

Popping Them From the Air

by SPENCER EDDY

Photographs by F. Leland Elam

AIRPLANES as means of hunting furred and feathered pests are nothing particularly new in the West—except in point of magnitude.

Almost every predatory creature, ranging from boll weevils to eagles (and not forgetting mosquitoes), has been killed from the air in the hope of making democracy safe for the rural districts.

POPULAR AVIATION has carried these stories from time to time, and I particularly remember the story of the eagle hunt by Wiseman.

I am showing the present pictures just to introduce the idea of magnitude into the sagas of aerial hunting adventure. And to follow this thing up, I can even remember back about five years ago to the time when J. B. R. got bawled out by an Indiana game-warden for showing a plane covered with dead ducks!

But to get back to my particular job in this case, I wish to exhibit some photos of a man who is warring on pests in a big way. This is E. L. Torrey, who very effectively uses his plane to eliminate chicken hawks, coyotes, more hawks, more coyotes, more hawks and more coyotes, and so on. And the bounty collected by the industrious Mr. Torrey, is no small item as you can easily guess from the exhibits herein displayed.

To bag one or two chicken hawks in a day is a sizeable job for any full grown man, regardless of how big he may be or what sort of vehicle he uses for trans-



This is even more sport than it appears. The automatic shotgun is mounted on a specially designed free swivel. By learning to fly the ship one-handed, the pilot can hunt easily.



These aerial killers weren't fast enough for safety. They were "shot down" from the air.

portation and for the hunt, but Mr. Torrey thinks nothing of stringing up eight chicken hawks in one day and even then, he has a few hours left for the general purposes of work and recreation.

He just levels the old gun across the cockpit, pulls the trigger and permits the laws of ballistics to have their own way about the matter. And then, be sure of it, something drops and that something is a bird or an animal that the country can well afford to lose. It is not only the domestic animals that are killed by these wild birds and animals that matters, but they also destroy useful birds that assist man on his war with insects and fungus plagues.

In a booklet published by the government, much is said in favor of the chicken hawk as an enemy of field mice and other destructive rodents with a parting paragraph stating that hawks only seek chicken yards after the mice and rats are cleaned up and that the hawks will earn the few chickens that they take. However, it is difficult for a farmer to believe this statement after half his poultry has been wiped out and so he boosts the idea of bounties for the benefit of public benefactors such as Mr. Torrey.

Mr. Torrey also exhibits an eagle of no mean wingspan—a bird that can carry nearly its own weight in the form of "live load." Many weird eagle stories have come in from the West, tales of attacks by the birds and so on, but it's easy to prove that they can be bagged from the plane. We need only to look at the picture.

Book-learning is one thing and experience is another, and it has been the experience of most farmers that the fewer the hawks the greater will be the number of chickens. Scientists may frantically declare that eagles do not steal lambs or calves, but as many a rancher has seen good lamb and future mutton disappearing skyward in the talons of an eagle, this rancher is still from that sovereign state of Missouri where skeptics require more than statements.



A little hedge-hopping combined with some nimble rudder work, and Mr. Torrey gets a sizeable bag of wolves and coyotes for his trouble. Note the wounds on several animals.