

Anderson, 1946:122) and the British Isles; in the latter case introduction has been regretted since the Gray Squirrel has since become a major pest, even evidently causing the disappearance in many areas of the native species of squirrel. There are many examples of catastrophes resulting from the uncontrolled introduction of plants and animals into new environments, but there are also other reasons for opposing this practice. "In recent years the faulty reasoning behind the introduction of animals has become increasingly apparent. Biologists now are generally opposing the liberation of exotics into the wild, because of the unpredictable nature and possibly unfavorable economic consequences of such action, and because of an aesthetic objection to mixing diverse faunas." (De Vos, Manville, Van Gelder, 1956:163)

* Franklin's Ground Squirrel (*Citellus franklinii*), a common species in Saskatchewan, is frequently locally known as the "Gray Squirrel." It is gray and does have a slightly bushy tail but can hardly be confused with the Gray Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) of eastern North America. The latter is considerably larger, inhabits forests and is a tree squirrel.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Since the above article was received, the Museum has had a report from Harvey Beck of Gray Squirrels at Saskatoon. Harvey Beck knows of at least three squirrels there, two gray and one black in colour (a colour phase of the Gray Squirrel). One of the grays is considerably smaller than the others. The larger gray was first noticed in the fall of 1955 and the others appeared during the summer of 1956. The Poplar Crescent area where they live is well treed. Elm predominates, with maple and caragana also present. Last summer the black squirrel made a nest in a maple tree, using branches with green leaves. Apparently no young were raised. The squirrels have remained fairly active this winter (1957-58), appearing two or three times a week. Last winter they were seen only once or twice during the whole winter. During the summer they "free-load" around the neighbourhood and several families put out nuts for them.

Who's Who In Gophers?

By R. W. Fyfe, Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History



Photo by R. W. Fyfe

Pocket Gopher. Note claws, small eyes and ears.

The Pocket Gopher, found throughout southern and central Saskatchewan, ranges in North America from the central prairies south to Panama. The name Gopher comes from the French "gaufre", meaning honeycomb, which suits this

animal whose underground home honeycombs the soil. Anyone having one of these animals in his garden will mostly certainly attest to this. Because of its subterranean life the Pocket Gopher often receives the misnomer of "mole". (It is worthy

of note that true moles have yet to be reported in our province.) They are truly mole-like in habit, seldom coming above the surface of the ground during the day and only rarely venturing forth at night in search of food. It is on these midnight excursions that the larger owls find them; in some parts of the country these animals provide one of the main sources of food for the Great Horned and Barn Owls. The Pocket Gopher is best described as being about the size of a rat, heavily built and with a short tail seeming out of proportion to the size of the animal. Its most distinctive features are large "pockets" or external cheek pouches for carrying food. Its small eyes and ears are suited to an underground existence and the enormously developed forefeet and claws admirably equip him for digging. In Saskatchewan the Pocket Gopher varies in color in different localities, ranging from pale tan in the south central

and western areas to dark brown and nearly black in the east central sections.

What is commonly called "gopher" in the western provinces differs markedly from the Pocket Gopher and can be readily seen in the accompanying photo. The so-called "gopher", referred to as the Flickertail by Seton, is actually a variety of squirrel which is correctly called the Richardson's Ground Squirrel. Two other ground squirrels—Franklin and the Thirteen-lined—are also frequently called "gophers". Although ground dwellers, they do not build burrows approaching the complexity of the Pocket Gopher's and therefore perhaps do not technically deserve the common name we have given them. Whether they are called ground squirrels or "gophers" they and the Pocket Gophers are economically important and interesting rodents.

Unusual Animals of the Beechy District

By **Dave Santy**, Beechy, Sask.

For the past couple of years reports have come to us of raccoon in the Beechy district. The first report came from John Houben who saw an animal he did not recognize when he was returning to his farm home. He gave chase over the stubble field and ran over it with his light truck. It proved to be a raccoon.

Reports were also rife of red fox having been seen, but we were inclined to doubt these reports. However, one such report followed up last spring produced a den of five pups. These were kept in captivity for a few weeks before they escaped.

Muskrats have always been with us, though during the dry thirties they decreased in numbers. Now they are back again as strong as ever. About three years ago trappers complained that some animal was taking a heavy toll of them. Remains of rats were found around the houses on many sloughs. Experienced trappers suggested mink, an unusual predator in this district. During this season (up to the present date) trappers A. Stockman and R. Swann have captured over 50 mink and others in "Operation Muskrat" have taken lesser numbers.

In earlier days beaver were fairly plentiful along the South Saskatchewan River in this section, but an unusual ice break-up in the spring of 1947 dammed the river waters to submerge completely the many islands. When the ice jam broke, the trees, beaver houses and animal life of the islands were swept away and crushed in the heavy pressure of ice flow. Numerous beaver that survived moved to higher ground and for some time occupied small sloughs and ditches in the settlement. They have now pretty well disappeared from there.

Badgers are not as plentiful as in earlier days but skunks seem to be at the peak of their cycle. Time was when prairie gophers were so plentiful that as a control measure our local rural municipality paid a bounty of three cents a tail on them. Now they are gone and their place is being taken by numbers of the striped variety previously considered unusual in this district. Jack rabbits still provide food for eagles and coyotes.

Coyotes have always been considered our greatest predator but they are now well controlled