

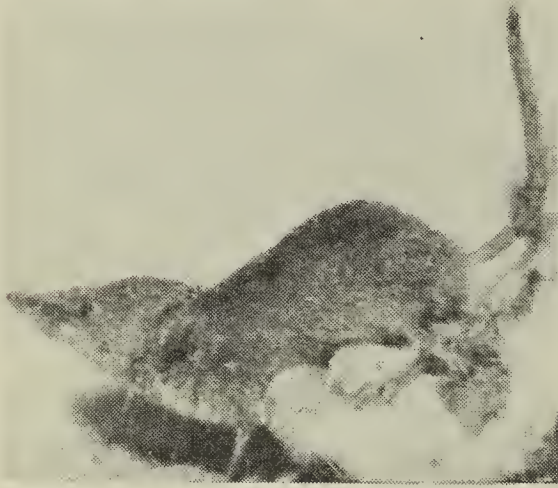
generally supposed to be docile and have not been known to bite. According to G. C. Carl, however, when irritated they may open the mouth, hiss or inflate the body (1951. *Reptiles of British Columbia*).

Under extreme irritation they may

even suddenly eject a thin stream of blood from the corner of an eye! This astounding feat has been well authenticated, and it amuses me to wonder whether it might have been the origin of the expression "mud in your eye"!

"Taming the Shrew"

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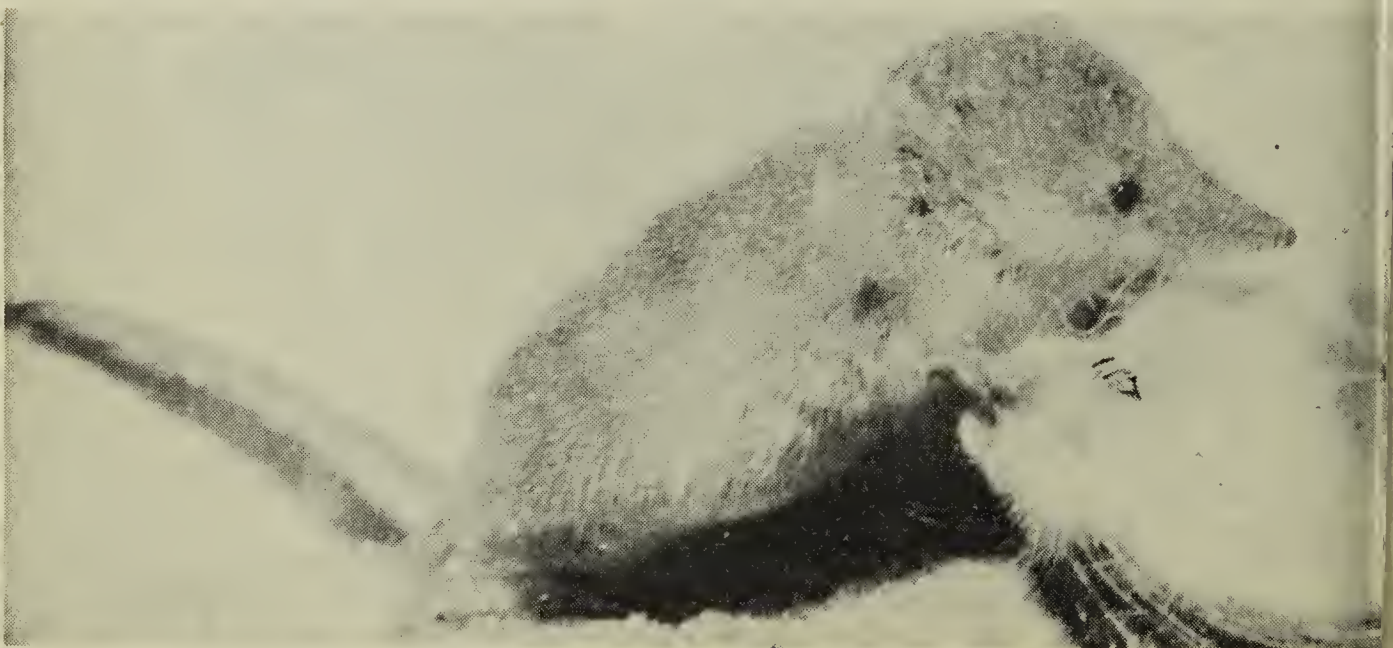
Common Shrew, natural size

The cover photo and those on this page are of a Common Shrew recently donated to the museum by some junior naturalists in Regina. The live animal is pictured here behind glass and feeding on a White-footed Mouse.

The Common Shrew is usually found in areas of brush or on the prairie near streams or other water areas. Seldom seen because of their small size, they are more common than we realize. Although they have a total length of from 3½ to 4 inches and a weight about that of a penny (3.6 gm.), they are noted for their fearlessness and will occasionally attack and kill mice much larger than

themselves. However, the main diet of most shrews is insects which are more easily obtained. Having a very high metabolic rate with a heart beat of 1,600 beats a minute, they require a tremendous amount of food and are reported by some authors to eat up to three times their weight in food per day. They are admirably equipped to do so, because they have piercing teeth and because they can poison their prey with venom similar to that of a cobra. Although the Common Shrew is not considered very poisonous, one other member of the shrew family, the Short-tailed Shrew, can inject enough poison into humans to cause considerable pain for one or two weeks.

The Pygmy Shrew, which is the world's smallest mammal, is often confused with the Common Shrew shown here. This is very understandable as they are similar in appearance. Although the Pygmy Shrew is slightly smaller, it can only be distinguished by an examination of its tooth pattern. However, the Common Shrew is the one most often found in Saskatchewan. Questionable specimens should be sent to the museum for identification.



Common Shrew