



Rabbits for regular diet, mice and sparrows for dessert.

Whooley HATES CROWS

Owls and crows are natural enemies; consequently, owls can decoy crows

By BERT POPOWSKI

regard for the self-sufficiency of the feathered gent in the soft weskit of barred feathers, topped with a cravat of lacy white. Approached too suddenly or too closely, he would huff himself into an enormous feathered ball, his powerful black beak snapping in warning. But if a finger was extended within reach he'd take it in his beak, squeeze it a bit, then release it.

JACKRABBITS were plentiful and one of the big plains hares would do him for 10 days. The neighborhood was scoured for mice for dessert. But in spite of his capacity for meat, none of us saw him swallow a mouthful. He might peck at a mouse or sparrow as it was offered him, hold it momentarily in his beak, then drop it.

As spring neared we found an abandoned chicken house for new quarters. It was then, too, that he first muttered a muted "who-who-who" and got himself named "Whooley." My wife made it "Hooley" and began to make extravagant claims as to what would happen if that owl wasn't kept

ONE day I met an infidel. He grinned tolerantly while I extolled the virtues of the crow as a shotgun target; snickered impolitely when I swore the sable scamp could shame the wing work of any bird that flies; and exploded in a ribald belly laugh when I pulled all the stops to describe a pre-war hunt of an hour's time in which two of us burned 200 shells—and picked up 124 crows. He was rude, raucous and no gentleman. Definitely.

But I'm still a one-bird man and that bird is the crow. I'm not like my friend Tony Hoover who claims the crow should never be called a "bird" by a hunter; that only game birds deserve that appellation. Nor am I like Al Haugan, who never wants to see a crow closer than 200 yards—the better to center the crosshairs of one of his blued and burnished darlings. I'll take my crow as I find him and I always find him as full of tricks as a fox, as curious as a 'coon, as dependable as death.

But let's start at the beginning. It

all goes back to the day when my eldest listened to a trapping crony of mine recite the woes he'd had in catching a big dog fox. When the tale was done, John regarded me thoughtfully for a moment; then:

"Can you catch a fox, Daddy?"

As it turned out, I couldn't. But I did catch a great horned owl in one of my sets and took it home to show to my boys. Protected by its thick pad of feathers, the owl's foot wasn't hurt, so he continued to live in my basement all that winter. His favorite roost was a gnarled bit of willow which we'd nailed high in a dim corner. There he would sit in immobile silence, enormous eyes watching our every move.

During that interval I developed a sincere



Tethered to a low branch, Whooley makes a perfect crow decoy.

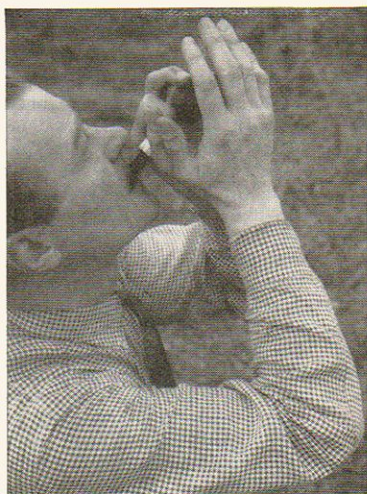
out of her basement, hereafter.

One morning I heard a terrific uproar at the cage. A glance out of my bedroom window disclosed the amazing sight of seven crows clustered about the cage, all cawing at the top of their raucous voices. All this in the midst of a city of 20,000 people. How those crows had sought Whooley out I don't know to this day but they gave an idea which paid off in a jack-pot of the world's sportiest shooting.

Crows and owls are hereditary enemies. In any bit of woodland, a major crow uproar usually indicates that the black birds have located one of the velvet-winged killers and are hard at work trying to bluff it into flight. If successful, they will yell and harry that owl for miles, gathering reinforcements as they go. But if, on the other hand, the cover is so thick that Sir Owl can find a spot where he can present the rowdies with his double-barreled glare, they have no stomach to crowd within reach.

So, what could be more natural than that I use Whooley for a crow decoy. I had infrequently used stuffed owls with success, but had to be cautious about allowing no crow to get behind the decoy bird, else it swept in suicide-bomber fashion and knocked off the head or at least set the ear tufts askew. And, when I once used a sheet metal owl, at least three crows swept into it from behind and hit it so hard that they lost tufts of their own feathered hides.

But Whooley could protect himself well enough I learned. Once in place, with a light chain tether to restrain his liberty, he ducked, hissed and puffed in such a rage that only once did I see a crow come near enough to touch him. He soon learned he couldn't shake his tether and that the nerve-



Writer Popowski tunes in with a bit of crow S.O.S. broadcasting that panicked them.



This is Cowboy Bill Gordon, when he was just getting warmed up to his crow-killing chore.

shattering blast of shotguns did him no harm. Instead it provided many a succulent feed of crow meat, though he always restrained his appetite until safe in his home cage.

But to proceed with the converting of the infidel. Bill Gordon was his name. Built of whang leather and weathered rawhide, he could—and often did—wrestle 10 times his weight of horse flesh and come out winnah. Ever since "Dad" Gordon had taken a bad fall in a spring roundup, Bill had taken care of the home place in the long blue shadows of the Black Hills. His chores took him over 35,000 acres of range on which he grew an annual crop of 3,000 calves. These, together with the older animals, took the combined efforts of 23 cow waddies. Sometimes even that wasn't enough help and a sizable piece of his herd was lost in unseasonable weather, or stampeded to ruin in one of the rocky gorges that took monstrous bites out of his grazing land.

BUT every year Bill and I got together for a day or two when the trout were rising, and again in the fall. Then, it mattered little as to whether our game was duck or pheasant or partridge. Bill enjoyed them with an exuberant zest that gave the lie to a sprinkling of white in his otherwise jet-black thatch. His days afield were relaxation from a life of toil and his only wail was that his standing order for a "day stretcher" was, thus far, unfilled.

But this was spring, and Bill lay back in my favorite chair and roared when I told of a crow hunt in which Eddie Forseth and I had taken 124 birds and then had run out of shells. But five minutes later he leaned forward with a businesslike glint in his eye.

"You don't usually bother to dress up yore yarns in such fancy lies," he suggested. "Maybe you've been tellin' it so often you really believe this one."

I know I looked my flabbergasted disbelief. Here I'd been trying to rouse his interest in a new sport and the net result was my being called a liar.

"Put up or shut up," I sputtered, wrathfully. "If I don't show you a shoot in which you can burn 100 shells faster than you ever burned them before I'll give you my fly rod. The one I landed that six-pound rainbow on in the Big Hole River last summer."

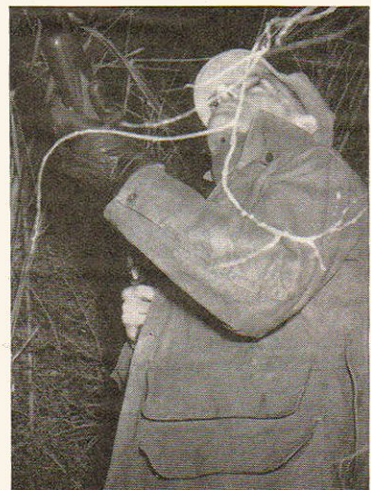
Bill sprang across the room and reduced my hand to quivering pulp in his eagerness to cinch it. While I rubbed feeling back into it I sank the final barb:

"And if I do, it'll cost you that Navajo rug in your ranch house. The one with the cow heads on it."

Inside of an hour we were on our way, Whooley riding his chickenwire cage like a veteran sailor, and looking hard at the unfamiliar back of Bill's neck. He knew me, so I was ignored.

IDROVE straight to a grove that was a crow roost, a roost I'd been saving for a big killing with Tony Hoover. But I couldn't pass up this chance to knock Bill's ears down. In two hours we were in it, a tight blind built in its lee, and Whooley staked out on the angling branch of a fallen tree, less than six feet off the ground. In order to get at Whooley the crows would have to come down low, so Bill and I backed in under the screening branches of two cottonwoods, threw up a breastworks of tumbleweeds and settled down to wait. It didn't take long.

A distant crow call snapped Whooley's (Continued on page 46)



Until dusk made his gun spout fire like a Roman candle, Cowboy Bill hammered away.

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Rambling Thoughts . . .

I'M what might be called a pointer enthusiast but I tend to side with the setter crowd when they complain that it has become almost a common practice for field trial judges to favor pointers over setters. It will help the bird dog fraternity if the judges at trials will place the dogs on the basis of what they do and not what they are . . . Sorry to report the death of MOSES BROWN of Scituate, Mass. For the past 10 years or so I enjoyed seeing and talking with Brown at New England trials. He was a real sportsman. Brown died of a heart attack while running one of his dogs in a trial at Falmouth, Mass. It saddened the day for all of us who were there . . . Would like to predict that in the next few years we are going to see a lot more Irish setters being used as bird dogs and run and winning at trials. The Irish Setter Club of America has been sponsoring the breeding of some real hunting strains of the mahogany setter . . . Enjoyed meeting ALLAN KERR of Green Bay, Wis., and also his springer *Fort Howard Don*. Kerr writes a swell dog column for the *Green Bay Press-Gazette*. His dog *Don* is one of the best in the middle West . . . Hope someday to have the pleasure of knowing DR. J. RUE PLATER of Milwaukee. He's secretary of the Wisconsin Amateur Club and owns *Top Coin*, only a puppy, but a coming dog . . . A couple of dogs I'd like to own: W. B. LAWSON'S *Lawson's Carolina Frank*, a good looking black and white pointer and *Shanty Town Willie*, a pointer owned by DR. C. F. MILLESON of Portland, Oregon . . . Must write that letter I have been meaning to write "STEW" KOUSTMER, popular west coast sportsman and owner of *Fresno Tarheel Jack*. Have certainly enjoyed the two letters and pictures he has sent me.

Questions and Answers

REST FOR DOGS

Question—I have a three-year-old dog. How often and how long should I let him rest during a day's hunt?—*K.J.O., Hampton, Iowa.*

Answer—I don't advise using the same dog during an all-day hunt if you're covering a lot of ground. Dogs of moderate range and speed can be used most of the day if you don't push them too hard, but if your dog is fast, don't use him more than three hours in one day.

HEART WORM

Question—I understand heart worm is very prevalent in the South. Are these worms found only in the heart of dogs?—*J.P.W., Dayton, Ohio.*

Answer—Not necessarily, for the parasites are often found in arteries and veins of dogs.

BROKEN TOOTH

Question—My dog has a broken tooth. What should I do about it?—*H.I.A., Wabash, Indiana.*

Answer—Without actually seeing the animal, it is hard to prescribe. Perhaps the tooth may be ground and saved. On the other hand, the only solution may be extraction. Suggest you consult your veterinarian.

Whooley Hates Crows

(Continued from page 15)

head around toward it but it whipped around with equal suddenness as I dropped to my knees and started to call. Bill just stood there, looking at me and grinning infuriatingly. I raised such a holler that Whooley nervously shifted his feet to face me. As I paused for breath Bill snickered.

But he nearly dropped his gun a moment later as two crows zipped into the clearing, glimpsed Whooley and started to use some of the most profane crow language I've ever heard. My jaw dropped in admiring wonder as I listened to crow cuss words I'd never heard before.

The smash of Bill's gun put an end to that and the survivor pulled back on the throttle and lit out. But as it zipped out of range I started to plead for help and it banked around and came screaming back to help its fallen brother crow. Bill put that one down, too, then snickered again.

"Just like shootin' fish off the bridge," he depreciated. "An' that's only two shots. You've got 98 to go to win over Navajo."

My long shrieking yell for help rang out over that scrawny grove and, as I paused for breath, I heard the faint clamor of distant crows. I grinned smugly, set my back against the cottonwood and got to work. As an afterthought I checked the four boxes of shells Bill had set out. Yep, there were just seven shells missing from the first one; two that were empties and five in the gun. I leaned back and played a crow S. O. S. on that call that I hoped every crow in Faulk County could hear.

This time five of the sable rascals dove headlong over screening trees and piled in on Whooley. He raised his wings and hissed and the crows zoomed, all but one that had come in about 10 feet higher than his unsavory comrades and now pitched past Whooley, a mass of shot-riddled carrion. The others towered but the fallen crow raised a failing wing and emitted a gurgling squawk. Back they came, jostling each other to be first in making their bluff at Whooley.

Bill's next three shots got only one crow and he swore one of the rangeland oaths.

"Do they roost in this grove every night?" he demanded, examining a tree splattered with the whitewash crow excretions.

"If they aren't shot out too severely. Get down, here come two. Get 'em both!" And he did just that, though it took a ringing four-shot salvo to do it.

"Don't you put Whooley in any danger," I warned. "Take those birds that are far enough above him so he won't catch a stray flier."

Three answered my calling this time and Bill rang the bell with a double. But the third bird dodged and swerved, then came racing in to my repeated yells for help. Bill stood up in the blind to take the incomer but that crow dodged, twisted and finally dove away to safety as Bill rattled two loads of sixes in vain pursuit.

"Told you to stay out of sight," I patiently pointed out. "But you can't expect a dumb cow waddle to be anything but bullheaded," I mourned.

