

Predators, the Goshawk and Great Horned Owl, are still scarce, (as are their chief prey - the rabbit.)

Pine and Evening Grosbeaks appear to be about as usual. The Bohemian Waxwing was not recorded at any point south of Nipawin, but have been quite abundant there since early fall. The heavy crop of spruce and pine cones are providing the Crossbills with fine fare and they are in unusual numbers in the northern forests.

Maurice G. Street.

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INFORMATION WANTED

We have obtained several March migration records but our information is not as complete as it might be. In March, 1945, 32 species of migratory birds were noted in Manitoba. Can we equal this record? Plan to make a "First seen" note of all our early bird arrivals and let us have a full report for the next issue. Early nesting records such as those of the Horned Owl and Canada Jay will also be greatly appreciated.

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MAMMAL SECTION

THE COYOTE

The unique feature of the BLUE JAY which has made it a treasure storehouse, not only to its subscribers, but to nature scientists in many parts of Canada, has been the inclusion of so many homely stories of interest about our animals and their antics. A keen observation and a sense of humor on the part of Mr. Gilroy, who lives in the Regina district, has added another to the list. He writes:

"I see coyotes practically every day, sometimes as many as four together. At night, especially when the train whistles they do some yodeling. Our dog, Smoky, has a great time with them. This morning two coyotes passed to within 200 yards of the house. Smoky went out to do his regular barking. One stopped and stayed within a tantalizing distance from him; the other went on to a knoll about 500 yards to one side and hung around there in an unassuming manner. Meanwhile the other kept drawing the dog out a little further until finally Smoky could stand it no longer and took after him. Away they went as hard, at least, as the dog could go. The coyote on the knoll stayed there until they had passed, then he took up the chase, closing in from the rear. When they got almost half a mile away from the buildings the front coyote stopped suddenly. It was then Smoky found himself, not with just one coyote, but with another at his rear. He didn't wait to ask questions but headed back home as fast as his legs would carry him, while the coyotes helped him along with little nips on the tail. I sure did laugh and Smoky must have enjoyed it too, for he arrived back looking as happy as a lark.

Paid Hunters

Use of paid hunters for coyote control was recommended by Noble E. Buell of the United States Wild Life Service in an address to a conference of Saskatchewan natural resources field officers in Regina recently. He said his department was not concerned with extermination of the coyote, curse to cattlemen and poultry farmers, but was concentrating on controlling the animals destruction. "The coyote was likely to remain in the west for some time to come, since it was very adaptable to new stamping grounds if chased from old ones", he added, "and naturalists need have little fear of its extermination."

Saskatchewan News.

Many naturalists do have fear for its extermination as well as the extermination of other predators, for there is no telling where a halt will be called should this sort of thing get under way. The offenders should pay the penalty. But this, we believe, is no excuse for an attempted wholesale slaughter of the species in areas where they probably do more good than harm.

We invite comments and frank opinions about the advisability of employing paid hunters for coyote control. ---- Editor.

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Timber wolves have been reported from Torch River by Mr. S. Francis. On February 5, a neighbor of his, while hauling sawlogs, came across a freshly killed deer, which had been brought down by them. The deer was still unfrozen and wolf tracks were all around it.

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DEER and COYOTES

Mr. Z. M. Hamilton, writing in the Regina Leader Post, reports that from a portion of the Qu'Appelle Valley, lying between Craven and Piapot's Reserve, coyotes are causing havoc among the deer. The snow, he explains, is not strong enough to support the deer and so they plunge belly deep in the drifts, become exhausted and fall easy victims to their pursuers who are light enough on their feet not to break through the crust.

He tells the story of a rancher in the Craven district who saw some coyotes pursuing a band of deer. He hurried to his house for a rifle and when he returned found that the "brutes" had pulled down a deer and were actually engaged in their "horrid" feast, although there was still some life left in their victim.

(This very area is my most cherished "hunting ground". Within it lies the wild life sanctuary of the Regina Natural History Society.

Almost any summer evening during the past three years deer could be seen in the coulees and meadows. A year ago last fall, early on the first morning of the hunting season and for days that followed a constant bombardment of rifles echoed from hill to hill. Happy hunters loaded their cars and returned home, while many unhappy victims limped among tangled fallen trees on the ravine embankments and lay down to die. There were not as many last fall and we missed them. Perhaps their numbers have even dwindled since then, but the coyotes were hungry -- the hunters were not. Editor.)

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"BUCK FOR BUCKS"

From Winnipeg comes the story that thousands of snowbound deer in southern Manitoba, facing death by starvation or slaughter by predators are to receive an immediate aid feeding program. The provincial government will supply emergency food supplies where the need is greatest. It will undertake, the last two weeks in February, the first census of the deer population by air.

Many deer have left their natural feeding places to raid stocks for domestic animals. Farmers are laying out feed and putting up deer in their corrals and barns. It is feared that the worst month is still ahead for the deer. More snow will fall and it also will crust over. It is then the deer mortality rate jumps sky high. A "buck for bucks" campaign to buy food for the starving animals has been organized by the greater Winnipeg Game and Fish Association.

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GERALD -- Mr. Martinosky sent us an interesting photograph, showing a cat peering contentedly from a badger hole. The cat raised her kittens there in the bank of a big cut on No. 22 highway in the Cut Arm Valley. It was Mr. Martinosky's cat.

He also reported that a Bob Cat was treed by dogs last summer in the same valley and believes that this is the first one reported from his district in many years.

OKLA -- Mrs. W. Roach.

"In July the men were pulling trees with the help of a team when they noted that three little squirrels came out of a hole in a poplar tree which previously had been used by woodpeckers. The animals did not appear to be the red squirrel, which is common in this district."

(These might be flying squirrels. A number have been reported from Moose Mountains and other places. They are apparently more common than is usually supposed. Mr. Francis and his sons at Torch River do considerable trapping in the winter time. From among over 100 squirrels taken this winter five percent were flying squirrels. --ED.)

MAMMALS

GRENFELL - John Hubbard Jr. writes:

Coyotes which were very numerous during the winter of 1947-48 were hunted extensively and appear to be on the decrease.

Muskrats were more plentiful last fall than since 1928. Unfortunately, there was a very dry fall, sloughs are low, and it is believed that many will die out this winter.

White-tailed deer are quite numerous and there were more hunters this year than ever. We believe that more deer were shot before the season than during the season, and suspect that the largest percentage of these were shot at night.

Jack Rabbits seem to have disappeared completely from this district and bush rabbits are not numerous.

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HUDSON BAY -

From this town comes the news that wolves are showing up in increasing numbers in settled areas where, until last year, they had not been seen for years.

Reason for the appearance of timber wolves in this comparatively southern area is believed to be the shortage of rabbits, which are just emerging from the bottom of their 10-year cycle and are extremely scarce in this area.

The government, this year, reduced the bounty payment on wolves from \$25 to \$10. This has resulted in less effort on the part of trappers to capture the wily animals.

Moose appear more plentiful this year than for many years and the animal that was once nearing extinction seems to be making a come-back in north-eastern Saskatchewan.

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INFORMATION -- PLEASE

Report "first seen" records of bats. Are all bats of Western Canada migratory? Have any traces been found of these hibernating?

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How have the deer come through the winter? Are there any indications of disaster, such as that feared in parts of Manitoba?

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How is the porcupine situation? Where have they been observed recently?

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A report on the prevalence of rats and indications of damage done by them will be greatly appreciated.

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MAILIALS

PRINCE ALBERT - E. W. Brooman.

A very young black bear cub was recently acquired by the Wild Life Exhibit by G. E. Lund. The bear weighed only 12½ oz. Some idea of the small size may be realized from the fact that the cub was only about 6 inches long and that its cubic bulk was about the size of a large tumbler.

The bear was discovered at Cumberland House on January 11 by a party who were bulldozing a trail. The mother bear was killed and an examination of the den revealed one live cub. The cub was taken and unsuccessful attempts were made to feed it from a bottle. In estimating its age it was noted that the nails were sharp, and the navel completely healed. The fur was well developed. While it is difficult to accurately estimate the age, it was placed at about one month.

According to Anthony, black bear cubs are born almost naked, toothless and their eyes do not open for some time. Single cubs are said to vary in weight from eight to eighteen ounces. Further, Anthony stated that cubs are born between January and March. It is highly probable that this cub was born in December. It is likely that, for this latitude and location, December is a very early date. It is not usual for a female bear to leave her den until her cubs are six or eight weeks old. It is doubtful if a female bear, in this latitude, could leave her den much before the end of March. In this particular case, the cubs would be at least 12 weeks old.

Since small cubs are an adaptation of the Ursidae to prevent excessive feeding during hibernation, it is again reasonable to suppose that our record may be an early one. It is fairly common to see a female with two or even three cubs. If our date of December were common, it would mean that the mother bear would have to feed two and even three cubs for three months. It is hardly likely that this would be common, since it is not for the best interest of the species. Since bears in Northern latitudes must leave their dens later than those more southerly, it is probable that the time of having cubs would be later than the more Southern species.

(Mr. Brooman has sent us several observational articles of interest. Unfortunately, they arrived after the material for this issue was all prepared. We hope to make use of them later. ED.)

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"Nature is a better tonic than anything your doctor can prescribe. It is the urge that takes you strolling in the fresh air with every sense alive for a sign of beauty. It is the companionship of other living things whose exciting lives twine with ours and upon whose prosperity we often unknowingly depend.

Nature is the wonder of moonlight, the unexplained glory of the skies, star-studded, imponderable. It is the love of color and sound. It is an interest in the wonder of creation, the satisfaction of growing out and onward beyond our own human troubles. When you make a hobby of nature you find an exciting world all around you, and your interest in it will pay greater dividends than you dreamed possible."

Rachel Biggs,
Saskatoon Star-Phoenix.