

ONE BLIND MOUSE

By C.C. Shaw, Yorkton



While out to the edge of the city for a walk Thursday (Apr. 20) my attention was suddenly attracted to a mouse scampering leisurely along a damp cinder path. It stopped within a few inches of my shoe and began to nibble at a patch of melting snow. After satisfying his thirst he, (verified later) took a few short hops and banged his nose against a fence post. I was as surprised as the mouse must have been. Kneeling down to his level I noticed he was completely blind. He was also apparently deaf

and when picked up made no audible protest though threatened with his chisel-like teeth. From all appearances the mouse was otherwise in good health and as I returned him to the path he busily went about his business of nibbling among the damp leaves. My identification was that of a "Deer Mouse" or sometimes called a "White Footed Mouse." I realize there are geographical variations and perhaps should have packed him off to the museum. However, I felt sorry for any creature, blind on such a beautiful spring day.

As sometimes happens this was one of those occasions when I left my camera at the office. I understand this species is nocturnal.

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SIMPSON SCHOOL NATURE CLUB

We are in receipt of the most remarkable nature record, kept by boys and girls, that has yet come to our attention. It is a forty page report of birds, amphibians, reptiles, mammals and insects seen by the members of the Yorkton Simpson School Nature Club, and recorded by their enthusiastic leader, Miss Pauline Summers, a teacher of that school.

Observations have been made every week and sometimes nearly every day from August 29 to November 14, 1949, and from February 28 to May 13, 1950. A total of thousands of birds have been seen, identified and recorded by members of the Club. The total number of species has not been checked but it is safe to say that practically every bird that lives in or visits the vicinity of Yorkton has been spotted by this group of keen-eyed naturalists. When identity is in doubt, Miss Summers comes to the rescue, and by her own practical knowledge, augmented by "Taverner" and Peterson's "Field Guide," she comes up with the correct determinations.

Not only are birds observed and discussed but bears, flying squirrels, snakes, salamanders, rabbits, gophers, muskrats, chipmunks, coyotes, butterflies and beetles have all been seen, named and duly recorded. Among their projects the Club has carefully examined the crop of a Prairie Chicken and taken from it 266 separate items which have been classified as fruits, berries, seeds, beetles, worms, eggs, leaves, twigs, etc.

If Saskatchewan could boast of many clubs of this nature, encouraged by enthusiastic and competent leadership, it would become a province of ardent naturalists in a few years. Miss Summers is to be highly congratulated on the splendid work which she is doing among the younger generation.

RABBITS PLENTIFUL AT BLADWORTH

Jack Rabbits are becoming more plentiful and are nearing the top of their cycle. I shot eight this winter and there are about fifteen more around the place that have survived. I saw ten on a half section on March 19. Bush Rabbits are also the most numerous I have ever seen. Willows, bent by the weight of the snow offer good shelter and protection. I noticed one place where two coyotes tried to get at a rabbit. One dug from the top and one from the side, but both ran into a very efficient screen of willow. The rabbits ate many tender willow shoots and bark from the larger willows.

I also found three sloughs where large trees have been practically stripped of their bark by porcupines. One of these sloughs is so far from the other that I assume there must have been two porcupines. I also noticed that the bush rabbits and porcupine ate from the same tree. The porcupine cut branches off that were an inch in diameter.

The Provincial Museum is with the rabbit population in It seems that in some areas in others there are very few.

Aerial observations made Museum Staff, B. McJorquodale following facts:

From Emmaline Lake, the presence of rabbits grades From Emmaline Lake north and plentiful and exist in large region. Montreal Lake region and eastward from there show evidence of the rabbit population being low, although much more common than in the Big River region.



desirous of reports dealing various parts of the province. they are very plentiful, while

recently by two members of the and Fred Lahrman indicated the

south-west to Big River region down to being almost nothing. eastward they become quite numbers in the Lac La Ronge

region.

THE CYCLE

According to an article written by John Patrick Gillese and reprinted in the March number of "National Wildlife and Conservation Digest," rabbit cycles in the West follow one another with mathematical precision. In fact, the records of the Hudson Bay Company, dating back more than two hundred years, indicate the exact average period of the cycle is 9.6 years. Prairie Chicken, Grouse, Hungarian Partridge, Magpies, Evening Grosbeaks and Blue Jays have their cycles too, which closely follow that of the rabbit. Many mammals do the same thing, for the rabbit furnishes food not only to the Indian in our Northland but to coyotes, weasels and snowy owls. No animal follows the cycle more closely than the lynx.

The last cycle reached its peak in 1942. In that year the West was almost overrun with rabbits, and predators and game birds were numerous. It was the year of the hunters' paradise. The next peak comes in 1952. We can expect until that year an increasing number, not only of rabbits, but game birds, and Owls and Coyotes.

After that, for a number of years, these animals will disappear as if by magic. By 1955 we will not have to worry about coyote control by poison and organized hunts. Without their natural supply of food the number of these predators will dwindle to a new low.



THE CYCLE (Cont'd)

Mr. Gillese writes: "Both last year and this, game birds showed steady signs of a comeback, and when the current cycle reaches its estimated peak, the north will be a sight to behold. Farmers will have to burn haystacks again to get rid of dead rabbits, and hunters will bag their bird quotas the first day out. NOTHING CAN PREVENT IT."

Now this remains to be proved, and our Society should be in a position to do so. Please keep this in mind and let us have your actual observations.

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ALL THE WORLD LOVES A YOUNG HELPLESS ANIMAL



People instinctively have a love for wild animals, particularly young wild animals. The truth of this fact was amply demonstrated when hundreds of men, women and children - 5003, to be exact - flocked to the Provincial Museum recently to watch the antics of two bear cubs as they boxed one another, performed gymnastic stunts on the trunk and branches of a dead tree, and ate sweet morsels which were handed to them through the wire front of their temporary home.

The bears were sent to Regina, on April 28, by Mr. W.J. Watt, of Ile a la Crosse, and were kept at the museum for three weeks.

Following the departure of the cubs to their permanent home at the Wild Animal Park at Moose Jaw, their place was taken by two young timber wolves, sent to the museum by Mr. Schell, of the Natural Resources Department, stationed at Hudson Bay. During the first afternoon following their arrival, 1023 people visited their glass-covered display-pen and made their acquaintance.

Before this Issue reaches your home, two fawns will form the centre of attraction and no doubt will be received with similar interest and affection.

Young wild animals have a fascination hard to explain; people love them.

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BLISTERS ON RABBITS

Constable Ned Carnie, R.C.M.P., at Resolution, has been concerned about the appearance of blisters on rabbits in that area, and if these will affect the use of rabbit meat as food for man.

Mr. Fred Bard, Director of the Provincial Museum, has made several enquiries on his behalf, and has received the following information from Dr. C. G. Saunders, Professor of Parasitology, at the University of Saskatchewan.

"These are the larvæ of a tapeworm in the form of a large fluid-filled vesicle with opaque white spots in clusters on the walls. Each spot is an inverted tapeworm head, complete with hooks and four suckers. The adult tape is *Multiceps multiceps* in *cannis*; dogs, coyotes, wolves, and will not develop in man.

The rabbits are therefore fit food for man, even if they are not properly cooked, but they should not be given to dogs unless boiled first."