

MAMMAL SECTION

PORCUPINES



Doug Gilroy, of Regina, has made the following observations:

"On March 2, while snowshoeing through the bush about two miles west of home, I came upon quite a large area where almost every willow clump was well peeled of its bark. A porky must have fed here all winter but a thorough search did not reveal him.

On April 20, about half a mile north of Bredin I came across a large porcupine posing beautifully in the topmost branches of a high elm tree. I climbed up after him and got pictures. Old Porky just slowly walked out to the very tip of a long slender branch and there curled up into a ball of yellow hair and quills."

"Porcupines are quite plentiful around here," reports S.A. Mann, of Skull Creek, "and are very destructive to young trees. I usually get out a few times during the winter and hunt down all those near our buildings, both to protect our fruit trees and stock. I have seen stock that had become too inquisitive with a real dose of quills both in their noses and on their legs."

Harold Kvinge found a dead porcupine about two miles west of Hawarden, March 2.

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RATS

There seems no doubt that the rat is becoming a dangerous pest in Saskatchewan and that every effort should be made to stamp out the invasion which threatens not only our property but our general health.

Mrs. Hubbard, Grenfell, feels that unless constant vigilance is kept rats will continue to become more numerous in all sections. Buildings with poor floors and foundations, she believes, lead to a rat invasion. Cats are very effective in keeping them in check.

S.A. Mann says that these pests are becoming very numerous in the Skull Creek area. He caught six or eight during the fall and early winter. One was a very large male measuring 16 3/4 inches from tip to tip. It was of a brownish tint. Most of the others were much darker and much smaller, and he thinks that these were only half grown. They were all caught in a No. 0 gopher trap, which proved very effective.

The Sanitation Bulletin No. 5, of the Saskatchewan Department of Public Health gives us both useful information and a timely warning. It would be well to obtain a copy.

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SKUNKS

Five skunks were responsible for the loss of 23 chicks on Mr. Ward's farm, at Burnam, on April 12. They were trapped and disposed of.

JACK RABBITS

Since reporting in our last issue that Jack Rabbits had disappeared from the Grenfell district, Mrs. Hubbard writes that a pair were seen in February. A neighbor of hers also saw one - the first in two years.

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DEER

White-tails seem to be able to hold their own in the Tisdale area in spite of settlers is Mr. K.E. Baines opinion. Five years ago there were more Mule Deer than White-tails, but none of these have been shot to his knowledge during the past two years. Coyotes have never killed many deer in this district.

Mrs. Buceuk, of Kamsack, also reports that deer are fairly plentiful in that district. Last fall, all through the hunting season, the snow had a hard crust and walking was so noisy that many hunters got no deer.

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Resources Minister, J.B. Brockelbank, said recently that a two-day aerial survey of wild life in the south-east corner of the province had failed to confirm reports of widespread killing of deer by coyotes in that area.

Game Commissioner E.L. Paynter reported seeing 125 deer during the flight, and most appeared in good condition. While the Qu'Appelle had an apparently smaller deer population than last year, the Pipestone Valley had a much larger number.

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ANTELOPE

The Saskatchewan Department of Natural Resources conducted an aerial census of an antelope herd, estimated to contain 30,000 animals, in the southwest corner of Saskatchewan. The survey began April 11, and continued for over two weeks. It was carried out in co-operation with Alberta and the State of Montana which also contain areas frequented by the herd. Its purpose is to provide a basis for hunting regulations and to give information which will make possible a more intelligent administration of the herd.

STORM VICTIMS

Judge McKim, of Melfort, made these interesting observations while returning from the convention of Ducks Unlimited, held at Reno, Nevada:

"For 90 miles along the north side of the railway in Wyoming we saw dead antelope. Sometimes they lay huddled together; sometimes singly. A couple were still standing up against the railroad fence where they had died. Sometimes they lay so close together near the fence that I couldn't count them. I was told 70% of the antelope died in the four-day blizzard that killed so many cattle and sheep. My theory is that the animals, sensing a storm, were for some reason going south and couldn't or wouldn't cross the railway."

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COYOTES

During the recent aerial survey of wild life, Game Commissioner Paynter reported that the largest concentration of coyotes in the area covered was in the Qu'Appelle valley eastward from Regina.

"Recently," writes Mrs. Hubbard, Grenfell, "a farmer in the Qu'Appelle valley says that two years ago dogs were killing deer in almost as large numbers as coyotes were doing this winter."

Coyotes are fairly common at Naicam, but according to Mr. W. Yanchinski, they are not considered to be a nuisance there.

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National Wildlife Week - Admonition  
Editorial, Regina Leader Post

"The wild things of this earth are not ours to do with as we please. They are given to us in trust and we will be held responsible by future generations who come after us to audit our accounts. Our promissory notes to Nature are falling due and must be paid. Civilizations before us have perished because they did not recognize the cardinal principles of conservation and honor their obligations before it was too late.

We can learn to commune with Nature and to glorify the commonplace around us; to appreciate the beautiful and to conserve for future generations the privileges we have, for in so doing we will fulfil the promise and desire for a richer and more abundant life for ourselves and others."

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WOLVES

Mr. Baines of Tisdale reports that wolves are common at Leaf Lake. Two were shot on the lake ice last fall. He saw a large black one there last May.

"We have had timber-wolves for the first time within my memory," reports Mrs. W. Buceuk, of Kamsack. "Four or five were killed recently; one of them, a black one, by a truck."

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FLYING SQUIRRELS

These little rodents are quite common in the district about Tisdale according to Mr. Baines. "Few people know it, however, because of their nocturnal habits. Almost every large timber bridge has its colony. I know one boy who always has several for pets. They become tame easily," he said.

"I, myself," stated Mrs. W. Buceuk, "have never seen a flying squirrel but about a year ago we found the remains of one, brought in by our cat. The skin stretching between the legs and the very soft fur seemed quite distinctive."

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BATS

SKULL CREEK -- S.A. Mann

"I have never seen traces of bats hibernating, although as a boy. I remember my father cutting down a hollow tree from which two bats emerged when he cut into it. They were not able to fly but that could be because of injury. This happened while he was getting his winter's supply of wood out, possibly October."

REGINA, March 26 (Leader Post)

"Customers and employees in a downtown office Thursday morning were startled when a girl clerk screamed.

Everybody rushed over to where she was standing before an open filing cabinet. "What is it? A mouse?" someone asked.

But it wasn't a mouse which frightened the girl. It was a live bat, snoozing in a cabinet drawer she opened."

Hibernating ???

FISHER

The main event of Mr. Baines stay at Leaf Lake was on April 3, when he saw a large Fisher. The animal crossed five miles of open lake about midday and was first seen 150 yards from the shore. The party gave chase and managed to get within 75 yards before he disappeared into the timber. He was about the size of a large fox and tawny black in color with a long slim tail. The most distinctive point about him was his hopping, weasel gait. Apparently they do not walk or trot, but must lope along when going slowly.

ALBINOS AND MELANOS

Here is another interesting observation from Mr. Baines:

"While trapping muskrats on the ice of Leaf Lake, April 4, an albino rat was seen sitting on the ice. It was pure white with pink eyes, feet and tail. We approached within ten feet before it went down. All hands attempted to trap it but without success.

White rats are not uncommon at the Lake. Fourteen were included in a catch of 4000 in 1942, and they have since been seen in the water on several occasions."

--And then there was the cream-colored skunk which caused such a commotion in Kingston, Ontario, April 12. Farmer Ross Revell, of Collins Bay, was patrolling his fields when he shot what he thought was a stray cat. When he got within close range there was no mistake. The animal was found to be without one black hair on its body.

Harold Deighton, Yorkton game guardian, reports a black "gopher" taken on the farm of Ernest Miller, of the Waldron district, April 25. The animal was in a state of decomposition and for that reason could not be forwarded to the Museum.



Melanism is the opposite of albinism. It is the darkness of color resulting from abnormal development of melanin, a black or brown pigment in the skin, hair, feathers, etc. of animals. The species affected is known as a melano.

The silver black fox is merely a melanistic phase of the red fox. A fine specimen of a melano Franklin's Ground Squirrel (Spermophyle) or Bush Gopher was donated to the Provincial Museum by Miss Doris Thompson of Carlyle, May 14, 1925. -- Editor.

FISH

This hardly comes under the heading of "Mammals" even although many fish stories have been told about them.

Mr. Shaw reports from Yorkton that hundreds of Brook Sticklebacks were found dead in York Lake, four miles south of that city, this spring. Many suckers also were killed. This is a shallow lake and perhaps the depth of the ice was responsible for the loss.

The specimens were identified by Dr. D.S. Rawson, of the University of Saskatchewan.

Readers will be interested to know that an illustrated check list of the fishes of Saskatchewan, has been written by Dr. Rawson and was published only this spring. Copies may be obtained from the Department of Natural Resources and Industrial Development.

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BOTANY SECTION



Our wild plants got away to an early start this spring, many of them producing flowers and seeds two weeks or more earlier than usual. It was a case of "The early bird gets the worm" for many of them met the fate of some of our semi-hardy garden perennials by the devastating frosts which swept across the Province on the nights of May 22 and 23. It is to be hoped that our wild fruits are not too badly damaged, but we are keeping our fingers crossed.

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More wild-flower observations are solicited and welcomed. If we can be of any service to you in making identifications we will be glad to do so. Mr. A.C. Budd, of Swift Current Experimental Station, and Dr. R.C. Russell, of the University of Saskatchewan, will also be pleased to assist you.

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It will not be long before the Lilies are again in bloom. We request all of our members to spread among their friends the necessity for the conservation of this, our floral emblem. Perhaps it would not be too much trouble to place a small sign on a roadside post near a patch of these flowers reading, "THE WESTERN LILY IS OUR PROVINCIAL EMBLEM -- PRESERVE THEM FOR OTHERS TO ENJOY."