

Weasel—A Friend or Foe !

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I WAS PLEASED to see my article on the Least Weasel reprinted in Vol. 10, No. 1, issue of "The Blue Jay." I am even more pleased to note that it brought a response from a number of readers. Their comments provide valuable data for our files. It was my hope that the article would bring to light a number of records, especially from Eastern Canada. It seems quite clear now that Saskatchewan has as great, if not greater, population of these mammals than any other province.

I am quite aware that public sentiment is not always on the side of the weasel and it is sometimes rather difficult to appraise the economic status of our carnivores. Possibly it depends a good deal on local conditions. Until someone undertakes a careful study of the food habits of the weasel we shall never be certain whether to regard it as a friend or foe.

Most Useful in the Hands of the Furrier

F. L. Trego, Rosedale, B.C.

IN your latest issue of "The Blue Jay" I read with interest the three articles concerning weasels, and was very much surprised to note that there were persons interested in their protection. Having had a great deal of association with them, both as a farmer in Alberta and trapping in the north, I feel that I am to some extent an amateur authority on them.

In all my experience with them I have yet to find any evidence where the damage done by them is in any way outweighed by any good they might do.

Granted they do kill mice, but the various hawks do that for us with the assistance of many other of our feathered friends, and in the process do not harm the other birds or cause the poultryman any damage if he gives his flock reasonable attention.

On the other hand, the weasel will get into a chicken house and in one night cost the farmer many dollars and weeks of work. I once had a pair of old weasels get into my chicken house where they had a litter of kittens. Before I managed to do away with them all I lost over two dozen laying hens. Consider the cost of the hens, eggs, and time spent in raising them, to have them killed in a few nights by the old and young weasels alike.

In the woods where there are no henhouses I have found birds killed on the nest where they were hatching their eggs, and the evidence against the weasel was strong enough

to support a charge of murder.

Why then would anyone want to protect any animal that is as destructive as they have proven themselves to be? In my mind their most useful place is in the hands of the furrier, and the only way they should be protected is with moth-balls.

Hard Working Mice

Doug Gilroy, R.R. 2, Regina

THE mouse population in this district this spring was terrific. The Meadow Mouse seemed the most abundant species.

One evening when I had finished seeding for the day I forgot to pick up a large sheet of canvas that I used to cover over the seed wheat, and went away, leaving it on the ground. Also lying on the ground, not far away, was a piece of rope about three feet long.

The next morning when I returned to the field and began gathering up the canvas, out tumbled two White-footed Mice along with a large ball of brownish material. This, of course, was a nest that they had constructed in the course of one night. At first I was puzzled as to what the nest was made up of, then I noticed the rope was no longer three feet in length but was reduced to a mere six inches.

How those two must have toiled through the night, unravelling that rope and spinning it into a nest!

Supposing you and I worked all day, happily putting up a building—then at the end of the day a great force came along and destroyed all our work. I wonder if those two mice would feel as badly as we.