

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

the use of 1080 poison.

Along its course from the Rockies to Hudson Bay, the Saskatchewan River probably cuts through no higher land than here in the Coteau Hills at an altitude of over 2,500 feet. Here the distance from top land level to river high water mark may be over 500 feet. For a stretch of almost 10 miles, therefore, the river banks

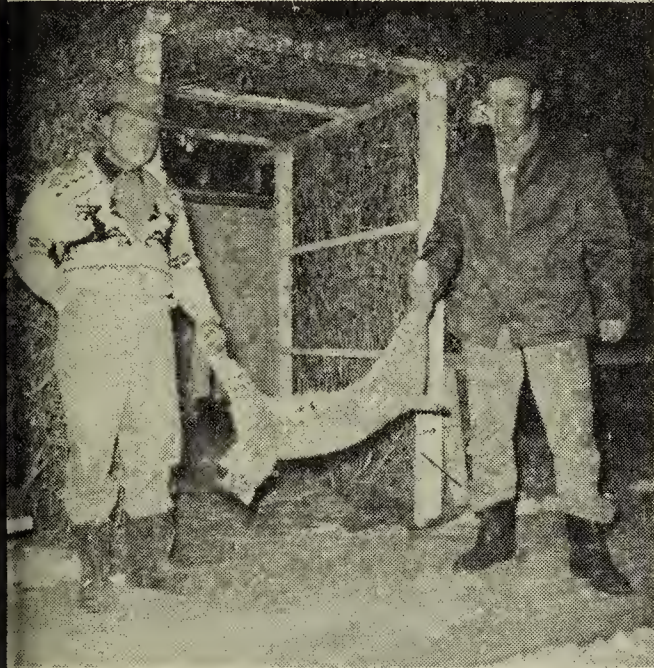


Photo by D. Santy
Bob cat taking a cat nap.

are present about three miles of rough terrain which is the haunt of deer and other forms of wildlife. Bob cats have always been with us in these river breaks, but they are infrequently seen. Since bob cats are known for their wariness, it was a surprise to deer hunters Abe Penner and Frank Odermatt to come across one this fall fast asleep and to view it for a time in that state before dispatching it with a rifle shot. The cat weighed 20 lbs. Two weeks later rancher Pete Perrin saw another cat when he crossed on the river ice near the Herbert ferry.

Looking back over the past 45 years we are reminded that the odd

brush wolf was trapped here, and down through the years the occasional pair has been seen in the district.

Those who have read Palliser's report may remember that when his expedition forded the river at the Elbow several bears were seen and one shot to replenish their meat supply. Last summer it was said that signs of a bear were seen around Bountey or Anerley but no confirmation of the actual presence of such an animal has come to us.

Further Records of Raccoons in Saskatchewan

In addition to the report of raccoons at Beechy in the foregoing article, there have been four reports of raccoons submitted to the editor since the printing of our last **Blue Jay**.

Lad Martinovsky of Gerald found one killed on the highway about one mile west of town in the Cut Arm valley in September, 1957. This is apparently the first one killed in his district. J. Stewart Houston of Tyvan also tells of a raccoon being taken this fall by a trapper near Redvers. His sister, Mrs. Marion Nixon, has heard reports of raccoons near Wauchope.

K. E. Baines of Tisdale writes that a large male raccoon appeared two years ago on the Frank Pearse farm at Leacross. This raccoon was raiding the hen house so it was trapped and transferred to a cage. When spring came it was released and it wasn't seen again.

John Hunter, taxidermist, Saskatoon writes that he has a raccoon in his wildlife exhibit, which was taken near Pleasantdale on January 18, 1954. This raccoon had been in a fight with a dog and had had to be destroyed.

The Thrills and Disappointments of the 1957 Big Game Hunt

By E. M. Morgan, Viewfield, Sask.

I own a summer resort on Candle Lake 65 miles northeast of Prince Albert and I am naturally interested in big game hunting. On the morning when the early moose season

opened last fall, Joe and Frank Hayes and myself took Joe's jeep and drove some 40 miles north east of Candle Lake into the heart of the moose pastures. We spent the night in a