

Let's Protect Our Weasels

E. Symons, Rocanville

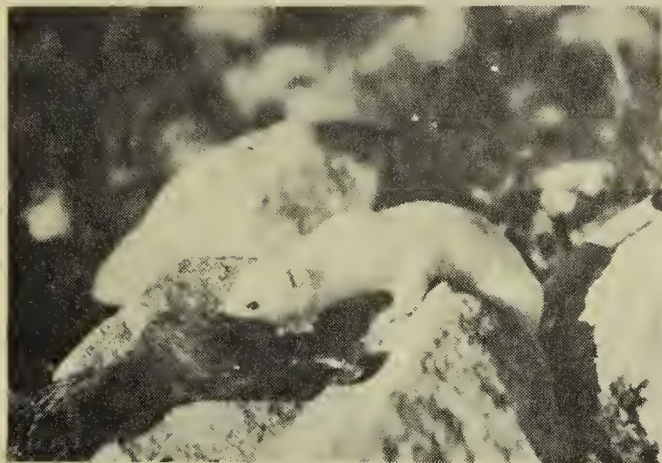


Photo by Fred Bard

THE "Family Herald" article about the Least Weasel recalled to my mind an incident illustrating the ferocity of this tiny carnivora.

It was threshing time back about '17 or '18 and this little fellow showed up among the stooks, mouse hunting no doubt. I caught him without much trouble, but I fortunately wore leather pullovers, for he was just a small bundle of ferocity and did his level best to chew through the mitts.

I shut him up in a wire-fronted box overnight, with two full-grown mice carcasses to feed on. He could not have been badly scared, for the next morning there was nothing left except a few bones and some fur and Mr. Weasel climbing over the wire front as ferocious as ever. This "mite" had eaten practically his own weight in mouse meat overnight.

Let's protect our weasels, regardless of species. I remember a short item on the subject, years ago, by a nature student of long standing. On the subject of the weasel in the henhouse, it was this man's observation over a period of years that the only weasel to molest chickens was an old male that had lost his teeth. I have noticed also that, although we see weasel tracks, and big ones, all over during the winter, around the henhouse and everywhere else, that only rarely do they cause trouble. But how many rats and mice do they destroy?

Our Friend, The Weasel

F. O. Langstaff, Yorkton

IT WAS on the 10th of December, while cutting wood at my home, that the writer saw a weasel in its pure white coat, bobbing in and out of the woodpile. It seemed to be quite bold and for a period of about fifteen minutes would advance towards me and then recede into the woodpile. At no time was it more than ten feet from me. What impressed me as remarkable was that its tail was entirely white and that it was not much bigger than a chipmunk. Up until this time there were many mice in a shed close by. From that day I have seen no evidence of mice.

The article on the opposite page, written by Austin W. Cameron and appearing in the Family Herald and Weekly Star under date of December 20 1951, will explain that my visitor was the Least Weasel.

Possibly the following account of my experience with a long-tailed variety of the Richardson Weasel will be of interest in view of the different opinions which people hold as to the predatory inclinations of the weasel.

In the early part of the winter of 1933-34, while I was still on the farm and had about seventy hens in a henhouse, there were many rats. A couple of weasels burrowed a hole up through the dirt floor. As soon as I discovered them I made a small feeding pen near the hole and fed them a variety of feeds including milk, bread and raw meat. Although I continued this until spring there appeared to be no inclination on the part of the weasels to molest the poultry. I stated above that there were two weasels, although anyone who has seen them in action would realize that one might appear many times and might be taken for more.

During the same winter a neighbor of mine had several weasels move onto his place and clean up the rats. Then his boys trapped several weasels and, some months later, the rats returned. The foregoing experiences should make people cautious about advising the killing of these animals.