk dived the master falcon, and on the third time he upset him. The duck hawk was reluctant to leave the overlook above his floating breakfast, but the lesser falcon was just as determined. Round and round through the pines, twisting and diving, the smaller pursued the intruder. Suddenly the larger falcon angered at this, and made a terrific dive for the sparrow hawk. He drove him nearly to the ground from a height of several hundred feet and could he have closed, would have doubtless broken every bone in his body. The sparrow hawk took refuge in the dense foliage of a pine top as the larger falcon winged back toward Big Dome. A few minutes later the cinnamon tail of the sparrow hawk was pumping contentedly from his dead tree and I left him there, asleep it seemed, unconcerned over the battle.

Many hours I have spent watching my pair of falcons. On wind-swept, wave-lashed rocks I have stood to witness their always exciting actions. We were proud

Starlite DRIVE-IN
THEATRE
PHONE 4-3470
2 MILES NO. OF WATSONVILLE
SUN. and MON.

\$ BUCK NITES \$
THE BUCK NITES

STARTS TODAY!

CONT. FROM 2 — GA 3-2000

WARNER BROS. PRESENT
GREGORY PECK

MIGHTIEST
OF THEM ALL

RIO
★ THEATRE ★