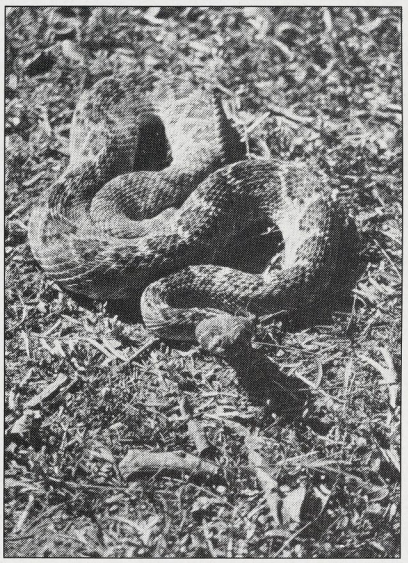
SURVIVAL

ANTHONY ACERRANO

SNAKEBITE: MYTH & FACT

For all the millions of humans stomping around the fields, forests and swamps of this country, only about 7000 are treated annually for venomous snakebite; nine to 14 of these people die. The highest bite rates occur in the southern states, in this order: North Carolina, Arkansas, Texas, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arizona and New Mexico. Poisonous snakes, however, live in all states except Maine and Alaska.



Bites: typically a result of handling.

More than half of all snakebite victims are children or people under 20. About one-third of the bites are the result of handling.

The snakes that do the most damage are fanged pit vipers (Crotalidae), 19 species of which live in the United States (including varieties of rattlesnakes and pygmy rattlers, and the copperhead and cottonmouth snakes). Coral snakes (Elapidae), which do not have fangs but carry an extremely dangerous brand of venom, account for only 20 to 25 bites per year, usually due to handling. The Elapidae occur only in certain southern and southwestern states.

The seriousness of a snakebite varies greatly with the situation. One scientist estimates that 20 percent of bites result in no envenomization whatever, either because fang penetration was superficial or because the snake did not inject venom. Venom potency also varies with the size and species of snake; a copperhead, for instance, carries less—and less deadly—venom than does a typical eastern diamondback. Another factor is the size and health of the victim; a large, strong man is less vulnerable to toxic injection than is a child or an adult in ill health.

DO'S AND DON'TS FOR BITES

●DO NOT panic. An increased pulse only accelerates the assimilation of venom.

●DO NOT drink alcohol.

●DO NOT apply ice packs or cold compresses. Once touted as the premier snakebite treatment, cryotherapy is now universally condemned by physicians since it often destroys more tissue than it saves.

●DO NOT apply a tourniquet. This only increases the danger of serious injury. A tourniquet that is wrongly applied can eventually lead to amputation of the limb.

●DO NOT use the incision-and-suction method. Though this is often suggested in popular articles (and even, occasionally, by physicians), the consensus now is negative. "We don't recommend this method anymore," advises Dr. Doug Gentile, assistant professor of surgery at Vanderbilt University, home of an acclaimed medical emergency facility. "The suction applied is usually inadequate to remove any poison. Also, the incisions usually do more harm than good, particularly when made by nonmedical personnel."

●DO immobilize the bitten area, with a splint if the bite is on an extremity.

●DO evacuate the immediate area. If possible, have someone in your party kill the snake. Positive identification will facilitate antivenom treatment. Be wary of the snake's head, however. Even when dead, a snake can reflexively bite for up to an hour. For this reason, carry the dead snake in some sort of container.

●DO get to a medical facility as soon as possible. If help is a long way off, a light constricting band of cloth may be applied above the wound, loose enough so that a finger can easily be inserted between the band and skin. DO NOT overtighten.

●The only other field device Dr. Gentile recommends is a suction device called the Extractor (see sidebar), which, if used promptly, can substantially reduce the amount of venom absorbed.

WHAT ABOUT ELECTRIC SHOCK?

Recent media accounts have claimed that the most effective cure for snakebite is intense localized electric shock. Touted in particular is a "stun gun" device called the Nova Spirit Gun, manufactured by Nova Technologies of Austin, Texas.

Theoretically, the high-voltage shock neutralizes the venom. Reports from the South American jungle, where the gun is being tested unofficially, have included stories of highly successful field treatments for venomous snake and insect bites. It's important to note, however, that at present there is little or no corroboration from the medical community.

THE EXTRACTOR KIT

The only commercial snakebite treatment device generally sanctioned by the medical community, the Extractor is essentially a plunger onto which is fitted a cup that is placed over the wound. Pressing down on the plunger creates enough suction to withdraw substantial amounts of venom without making incisions or cuts of any kind. The suction is most effective if applied immediately—no more than five or 10 minutes after the bite.

The kit includes the Extractor plunger; four small- to large-sized cups (some for use on bee or wasp stings); a safety razor for clearing away obstructive hair; and instructions. The Extractor is available in sporting goods stores or may be ordered directly from Sawyer Products, Dept. SA, Box 188, Safety Harbor, FL 34695. Cost is $11.95.

The kit uses a plunger and suction cup.

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This is a gag - right?

BOOK OF THE MONTH

What Bird Did That? A driver's guide to some common birds of North America by Peter Hansard and Burton Silver. Berkeley, California: Ten Speed Press, 1991. $7.95.

"Interest in avian dejecta has grown rapidly with the use of the automobile and the proliferation of roads that now reach even the most isolated habitats. There are seventeen Ornithological Dejecta Societies in the USA and over thirty in Britain. Canada has twelve Avian Splay Leagues and there are other groups in France, Italy, Australia and New Zealand" (from the introduction to What Bird Did That). This pocket-sized volume provides the first scientific documentation of avian dejecta with color photographs and paintings of splays from forty bird species. Each splay is identified with collection location, date, time and speed of collecting vehicle.

Collection speeds varied from 5 to 55 MPH, with only a few splays collected from stationary vehicles. Speed seems to be a very important part of this sport. The guide recommends speeds above 40 MPH for collection of Great Blue Heron splays to ensure "an even spread and good resolution," but recommends driving by lakes at low speeds to collect dejecta from Common Loons.

Besides splay photographs, each species account features a written description of the splay, details on food, bird distribution and the real scoop on collection (where, when and how).

Instructions for retrieving splays are covered briefly, the ideal is to cover the windshield with clear plastic film before collecting. Failing such preparations there are other methods: splays may be loosened with oleander or witch hazel oils.

The book introduces the reader to correct splay terminology with topography drawings and a brief glossary. The book is very readable right down to the bibliography, which includes such works as Darwin's Origin of the Faeces, Winter Splays, A Skier's Goggle Guide, Making Big Spreads: Preparing, Photographing and Blowing Up Splays in Ireland.

With Christmas looming on the horizon, this is a "must have" stocking stuffer for your birder friends. If you pick it up now, there will be plenty of time to read it before Christmas Eve!

* *

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CHAPTER INTEREST QUESTIONNAIRE **OCTOBER 1992**

The direction and character of Sacajawea Audubon Society for the next several years will be determined by the interests of those members who are willing to work (serv in positions) in the local chapter. Therefore, this questionnaire is important, and the Board of Directors asks your help by responding to the following questions.

1. What kind of program would get your attendance at an Audubon meeting?

2. Please check your area(s) of special interest in Audubon.

_____birding/wildlife

_____local environmental issues (please specify)

_____National Audubon's environmental agenda

_____other (please specify)

3. Would you be willing to help determine the direction of Sacajawea Audubon by serving as:

_____an officer (e.g. president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer

_____a board member

_____a committee chairperson (e.g. publicity, newsletter, membership, special interest)

_____a committee member

_____birding activities/field trips

_____other (please specify)

If you have checked any of the above responses in Question 3, please give us your name and phone number:

Name_____ Phone_____

Please fold & staple this questionnaire and mail to Robin Moore (1210 S. Pinecrest Dr.; Bozeman, MT 59715) by October 13, or bring it to the October meeting. Thank you for your time and effort.

Beaver Story w/ John Aḍzal

Our biggest furbearer (?). Like fishing, but weighs 40 lbs + wears fur. Give your hands arthritis, makes you walk 2 miles through snow to car.

But can modify whole ecosystem.

Turn pasture into pond.

Help trout.

Cut down ancient cottonwoods that shade streams + stabilize banks.

Affect insect life by exuding an oil (castor) that kills insects in the meniscus. A natural insecticide.

Excrement = nitrogen enrichment in backed-up water.

Water is blood. You can't kill it to make it feel better when it's dying. You can, these days, give it a heart transplant: beaver.

Has real degrees in Forestry + range management.

A "master's degree in observation."

". . . automobilists argue that a wilderness domain precludes the huge majority of recreation-seekers from deriving any amusement whatever from it. This is almost as irrational as contending that because more people enjoy bathing than art exhibits, therefore we should change our picture galleries into swimming holes." Furthermore, he contended, our wilderness policy should be swift and radical, for "it is easy to convert a natural area to industrial or motor usage, impossible to do the reverse." Last, he maintained that the population that coveted wilderness recreation would grow and would soon have the economic power and leisure to gratify its desires. In this prediction, he was prescient indeed.

No armchair philosopher, and faced in the spring of 1929 with a summer in which to do whatever he desired, Marshall took an atlas and turned to the map of Alaska. Using a study of tree growth at northern timberline as an excuse, he contrived to spend the next 13 months in the arctic settlement of Wiseman, where several dozen gold miners and Eskimos lived in a cluster of shacks and spent their days fishing, hunting, prospecting, and dancing in the local roadhouse.

Nicknamed *Oomik Polluk,* "Big Whiskers," by the Eskimos, Marshall kept a careful anthropologic record of his stay in Wiseman, and along with the hunter Ernie Johnson, the Eskimo Nutirwik and the prospectors Jesse Allen and Al Retzlaf, explored the southern drainages and ramparts of the Brooks Range. Marshall returned three times during the next decade, going by sled, foot and boat up the Koyukuk, John and Alatna rivers. Photographs from this time show him bearded, in a torn cotton shirt, jeans and knee-high boots, his smile huge, his arms clasped happily around the shoulders of Jesse and Nutirwik. And, of course, he still kept his records.

His first book, *Arctic Village,* published during the depression and describing the simple and prosperous life to be found in Alaska, became, not unexpectedly, a best-seller. During these years, Marshall also used his positions as chief forester of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and chief of the Division of Recreation and Lands in the Forest Service to set aside 4.8 million acres of wild country in Indian reservations and 14 million more acres for study as roadless areas. He also drafted a constitution for and almost singlehandedly funded a new conservation group named the Wilderness Society. With Marshall as one of its first officers, it became a leading conservation organization.

Photographs from these years show him sitting at a desk in Washington, in a white shirt and tie, a pile of ledgers before him, a pen in hand. Despite the work load, he is still smiling. Perhaps because he knew he'd be going back to Alaska.

On his last two trips, he twice attempted to climb Mt. Doonerak, which he believed to be the highest peak in the Brooks Range. The failure to do so—on the first attempt because of weather, on the second because he was unable to scale the last precipitous face—left Marshall depressed but philosophical. He had not climbed the mountain of his dreams, but he had mapped country no one had seen before and had enjoyed the sort of companionship not many are privileged to know. Of one of his evenings with the hunter Ernie Johnson, he wrote: "We didn't say very much sitting there. You don't when it is your last camp with a companion who had shared the most perfect summer of a lifetime. We just sat, with a feeling warmer than the crackling fire, exulting in the sharp-edged pattern which the mountain walls cut against the northern sky; listening to the peaceful turmoil of the arctic river with its infinite variation in rhythm and tone; smelling the luxuriance of untainted arctic valleys; feeling the wholesome cleanliness of arctic breezes . . . "

His friends were certain he would die in the cold rapids of some arctic river, amongst the flowers, the Dall sheep and the northern lights. But while on a night train between Washington, D.C., and New York City, as had his mother and sister before him, he succumbed at an early age. For all his grand walks, his hundreds of climbs, his simple living in the bush, Bob Marshall had a weak heart. Fortunately, for all of us who love the places he helped set aside, it was also a big one.

Coming Soon: Gear for the self-contained.

GEORGE HARRISON

Nature

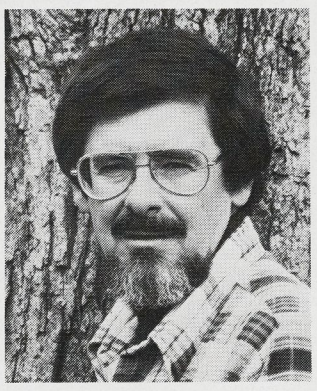
Native American Mice

Most people who set mousetraps don't want to capture live mice, but we set a live trap in our kitchen last summer because we wanted to study one of North America's most handsome natives, the white-footed mouse.

Unfortunately, our native mice have been given a bum rap by people who know only the house mouse, a dirty and aggressive alien that thrives in many buildings throughout the world. In sharp contrast, our native mice are clean, attractive and extremely interesting creatures. The whitefoot is my favorite.

The next morning, we found one sitting quietly in the little wire trap. We knew that she was a female by the nipples on her abdomen.

A trip to the local Ben Franklin store produced a hamster cage, complete with balcony and exercise wheel. After



adding some cedar chips, a jar lid of cereal, a watering bottle, a box with a small hole in the front and some Kleenex for bedding, we released Molly into her new quarters.

It didn't take her long to get acclimated to the spacious hamsterdome. Within an hour she had carried the Kleenex into the box, shredded it into a neat pile, formed it into a nest, and crawled in for a snooze.

A nocturnal creature, our

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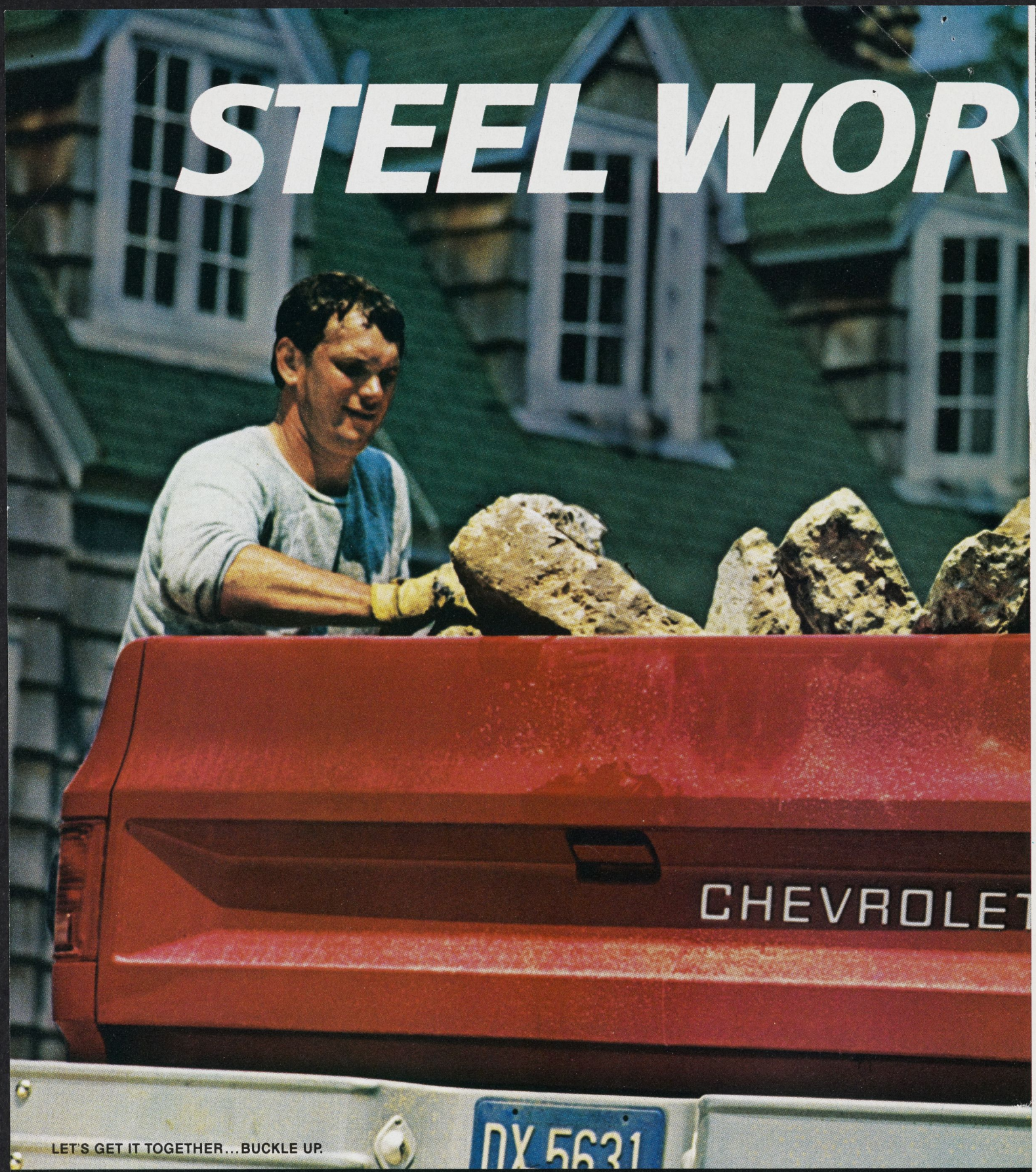

LET'S GET IT TOGETHER...BUCKLE UP.

NOTHING W

CHEVY

new charge did not stir again until after dark on that first day of her captivity. A bit cautious at first, she crept out into the center of her cage, looked around, jumped up on the balcony, rippled over the top of the exercise wheel, and then jumped in for a spin. (The spinning wheel later became a familiar night sound in our house.)

It all seemed to be going well until the morning of the third day of her captivity. The moment I entered the sun room, I knew that something was different. I could hear a strange, high-pitched squeak emanating from Molly's nest—we had not heard that sound before. Using a chopstick as a probe, I uncovered the Kleenex mound over Molly's nest and looked down at four newborn babies.

The white-footed mouse, *Peromyscus leucopus* (and its near twin, the deer mouse, *Peromyscus maniculatus*), is the most widespread of the more than 250 kinds of native mice in North America. From the Arctic Circle south, there is barely an acre that is not populated with one of the 15 subspecies and 75 races of these handsome mice.

Because it is a nocturnal animal, most people are not aware of how common white-footed mice are until one ventures inside, as Molly did. However, Molly was not my first mouse.

For many years we owned a log cabin in Pennsylvania. A part of the adventure of being there was living with the wildlife. Upon our arrival at Hidden Valley, it was routine to remove all the mouse nests from the dresser drawers and pantry shelves. At night we fell asleep listening to the rustling of tiny white feet racing across the false ceiling above our beds. And what a surprise when a pair of beady eyes and big ears appeared from behind a soup can on the pantry shelf!

Rolled oats were a favorite of Molly's, as were raisins, lettuce, carrots, peanut butter, apples and a little raw hamburger. She also liked the commercial mixture of dried hamster and gerbil food.

George Harrison

The whitefoot is the most widespread of our native mice species.

In the wild, whitefoots eat seeds, nuts, fruits, berries, mushrooms and insects. If you ever find an acorn shell that has been cleaned out and resembles a thimble, it is most likely the work of a whitefoot.

As natural food becomes more abundant through the summer and autumn, white-footed mice accumulate great caches of food in preparation for winter. They do not hibernate, and therefore require a steady food supply to keep them going through the cold months.

Though Molly moved around a lot inside her cage, white-footed mice rarely travel more than a few hundred feet from where they are born. E. Lawrence Palmer writes in *Fieldbook of Mammals* that of 675 young deer mice studied, 70 percent of the males and 80 percent of the females settled within 500 feet of their birthplaces.

Mice generally live alone during the winter, but as spring approaches, males begin to seek mates. In the north, the breeding season starts in February and lasts until November, according to Richard M. DeGraaf, author of *Forest Habitats for Mammals of the Northeast.* During the first part of the courtship, the females often resist the advances of males and are likely to drive them away. But soon the roles are reversed, and it is the female who winds up enticing the male into her nest, where he remains a few days to breed. Then he leaves or is driven away.

During the 22- to 25-day gestation period, the female prepares her nest, often in an old bird nest, bird house, stump, log or stone wall. It is a globular affair, usually placed four to 10 feet above the ground. The female carefully lines the nest with shredded plant materials to give it insulation. The average litter is four.

We found that Molly was a typical devoted whitefoot mother. During the first week or so, she remained in the nest with her litter, leaving only for short periods at night to eat and drink. Otherwise she was nursing them, licking them, and keeping them warm.

By the end of their first week, the babies were nearly fully furred and several times larger than they were at birth. That mouse milk is powerful stuff!

The young opened their eyes at the end of the second week, and they were venturing out of the nest a few days after that. Unsteady at first, they moved around on wobbly legs but managed to get back to the nest after short outings. By then they were nearly half the size of their fawn-colored mother and completely covered with silky gray fur. They retain their distinctive gray coats until they are sexually mature at the ripe old age of six to seven weeks.

With each passing day, we noticed a greater amount of activity in the hamsterdome. At night, Molly was spending much more time out of the nest and the mouselings were exploring its far corners and finally the exercise wheel.

We watched for signs that the youngsters were being weaned. Sometime after the third week passed, we saw them eating hard food. About that time, Molly became less and less attentive. In fact, she appeared to be trying to get away from them a great deal of the time, so we bought a second hamsterdome.

At the first sign of autumn, we decided to release the family on our patio terrace. By then, we had learned a great deal about the white-footed mouse, particularly regarding its lifestyle and its young. There didn't seem to be any logical reason for keeping them longer.

The possibility of Molly and her offspring being around a year later was slim. Mice are a buffer species, providing food for a great many other creatures including predatory birds such as hawks, owls, crows, even blue jays and shrikes. Weasels, foxes, coyotes, bobcats, shrews and snakes all consider mice a staple.

Literally millions, perhaps billions, of mice are eaten in North America every day. It's a good thing, too, because the reproductive capability of mice is phenomenally high. Considering that whitefoots reach sexual maturity in six to seven weeks, and each female can produce four or more litters a year, it wouldn't take long to be knee-deep in mice were it not for natural controls such as predators and parasites.

Other Mice

The white-footed mouse's closest relative, the deer mouse, is so alike in appearance and habits that even biologists have a difficult time seeing the differences between them where their ranges overlap, which is in most of the East, South and Midwest.

Other members of the *Peromyscus* genus include the cactus, Merriam, California, canyon, brush, piñon, rock, white-ankled and pygmy mice of the

continued

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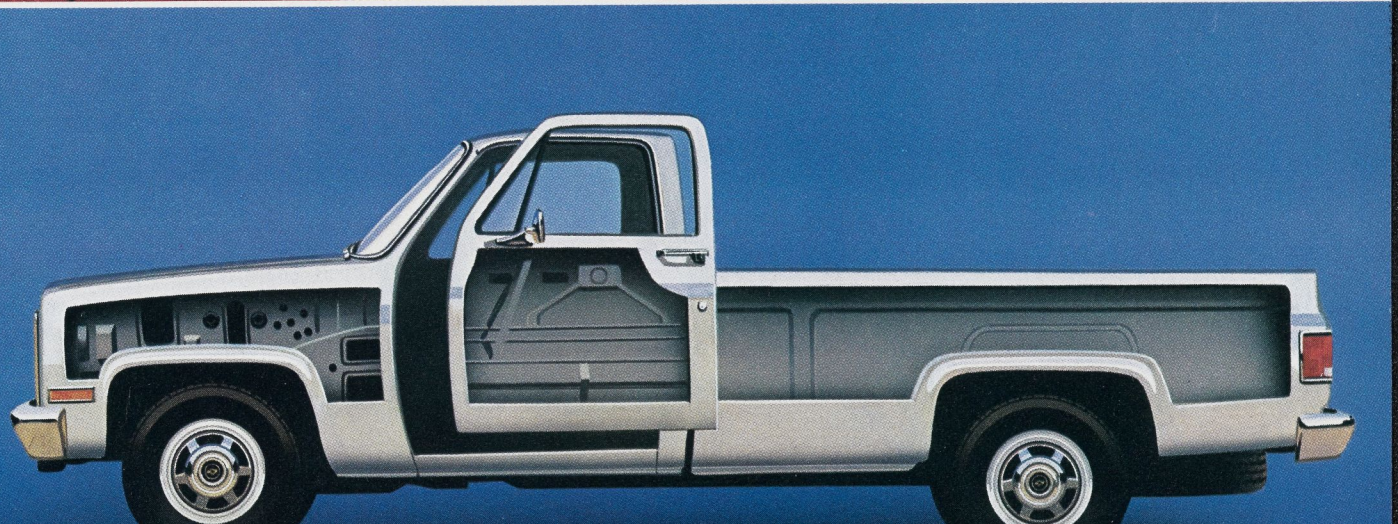


ORKS LIKE A TRUCK

Southwest and the oldfield, cotton, Florida and golden mice of the Southeast.

There are also grasshopper mice (genus *Onychomys*), which inhabit the prairies and southwestern deserts. Their short, white-tipped tails differentiate them from whitefoots and deer mice.

Harvest mice *(Reithrodontomys)* are smaller, resembling the house mouse. They inhabit the Southeast and Southwest.

Like so many wildlife pest species, the house mouse *(Mus musculus)* is not a native. Originally from Asia, it reached North America aboard ship from Europe in the 16th century. Today it thrives throughout most of the continent. Its dull gray fur and long, scaly tail distinguish it from the more attractive native mice.

Whitefoot Facts

Description: A handsome five- to nine-inch mouse (tail is half its length) with fawn to chestnut-brown back and white undersides and feet. Large ears and large, beady, black eyes. Adult weight averages less than an ounce.

Habitat: Brushy woodlands, streamside thickets, suburban and rural backyards, and farms.

Voice: Churring, squeaking, squealing, and high-pitched singing. Will also make a buzzing sound by drumming its feet.

Locomotion: Gallops in a zigzag manner, though more often a walk or trot. It also stalks and pounces on prey, like a cat.

Life Span: Less than one year in the wild, though capable of living a year or two longer. In captivity, eight years.

Editor's Note: For more information read America's Favorite Backyard Wildlife *by Kit and George Harrison, Simon and Schuster, 1985. Autographed copies available for $18.20 from Harrison Productions Inc., Hubertus, WI 53033.*

Coming Soon: The desert at night.

ZACK TAYLOR

Fishing Boats

Chicago News

IMTEC, in a more primitive era called the Chicago Boat Show, was bustling. IMTEC stands for something, but the world will little note nor long remember what. [It stands for International Marine Trades Exhibit and Congress.—*Eds.*] There were boats galore. Motors bigger and better than ever. And trailers! The boat business had come off a banner year, and hopes were high for a repeat in the months ahead. You could feel the excitement and expectancy at the show.

There was one negative, however. All is not rosy in the canoe business. Sales had been way off—around 50,000 last year, when a good year sees 125,000 canoes sold. What's the reason? Bikes, jogging, the rafting craze? As one executive growled to me, "The damn things last forever." Company reps were meeting at the show to discuss more promotions, advertising and retailer deals.

Great old names were on display: Century, Grady White, AquaSport, Grumman with lines of sport boats and canoes. (You can get a catalog from Grumman Boats, Dept. SA, P.O. Box 549, Marathon, NY 13803; 607/849-3211.)

Chris-Craft is back big with a line of boats from 17 feet on up; most are inboard/outboard, but some are available in outboard models, too. (Catalog from Murray Chris-Craft Sportboats Inc., Dept. SA, P.O. Box 9450, Bradenton, FL 33506; 813/753-7878.)

Interesting story: Chris-Craft bills itself as the "American Legend." Is it ever! At age 13, Christopher Columbus Smith built his first boat, a log canoe, and launched it in Lake St. Clair, Michigan. The year was 1873. He kept building boats, and by 1884 he had a factory where he installed a naphtha engine into a duckboat and created the first powerboat—two years before Karl Benz and Gottfried Daimler invented the first automobile in Germany. Chris Smith's boats have been in the forefront of the American boating scene ever since.

I once wrote in this column that the Japanese incursion into the outboard market would not parallel their efforts on the automotive market. I

was wrong. They simply will not be denied. Lots of them were at the show: Suzuki, Mariner, Tohatsu, Yamaha ("marketing in 140 countries for 25 years"). Of course, all the familiar American names, including Evinrude, Mercury and Johnson, were there with interesting new lines.

Up to now, all outboards rotated clockwise, which is why on twin-outboard installations the boat tends to heel to the right and turn hard to the left. Now Yamaha offers counter rotating on its V6s from 150 to 200 hp, the first in the United States to do so, as far as I know. Yamaha is also the only outboard company to incorporate kill switches on all models except the 2 and 4 hp. This is a strong safety statement other outboard companies could emulate. (Catalog from Yamaha Motor Corp., Dept. SA, Box 6555, Catella Ave., Cypress, CA 90630; 714/761-7300.)

Bassboats at the show were bigger and more beautiful. Ranger still leads the way, but you'll have plenty of others to choose from. If you want something to drool over, write for Ranger's catalog (Wood Manufacturing Co., Dept. SA, Flippin, AR 72634; 501/453-2222).

The trend to larger bassers is causing somewhat of a revival of 24-volt electric motors. The 24s were such a pain and required so much recharging that fishermen switched to higher-thrust 12-volt motors. Now the new long-lived deep-cycle batteries with cranking power (described in December) are taking some of the strain out of the 24s. For sure, you need 60 pounds of thrust to control a 20-foot bassboat in any kind of breeze.

Among the interesting boats

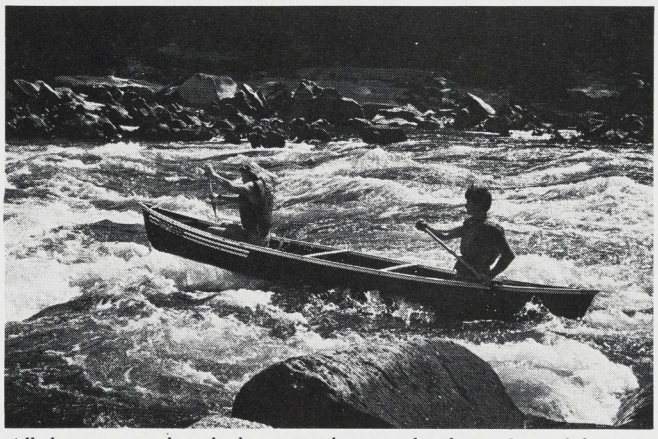
continued

I saw at this boat show was the Sportspal, a lightweight canoe now available with camo kits to make her a ducker. In 12-, 14- and 16-foot versions, plus 13- and 15-foot-square sterns. (Particulars from Meyers Industries, Dept. SA, Tecumseh, MI 49286; 517/423-2151.)

These used to be the lightest canoes there were, even lighter than Grumman's lightweights. Now, with foam flotation, they are heavier; Sportspal 16-footer is 69 pounds; a Grumman lightweight 17-footer is 60 pounds.

If it's light weight you want in a canoe, Kevlar (sold under a variety of brand names) makes aluminum obsolete. Look at these Sawyer weights: the D.Y. Special, 16 feet 8 inches with 29-inch beam, weighs, in its plastic version, 48 pounds; in Kevlar, 38; and in Superlite Kevlar, 31. Prices respectively are $735, $1075, and $1195. (Catalog from Sawyer Canoe Co., Dept. SA, 234 S. State, Oscoda, MI 48750; 517/739-9181.)

A new, innovative, somewhat expensive boat is the Saroca. You can sail, row, paddle, or operate it under power. Specs are 16 feet 6 inches; beam 56 inches; draft 3 inches; draft, board down, 33 inches. For hunters there is a dead-grass version with camo spray shield. This boat would make a neat scullboat rigged Jersey-fashion, with the oar outboard. You'd have to build some kind of removable bracket for the oarlock. The basic boat is $2195, sail package $800 and row package $649. The only boat that will beat it for versatility is a canoe. (Saroca, Dept. SA, 27 Hedly St., Portsmouth, RI 02871; 401/683-9003.)



All the major makers had new products at the show. One of the most popular was Coleman's Gold Medalist canoe with interior stiffener.

I've been an advocate, in this tight-space age, of Porta-Bote, which folds flat to surfboard size (four inches thick) and stows under your bed or stands in a closet. It is now available in hunter green for duck shooting. Row it, sail it, power it. Three sizes are available: 8-, 10- and 12-foot models; weights are 48, 59, and 69 pounds; prices $795, $845 and $895. (Porta-Bote International, Dept. SA, 1074 Independence Ave., Mountain View, CA 94043; 415/961-5334.)

There's a new 16-foot fast-water canoe from Coleman. Older versions incorporated an aluminum frame with a polyethylene skin. The new black Gold Medalist has a single aluminum interior stiffener through-bolted to a keel. The entire interior is smooth and open. Price is in the $500-or-less range. (The Coleman Co., Dept. SA, 250 N. St. Francis, Wichita, KS 67201; 316/261-3348.)

You've probably seen the flashy Hobie Cat, a super-fast twin-hulled catamaran sailboat. Now there's a flashy 15-foot Hobie Power skiff especially rigged for fishing. It has some nice touches. The helm seat is a double-duty 68-quart Coleman cooler (serves as dry storage or ice box). There is a live-bait well, a self-draining cockpit and a modified-V hull. It is lightweight at 425 pounds and takes to 60 hp. Three versions: center console Fisherman, $4395; Sport model with bench thwart seats and side console, $3695; Standard with bench thwarts and tiller steering, $3250. (Hobie Power Division, Dept. SA, P.O. Box 1008, Oceanside, CA 92054; 619/758-9100.)

Coming Soon: Solar power for fishing boats.

V. LEE OERTLE

Sport Vehicles

Smart Shopping

In times like these, is there an outdoorsman anywhere not interested in saving money? I doubt it. Considering the fact that an RV price tag can range from as low as $1000 (for a small folding trailer) to as high as $334,000 (for a Country Camper motorhome), there's a lot of leeway to save a buck.

It's not just a matter of asking, "Is that your bottom dollar?" With many consumers today, that kind of question pops up about 10 seconds after scanning the window sticker. Saving *real money* is mostly a matter of plotting action ahead of time, and asking key questions when you find the right product. A good way to begin is to discuss your requirements with your family. Starting without a clear idea of what you need or how much you want to spend on it leads to trouble. To locate an experienced RV dealer, check the Yellow Pages of your

local telephone directory. The first dozen or so display advertisements listed under "Recreational Vehicles" might well come from the most experienced, best-financed or longest-surviving dealers in that region. Unless a dealer has a decent service department, he won't last anyway, so the Yellow Pages are a good clue. Until he has been around a while, he probably won't be handling the best brands. Fi-

continued

Billy the Bully chased any other chipmunk that ventured near his peanut butter

The Little People

By TED TRUEBLOOD

Quite often the best part of a hunting or fishing trip is the show put on for you by woods creatures

MY BROTHER Burtt and I had caught about ten trout by lunchtime. It was a hot day; so we cleaned them, strung them on a willow, and put them in the water to keep cool while we ate our sandwiches. They were lying about half submerged along the edge of a gravel beach, possibly four feet wide and ten feet long, while we sat on the grass bank at the upper edge. A football-size rock on the end of the willow kept them from drifting away.

While we were eating, a mink came bounding along up the edge of the stream. Apparently he had smelled our trout. We were less than six feet from the fish, but we remained absolutely motionless and if he saw us he gave no indication. He went straight to the trout, seized one, tore it off the willow, and hurried away in the direction from which he had come.

When he'd gone, we agreed that it was worth a trout to watch a mink that close. Burtt said, "I never saw a mink that wasn't in a hurry. Just like some people!"

The mink was back in about a minute, and this time he brought a friend—or maybe his wife. Perhaps he'd told her, "Honey, I've struck it rich. Come on!" However mink communicate, he certainly got the idea across in a hurry. We let each of them take a trout, and they departed.

But when they returned in a hurry we decided they'd had enough. Even if they had a family, three 10-inch trout should make a pretty good meal. I hissed and waved my arm. One of them —the female, I assume—bounded down the shore about twenty feet and disappeared behind a log. An instant later she poked her head around the end of it to watch.

The little male, however, was made of sterner stuff. He had jumped about a yard at my movement. Now he hissed back and, keeping a watchful eye on me, advanced again upon the trout. Such boldness won our admiration; so we let him take another.

The next time he came back I hissed and he hissed and came right in. This was too much. We were far from sure we'd catch more trout; so I picked up a handful of sand and pelted him with it. He jumped about five feet and ran back downstream to the log. But instead of hiding behind it as the female had done he stood by its end and glowered at me, his beady black eyes snapping.

He looked so fierce that Burtt and I had to laugh. If a mink got as big as a dog, he'd be a dangerous animal. The little fellow stood there quite a while—as long, in fact, as I ever saw one hold still. Then he jumped into the creek and swam across. He bounded upstream along the opposite shore until he was

night the rest of us have sat around and relaxed after supper while Cousin Sid washed the dishes," he recalled; "so tonight we'd like to present him with this big economy-size box of Scrubbo soap flakes to make his work easier."

Judge Parker gouged himself a large slab of birthday cake and sprawled in an easy chair beside the fire. "You know, it's hard to realize that five years have gone by since this club started," he mused. "Those were the good old days. Yes, sir, a lot of things have changed since then."

"It isn't like it used to be," Doc Hall agreed, licking chocolate from his fingers. "Take the fishing, for instance. It seems to me that trout are getting smaller lately," he sighed, "or else the creels are getting bigger."

"It's these modern scales," Uncle Perk grumbled. "They weigh everything lighter."

"They just don't put the same material into stuff any more," Colonel Cobb reflected, letting out his belt another notch. "The pants they sell you nowadays always seem to shrink, especially around the waist."

"The hunting isn't what it was, either," Judge Parker mourned. "Either the birds fly faster or the shotgun shells don't have as big a pattern as they used to."

"Streams are getting harder to wade, too," Doc Hall observed. "Rocks are more slippery and holes are deeper when you step into them."

"Fly lines aren't what they used to be," Mr. MacNab complained. "A mon can't get any distance any more."

"I've noticed the water is colder when you fall in," Cousin Sid added, "and it takes you longer to get dry when you get wet."

"Banks are steeper, too," Colonel Cobb nodded, "and the car isn't as near when you have to walk back to it."

"Strands of barbed wire are closer together when you crawl through them," Uncle Perk grunted.

"Hemlock trees are higher when you climb them to untangle your fly," said Doc Hall.

"Everything is farther away," Colonel Cobb maintained. "Like my hunting boots when I stoop over to lace them up."

"It's the same with trout flies," Judge Parker frowned. "I have to hold them at arm's length now to tie them on the leader. They don't make the eyes of the hooks as big these days."

"Another thing that's struck me lately," Colonel Cobb said, "they're putting more pockets in fishing jackets. I spend half an hour going through them trying to find my pipe before I remember I left it home."

"Pockets weigh more, too," Cousin Sid reflected, "because I have to take along more things when I go fishing, in case there's something I need that I don't have when I want it."

"Alarm clocks go off ear-r-rlier than they used to," Mr. MacNab remarked.

"And the sun is hotter on my bald spot," admitted Colonel Cobb.

"And there's more mosquitoes," said Uncle Perk.

"And all the other fishermen you meet look so much older," Judge Parker chimed in. "Half the time I can't even place them any more. People named George turn out to be Bill, and they

(*Continued on page* 138)

A thief and a glutton, the Canada jay is also a highly entertaining rascal

about twenty feet above us, then plunged in again and swam straight to the trout, underwater all the way! He tore a fish from the willow and swam away downstream with it. This time he didn't come back. We laughed until the tears ran. He'd shown us!

There are folks who say animals can't think. They probably know more about it than I do, but if that mink didn't exhibit reasoning when he devised the plan to get his last trout, then he had a mighty effective substitute for it. There was only one flaw in his strategy: the water was as clear as a crystal. He undoubtedly thought he was hidden when he was swimming beneath the surface, but we could watch him every inch of the way.

It has been about twenty years since Burtt and I let the mink rob us of our trout. I don't remember exactly when it was, nor can I recall whether we caught more fish that day. I can't even remember the name of the stream. As long as I live, though, I'll enjoy an occasional chuckle when I think of that greedy little mink and the ingenuity he displayed—even though it was transparent.

Some of the best things that happen outdoors come, like our experience with the mink, as unexpected extra dividends. Hunting and fishing are the incentives that take us into the woods or onto streams, but frequently rewards are not the result of our efforts with gun or rod.

Unfortunately we rob ourselves of many of these pleasures by hurrying. We get into the habit of working hard five days a week, and when we are free to enjoy ourselves we play hard. I am as guilty as anybody in this respect. I get so enthusiastic about whatever sport I may be pursuing that I'm inclined to go at it as hard as I can from daylight till dark.

This is a poor system. When we are

Pine squirrels are curious critters and will come to visit you in camp. They don't tame as easily as the chipmunk, but their antics can keep you amused

outdoors our surroundings are filled with a thousand wonders—birds, insects, plants and the small animals that are everywhere—and all we need do to enjoy them is to sit still, with eyes and ears open and mouth closed. That way we catch the animals unaware of our presence as they go about the daily chores: finding food, tending the family, fleeing from danger, fighting. I was sitting quietly one day, watching an elk crossing, when I saw a meadow mouse run along the side and around the end of a log that was lying near my feet. Thirty seconds later a shrew came hurrying along his trail. He had his nose to the ground following it like a beagle after a rabbit—except that he wasn't baying. Another time I had the pleasure of watching a deer mouse carrying her babies. I suppose she was moving to a better neighborhood. At any rate, she carried each one by the scruff of the neck, just like an old cat carrying a kitten.

I have watched both foxes and coyotes hunting mice. I'm not sure yet whether they see the mouse move under the grass or hear it, but they pounce on it with both front feet and pin it down. Then they pull it out with their teeth. They're mighty efficient, believe me! I once watched a young coyote eating grasshoppers. It had been a chilly night and he was picking the frost-numbed insects off the weeds and gobbling them down.

Another time, Rob Donley and I watched two coyotes after a doe—from grasshoppers to deer, there's a universal appetite!—they had cornered on a rocky point. While one trotted around in front to attract her attention the other tried to sneak up behind her under the cover of a log. Three times he got close, and three times she whirled and drove him away.

Then the wind changed and carried our scent to the coyotes and they ran. It would have been interesting to see whether they would succeed eventually or get discouraged and give up. (Ordinarily coyotes kill deer by driving them down onto a frozen stream where they can't keep their footing, or take advantage of deep snow. In this case the ground was partly bare.)

Watching any of these interesting things in nature requires only a little time, a few minutes stolen from hunting or fishing to sit quietly and watch. The object of your attention will be equally entertaining, whether it is a family of otters or a chipmunk gathering seeds. Chipmunks, in fact, are as good as a circus if there are many around and you make them tame by feeding.

Several years ago my wife and I camped in a spot that must have been chipmunk heaven. They were everywhere in the woods and we soon had a dozen or so regular customers at camp. They are an awful nuisance, but watching them was a picnic. They were crazy about raisins. And when we left half a watermelon unguarded on the table for an hour, they picked out every seed but left the meat untouched—except for dirty little paw marks.

Peanut butter was the greatest treat of all. Each morning we put a big gob of it on a pancake and laid it on the ground near the front of the tent. Within minutes, the chipmunks would be engaged in a free-for-all, but one that we named Bully usually drove the

others off and got right on the middle of the pancake. Then he'd start gulping the peanut butter down. Of course he choked. He'd cough and wheeze and try to get it down by rubbing his throat with his little paws. Meanwhile the others took turns dashing in to grab a bite of pancake and run. We laughed until it hurt.

The Canada jay, alias whisky jack and camp robber, becomes tame if given scraps of food. Though not so entertaining as chipmunks, jays are fun to watch. I've often wondered whether they can remember where they cache the tidbits they carry off. I don't think they can. I believe they're idiots and rediscover their treasures only by means of their sharp eyesight.

Watching the little creatures involves an art—the art of relaxation. I admire two men I've known who had it. Both were very intense, high-pressure guys. They worked hard and made a great deal of money when they were working, but when they were away from the job they were like a couple of old bums. They'd fish awhile and then they'd sit and look at what there was to see and recharge their batteries.

Once in a while, if you keep looking, you see a manifestation of nature's infinite wisdom that makes you realize how little man really knows. I saw such a thing last September in Alaska. I was hunting moose with Burtt in the area surrounding a small lake that emptied into a glacial river. During the summer, beavers had built a dam across the lake's outlet, raising the water level about eighteen inches and decreasing the flow of the small, clear stream that ran down through the woods, across a bar and eventually emptied into the river.

After we had killed our moose and packed them out and were about ready to leave, Burtt said, "The last two autumns I was here, sockeye salmon were running up the brook to the lake. This time we haven't seen a single one. If they do come, they couldn't get over that beaver dam. I'm going to cut a hole through the dam before we leave."

We walked up the brook to the outlet of the lake, and Burtt got into the creek below the beaver dam and went to work. It was quite a job, even though the dam wasn't very big as beaver dams go, but by dint of a great deal of chopping, pulling and straining he eventually opened a hole about three feet wide and half as deep in the middle of the dam. Lake water immediately gushed out and almost quadrupled the flow of the brook, bringing it back to a quite respectable volume.

We went back to our campsite, which was beside the brook, a hundred yards from the river, and took a final look around for anything we might have failed to pick up and pack. By this time it was nearly noon, so we decided to have a sandwich.

While we were eating we saw the first salmon go by upstream on his way to the lake! Before we left—not more than thirty minutes after Burtt cut the dam and probably not more than fifteen after the increased flow of clear water from the lake reached the milky, glacial river—dozens of salmon had passed. In my last glimpse of the brook I saw three fighting their way upstream over the bar at its mouth, headed for the lake and their spawning grounds.

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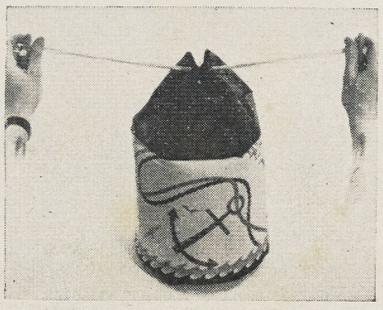

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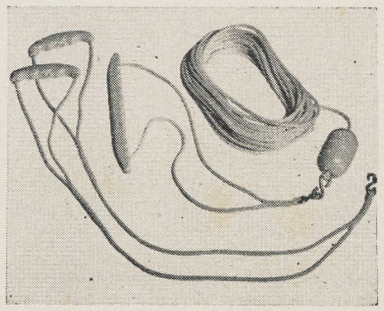

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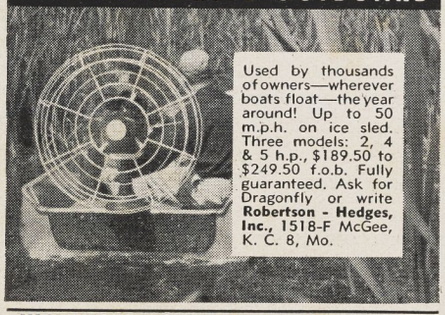

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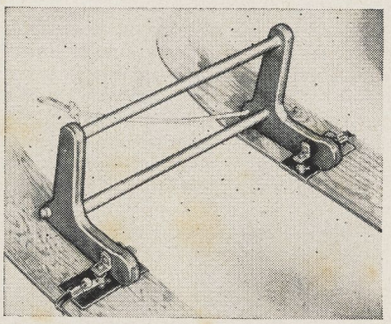

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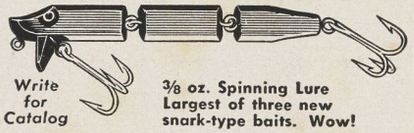

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By DURWARD L. ALLEN

He'll rob you blind, will the whisky jack, but he's an engaging little rascal and a pal to the lonely man in the bush

THERE'S satisfaction in a good meal after twenty miles of upwind paddling, and the boys were enjoying it. I had just engulfed half a fillet of smallmouth bass when a movement caught my eye. Above the balsams behind camp something sailed toward us. When it got over our supper party it lowered its flaps, fanned its tail, and drifted gently to a landing among our tinware. You never saw a more bug-eyed bunch of high-school boys.

"Wotta nerve!"

"What is it, anyway?"

"Give him a plate, fellers; it's a whisky jack!"

One or two of our canoe-campers had seen a Canada jay before. Most of them hadn't, and the cheeky bird stole the show as he hopped confidently over the rock inspecting our cookery. Puffed out as he was, you'd say he was a shade above the robin in size. Except for a black cap across the back of the head, his topside was wood-smoke gray. Forehead, collar and underparts were off-white. His big button eyes of shiny black cased the camp and took us all for granted as ordinary features of local scenery. Our French-Ojibway guide, Andy, was native to this part of Ontario, and the boys naturally turned to him.

"Moose bird," he chuckled.

Our nervy visitor grabbed a chunk of bannock, flipped himself over to a tent pole and began to pry away at the food. Then, clutching his plunder in a claw, the whisky jack flew off into the woods. Half a minute later he floated in for another pinpoint landing. He hopped onto a stick of firewood and took a second piece of bannock from an outstretched hand.

For the next two days we were rained in, and the thievish little Canada jay kept things in a constant state of uncertainty. He showed a lot of interest when the boys went swimming—then picked his time and made off with a cake of soap. We baked some beans, and the fluffy gourmet took to them like an old hand. He'd gobble up half a dozen and, with throat bulging, head into the brush. Then back he'd come for another consignment.

"What's he doing with them?" asked one of the boys. "He can't be eating them, or he'd be walking by this time."

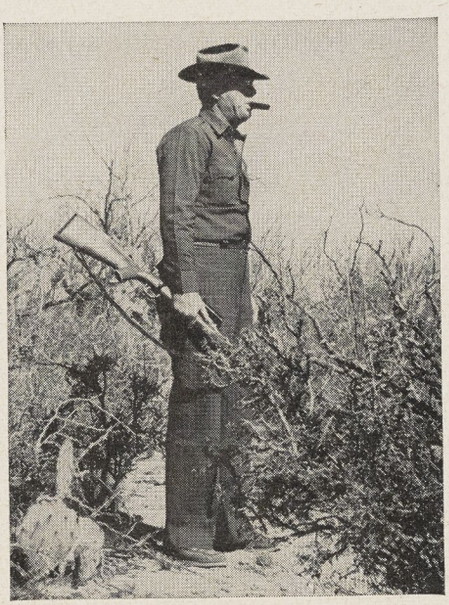
Several of the party laid some strategy and strung out in the brush to keep the bird in sight on his forays. They located his cache in a balsam stub and recovered not only the soap but a missing cop of darning thread. Higher up, in the split of a dead aspen, we saw a sizable (*Continued on page* 126)

ILLUSTRATED BY ADOLPH BROTMAN

Whit tootles his beguiling flute, then waits for coyotes to come running to the call

He Hypnotizes Coyotes

By BRYON W. DALRYMPLE



The agonized wail of a "dying" rabbit brings predators on foot and on wing

CARRINGTON WHITENTON is a rifle-loving, brush-country Texan with a great love of a highly specialized kind of music. He is a wizard at playing that music on a peculiar instrument he calls a "prickly-pear flute" or a "wolf whistle." Whit plays his odd tunes to an unusual audience: the swarming coyotes (and foxes and bobcats) in his 3-million-acre domain. The beasties love it. In fact, it slays them.

The theme of Whit's symphony is the scream of an injured jackrabbit dying a thousand deaths. It just plain mesmerizes every predator within hearing, and they come a-running. This intriguing hobby, of which Whitenton is a pioneer, is today sweeping the Southwest. It has spread from there to other widely scattered parts of the United States. It is destined, many believe, to become one of the most popular outdoor diversions ever practiced by rifle fans, camera bugs, hikers and plain fresh-air hobbyists.

I met Whitenton several years ago when I was passing through Texas and found that Webb County had good javelina hunting. The little native wild pig had long intrigued me. I wanted to look at one down a rifle barrel; so I knocked on Whitenton's door in Laredo and presented my problem. Would he help me? Sure!

weeds. Then he submarined and cruised slowly as the line pointed out his path. When the rod tip bent to the danger point, D.B. grudgingly released line, a reel turn or two at a time, inching it back when he could. By now I had backed us out into clear water, but the largemouth was reluctant to follow. A final dash or two and the sullen bass was coaxed from under the meadow. The battle ended as I eased the landing net under 5½ pounds of well-whipped bass. "That, son-in-law," D.B. said haughtily, "is a baking bass."

We lit cigarettes and admired the bass. "Why?" I asked. "Why?"

"Oh-h-h, you're ready to learn something now, huh? You noticed how cold the water is under the duckweed mat? And you notice how hot it is out here? And you see how shallow this water is? Gets hot fast here."

"But I caught three bass quick," I protested. "And not in anybody's alfalfa."

"Just little ones. They're small enough to find shade and coolness beneath a lily pad or beside a log. Baking bass want room to move around in, and they can find it in here. And comfortable temperatures. Let's see if we can get another one or two, and we'll have enough for Brother Scott and the freezer too."

We cranked up and moved to another cove bounded by cut-grass, buttonbush, cypress and interlaced willows. Here Reelfoot's frequent winds could not reach and break up the vegetative mat, and it was heavy. We eased close to the edge and I cast the floater under a dead buttonbush seemingly growing on dry ground. There was an eager strike, and wet duckweed exploded into a hundred tiny headlights reflecting the rays of the climbing sun. The bass was a 3-pounder and soon joined D.B.'s first keeper.

"Now you've done it," D.B. said. "Don't ever cast out into the middle of a pocket like that. Catch a fish there, and you spook every other one around. Cast to the edge, then the sides, and gradually work back. Sometimes you can take several from the same pocket. This time of year, when open shallow water gets hot and there aren't underwater logs or spawning pin minnows to lure 'em off, the big boys congregate in these places."

A hundred yards away, we pushed through a thin stand of cut-grass and came out into another hole. "Now try here," D.B. ordered. "And fish the near side first."

I did, and he did, and we worked that little hole until it had line tracks gridding it like muskrat ramblings. We didn't promote a smell of interest. More bits of "meadow" produced like results. Then D.B. caught a 4-pounder and missed another. "Sometimes it's too thick even for the big ones to strike accurately," he said. "But they're so used to seeing frogs bounce around on top—snagging them when they're hungry—that a darter or 'most any kind of floater will stir 'em up if they're halfway hungry. You catch one more and let's go." He mopped his forehead. "It's getting hot, and Olivia should have those screens painted by now."

We paddled back to the hole where I had taken the buttonbush bass. My floater sought the near edge of the duckweed meadow and settled. Then, like a man pumping line from a sounding tuna, I made with the twitch. There came an upswelling in the green mat, like a bubble straining against a viscous surface, and tension mounted as I knew what was about to happen. As the lure barely moved again, the same bubble tried to burst through the surface. Certainly something down there had its curiosity aroused. Some unknown warning of hellzapoppin' coming caused a tiny green tree frog to scamper like a kangaroo away from the plug. A fly lit on my nose and I didn't dare release the reel handle long enough to shoo him off.

"Steady," D.B., whispered. "You've got him interested. Now give it another bounce."

I did. The meanest, nastiest-striking bass I ever saw came up out of the water at least three feet, taking the plug on his way, and carrying it back as he submerged. The rod almost jerked from my hand before I could slack off my thumb. More through reflex than necessity, I struck back hard enough to rock the tippy duckboat. Unlike D.B.'s bass, this one stayed under the water after his first exit. We fought it out with him there in the dark, my mind picturing the darting, slashing fight as he tried to rid himself of the frog that wasn't a frog at all. Duckweeds acted as a brake, and finally there was only a dead pull on the business end of the line. I pumped toward the surface and D.B. gingerly tracked line toward lure with net. Up it came, bass, duck fodder and all.

"H'mm," said D.B. "Not as big as my first one, of course, but still a baking bass." He lifted the stringer. "That's enough. Let's head 'er for the stable."

On Sunday we stood around the dining table waiting for Brother Scott to finish admiring the baked bass and ask the blessing. "My, oh my, those are beautiful fish," he said. "Where in the world did you catch them?"

I couldn't help but answer, "Out on a meadow."

Preacher's eyebrows arched. He looked pitying at Tannye, whom, such a short time before, he had joined in holy matrimony to a confirmed liar and lost soul. Then he shook his head and turned to D.B. "About these bass, now where—"

D.B. looked at me and winked. "Out on a meadow," he said.

That Sunday Brother Scott said not a blessing over the bass, but a prayer for two strayed sheep.

THE NORTH WOODS' FLYING PACK RAT

(*Continued from page 73*)

portion of the durable bannock. The boys avowed it was waterproof and we'd look for it next year.

It wouldn't have been amusing if that ambitious bird had completed some of his projects. He sat on my shoulder and tried to remove my glasses. Once he dived into a tent and started for the pawnshop with a small pocket compass. But he didn't count on the string that tethered it to a pair of shorts, and the result was an ignominious ground loop.

At lunch the second day we broke out our slab of cheese. That, we discovered, was manna to buy a whisky jack's soul. When he downed the first morsel of piquant Cheddar, the ex-

goop. "The man's flipped," I thought, "and it's still so early in the cool, cool."

His floater landed noiselessly on the velvet water padding, then quicksanded very slowly until it was all but invisible. By looking closely I could see painted eyes protruding, much as a frog's eyes do in similar habitat.

"Hey," I said, "what are you doing? A fish can't see that plug. And even if it could, it'd have to be a vegetarian to strike. All he'd get would be a mouthful of duckweed."

D.B. jerked back on the rod like a plowman trying to stop a mule with the bit in its mouth. The plug barely moved. He repeated. Once more. Then reeled in ten pounds of scaly plant life. He thrashed the plug in the water to clean it and prepared to cast again. While he was doing this I had made a cast and for once laid the floater without too much splash along a lotus pad. Before the ripples settled, a yearling largemouth full of more greed than good sense slurped up a mouthful of hooks. D.B. watched me as I unhooked the pounder and said reproachfully, "That's no baking bass." I eased it back into the water.

D.B. made another cast, nearly a duplicate of his first, but a foot or so to one side. Again the wooden frog sank slowly, and again the strenuous heave-ho and the retrieve with a bale of green stuff. My second cast fetched a litter mate of the first fish I had caught. I held it up to D.B. "Baking bass," he commanded, almost threateningly, I thought. Hastily I freed the ineligible fish.

Baking bass to D.B. means big bass, bass at least 3½ pounds. I wished the youngster well. "They're eating me up over here," I said, "and I'm not getting all fouled up with that stuff. And," I pointed out, "you haven't gotten a strike. Furthermore, you should know there's no fish under that hay meadow." I returned a bass as big—well, almost as big—as my plug. "That's three out of ten casts for me. All you've done is mow down the duck food. Maybe Brother Scott would like frying-sized bass just as well."

D.B. muttered something uncomplimentary, then made a short cast to the left. And with the first twitch of the floater the matted vegetation undulated and shivered like jelly fresh out of a mold. I pondered, "This poor man has disturbed the bottom with his mighty heaving. No doubt he has pulled the plug the good Lord set in the lake bottom."

Another twitch of the plug, and a bass head that wouldn't fit into a gallon lard bucket dynamited the duckweed and sped underground. The hole closed up while bits of duckweed were yet settling. I spit some of them out, then shut my Irish yap as soon as I could.

D.B. grunted. The rod tip whipped into the saucy arc of a cur's tail and the line razored the near-muskeg surface like a sod-cutter's knife. The great bass opened a new hole, danced lightly as a ballerina, then jumped high, with the frog floater hanging from his lip. "Hold 'im, D.B.," I pleaded.

"Hold 'im, hell!" shouted D.B. "If he pulls much harder, you're gonna have to hold me."

Twice more the bass performed—jumping, skittering and tearing the chlorophyll out of those poor duck-

pression that came over his feathery features was something to behold. He thought he'd died and gone to heaven.

Atop the tent pole he anchored the wonderful stuff with a foot while carving off small nibbles. These were savored in dreamy-eyed ecstasy as they slid slowly to his far interior. He held the big piece in his throat for a time, blissfully working it over with little gulping motions before flying off to his hiding place. He came back looking for the slab!

"About that moose-bird business," I said to Andy. "I've been told whisky jacks hang around the moose all winter and even ride on their backs. Is that so, and why do they do it?"

"*Oui,* sure," said our guide. "Keep feet warm."

You couldn't tell about Andy, and I don't know the truth of it to this day. Years ago, Seton speculated that these birds may pick insects off the moose—all-same African rhinoceros bird. Sooner or later I'll find a man back in the brush who knows the facts.

If you fish or hunt anywhere across the North from Newfoundland to Alaska, you're sure to encounter this gray gremlin of evergreen forests. You may travel a week without seeing one; then at the next camp he'll be there among the spruces and firs, the pines or cedars, to welcome you. He'll haunt your camp for the pure pleasure of your company—not to mention your food.

The Canada jay comes as far south as northern New England and the northern lake states. Continent-wide, there are a dozen-odd varieties, and in the West these gray jays occur in their mountainous ranges as far south as New Mexico and Arizona. Everywhere they are curious, sociable—and hungry.

Certainly if the whisky jack does groom his lunch off a moose, it isn't more remarkable than many things he does. Other names applied to him—camp robber and meat bird—describe habits that are by no means a complete joy to his human buddies.

A friend told me of a pack trip in Oregon on which he killed his deer the first day. He hung the hog-dressed carcass in the shade to cure. It was above the reach of bears and out of harm's way—he thought. During periods in camp he saw the local contingent of meat birds visit the carcass, but not until he lowered it to get some steaks did he realize what was going on.

"Those birds had shredded it!" he said. "They took pounds of meat and spoiled a lot more!"

A built-in craving for fresh meat has been the undoing of many a whisky jack. Theodore Roosevelt, who hunted every kind of big game in the Northwest, was thoroughly familiar with the bird he called an "imp of iniquity." He mentioned a camp cook knocking one off an elk haunch with a nicely aimed stick of firewood. Another individual that got off side was eliminated with a willow switch.

On the occasion of killing his finest trophy elk, T. R. had broken the animal's back with his first shot, but it continued to lunge downhill by using its forelegs. At the first crack of the rifle, he said, a couple of whisky jacks appeared and, with complete indifference to the hunter, followed the wounded elk, pouncing on the gouts of blood that sprinkled the trail.

The meat birds are a bane to unsentimental trappers of the north country. Everything edible must be protected from them, and they are likely to riddle any dead animal found in a trap, with the result that many a camp robber has ended up as trap bait.

In nesting habits the whisky jack lives up to his character as a bird of lonely places. Before winter is half over, the mated birds retire to deep cedar swamps or other conifer thickets to find their nesting sites. The chosen location usually is a horizontal limb next to a tree trunk anywhere from shoulder height on up. In February or March the solitary pair take several weeks to build their nest—a structure admirably suited to protecting the nestlings in a period when snow lies deep on the north country and temperatures range to 50 below!

The framework of twigs is snugly chinked with moss, and the inner nest is woven and formed of rootlets, needles, moss, shredded bark and other fibers. The lining is a work of art—a neatly felted cup of the finest insulation the neighborhood affords. Grouse feathers and rabbit fur seem to be the favorite bedding, but hair of moose, caribou or other animals is used, and various kinds of plant down may serve on occasion. Whisky jacks are picky housekeepers, and you'll find no spare twigs or debris of any kind on the snow under a nest to betray it.

Incubation is the job of the female and takes from sixteen to eighteen days. Both parents feed the young on partly digested animal matter that they cram down the throats of their offspring. By trout season, the three to five fledglings are following their parents through the woods, gobbling insects and other fare. Later on, their diet will include an occasional egg or the young of smaller birds.

The whisky jack isn't mean about this. Using one of his capable feet, he carefully plucks a young warbler from the nest and carries it to a solid perch. There he expertly dismembers it, in total unconcern for the racket raised by its bereaved parents. It's just a meal, and part of his workaday world. As the season changes, the gray jays make the most of berries, tree seeds, nuts, mushrooms and nearly anything digestible—even buds when times are hard. It has been observed that they neatly peel a mouse before starting to eat it.

Like the rest of his jaybird kinfolk, the whisky jack doesn't get along well with hawks or owls. A group will take after a bird of prey and harry and bedevil it out of the vicinity. Otto W. Geist of the University of Alaska once saw a pair of Alaska jays thoroughly bloody-up a weasel that was running about on the snow. At such times, a group of meat birds can be loud and rackety. However, most of those I have known about camp were largely silent. A call frequently heard is like the note of a robin, and one of their common remarks is a soft *whee-ah*. It's well known that individuals can be inspired to melodious song, although I haven't heard it.

The Canada jay is exceptionally fluffy and soft-feathered—almost like an owl. Which may account for the relatively little noise he makes in flight. He has a habit of hopping up through the branches of a tree to gain altitude and then launching into a long glide. In sailing across a woods opening he has a buoyant appearance suggestive of a flying squirrel.

Trustful as this bird is, he's not a complete fool. Bird students who collected one member of a family group report that the rest disappeared in a hurry. Despite his shoplifting and nosiness, there's no more popular creature in the North. Here's hoping you meet the whisky jack on your next trip out. You'll get your money's worth—but tie down your gear, and keep one eye open during that afternoon nap!

THE DAY THEY LEAVE HOME IN MAINE

(*Continued from page 77*)

four hundred is scattered over twenty-five square miles of rural countryside and is engaged primarily in blueberry and apple growing, chicken raising and dairy farming.

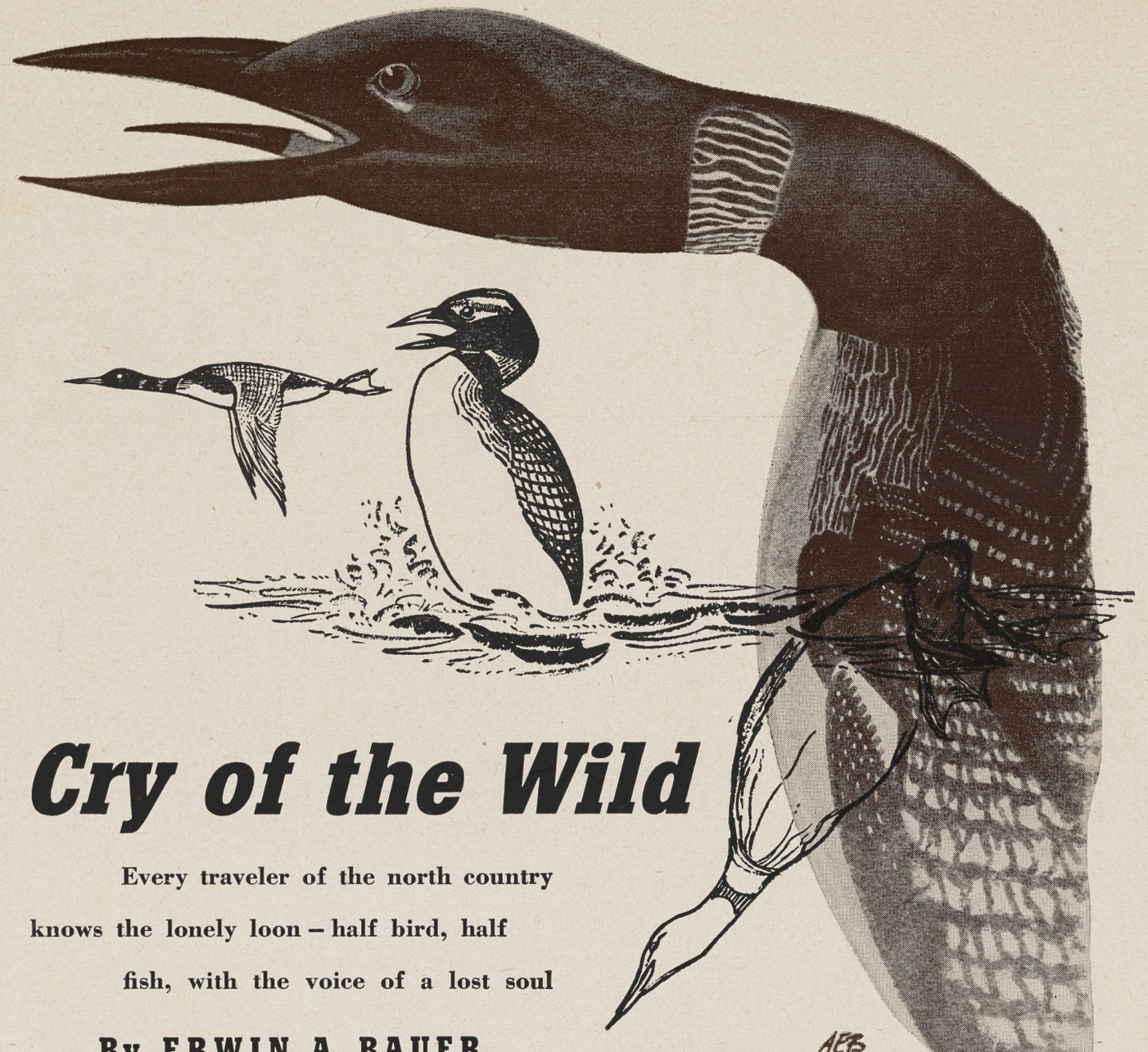
Hope citizenry is thus engaged most of the year, that is. One glance at the books of Katherine Brown, Hope's town clerk, will offer ample evidence of the town's November preoccupation. There are perhaps a hundred adult males in Hope. Mrs. Brown issues gunning licenses to eighty of them. Possibly ten of the remaining twenty are farmers who gun only their own backyards and aren't required to chip into the state coffers.

And this November is much like a hundred Novembers past in Hope Corners, Maine. A man is seldom asked if he's going gunning. It's assumed that he is—or has been already. Whatever his trade eleven months of the year—farmer, merchant, mechanic, carpenter—in November he's a hunter. Casual greetings may be various in winter, spring and summer; come November, there's only one password of the day: "Got your deer yet?"

Arnold Toynbee, in his monumental work, *A Study of History*, dismissed the northeast extremity of the U.S.A. as a relic of the seventeenth century, inhabited by woodsmen and watermen and hunters. That irascible author, the late Kenneth Roberts, took it upon himself to defend his native heath, but the average State-of-Mainer refused to take umbrage. In a state with something like seventeen acres for every man, woman and child, there is obviously no dearth of backwoods. The average Pine-Tree-Stater—a man with a rifle and a powerful yen for deer meat—is not at all embarrassed by all this empty geography. Quite the contrary, he's passionately possessive about it.

It is sometimes forgotten that the Constitution of the United States assures every citizen of the right to keep and bear arms. In Maine, to own a gun is something more than a privilege; it's considered a downright necessity—like a pair of pants. And, not uncommonly, a State-of-Mainer will acquire a spare gun before he invests in the second pair of pants.

In Maine's north country there are 10,000,000 acres of unorganized territory. To the average nonresident hunter, this is the Maine Woods. This fellow, office-bound most of the year, wants to



Cry of the Wild

Every traveler of the north country knows the lonely loon – half bird, half fish, with the voice of a lost soul

By ERWIN A. BAUER

MY FRIEND Don Miller was floating free on the dead-calm surface of Ontario's Obabika Lake. It was August and dog days had fallen on the north country—and on the fishing. Nothing stirred; so Don lazily baited with a large minnow, pitched it far out from the boat and settled back for a nap in the sun.

He had been dozing, for some time probably, when his reel whined abruptly and his rod was torn from his hand. Dazed, he managed to catch it on its way overboard, but he lost the skin on half his knuckles before he got the reel even halfway under control. If this isn't the largest pike in the province, he thought, it's mighty close. That's when a "pike" like no pike he'd ever seen before lurched out of the water and tumbled back in again. It had wings. It was, in fact, a loon.

In camp that evening, Miller described the incident: "I've caught some big fish hereabouts—muskies, lakers and pike—but none of them ever battled like that bird. It was fast and powerful. And when I got it in the boat, my troubles really began. I practically had to sit on it while I extracted the hook. But I did release the bird unharmed. I hope I don't have to go through that again." Miller still carries souvenirs of the encounter—a couple of deep punctures in the fleshy part of his hand.

It isn't even once in a lifetime that the average angler in the north woods actually hooks a loon. It's a rare outdoorsman, though, who travels into the vast evergreen country from Maine to Alaska without meeting one of the world's most fascinating citizens. The common loon, or great northern diver, is a bird, but one that almost defies classification. It's the critter that, more than any other, puts the genuine stamp of "wilderness" or "remoteness" on any lake in which a wandering sportsman finds it.

Loons are no ordinary residents of the north woods—or of anywhere else. They can swim easier than they can fly, for example, and few fish are a match for them under water. But the weirdest thing about the loon is its cry—probably the loneliest voice on earth.

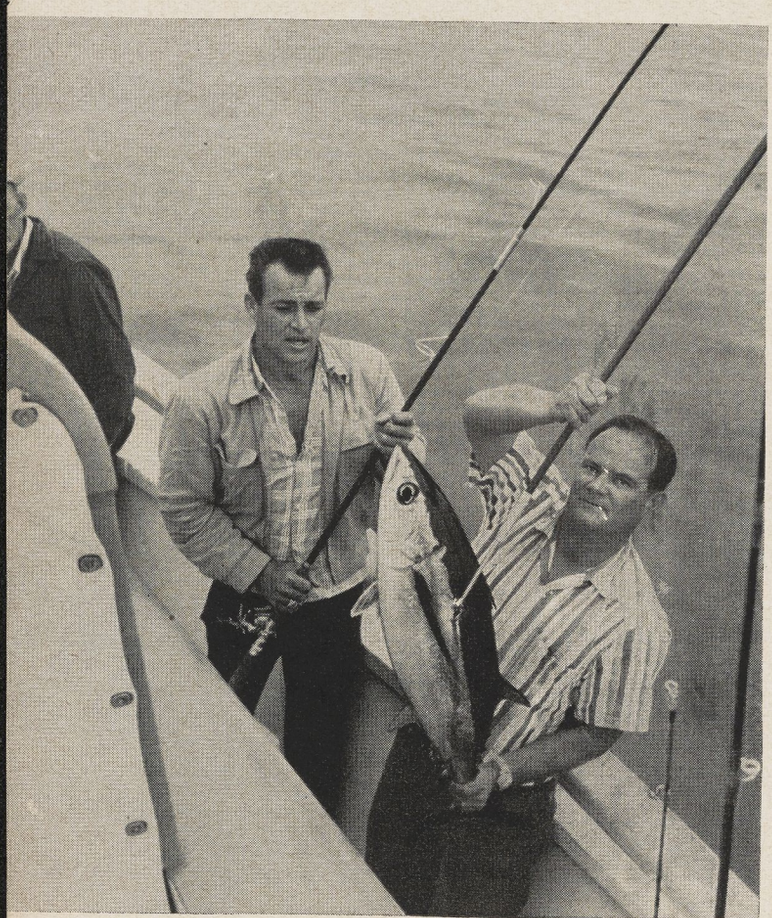
Depending mostly on your (*Continued on page* 139)

Albacore!

By CLINTON R. HULL

Anglers rush for the boats when that cry comes over the short wave in California, for this white-meated tuna aristocrat can go fifteen lightning rounds at the end of a line

Suddenly the albacore school is in session.



Jim Hicks of Santa Ana, California, shows the fish that won him a jackpot—the first albacore taken on the first deep-sea trip

"HOOK UP! Shut 'er down! Ho-o-l-ld it! Albacore!" I almost strangled on a mouthful of ham and eggs when the yelling began. Instantly the *Fury's* big diesels hushed, then throbbed again as the skipper first slowed, then reversed the propellers. I caught my sliding cup, gulped the last of my coffee and scooted for the deck.

In stations across the wide stern, six trollers were fighting their bucking, straining rods. Crewman Chris Christopher was already on the live-bait tank and tossing out netfuls of wriggling anchovies to attract and hold the school of fish. I snatched my outfit from the rack, took a 6-inch anchovy from the dip net, slipped the short-shanked No. 4 hook behind its gill collar and flipped it overside.

It was 6:15 A.M. on an early-July day, and we were near San Clemente Island, some sixty miles and four hours out from southern California's Newport–Balboa Bay. Pea-soup fog rolled across the decks and the water fifty feet away disappeared in the murk, but I had no trouble seeing the lucky anglers, one after another, land their fish.

I say lucky because they'd had first crack at trolling. And trolling is not only the best way to locate the fast-traveling albacore, but it gives the troller an exciting chance to score. Trolling is a privilege extended only to experienced fishermen on many boats; and on some not extended to anyone. Instead, these boats use spring-loaded boat lines to absorb the terrific shock of the striking fish against the speed

have gone down two hundred feet.

They'll do that sometimes. Sudden change in pressure seems to have little or no effect on them. Just how deep they can go is uncertain, but squid and fish known to live several hundred fathoms down are often taken from albacore stomachs and brought to the D.F.G. laboratory. But this was the first time I'd ever had one go so deep.

He didn't come up, either. I had to pump him up. And long before he was within reach of the gaff I ached all over from the strain. Maybe I'm getting old, but when Chris finally bounced a 27-pounder on the deck I'd had it. Anyway, 67 pounds of fish in a day is enough for any man. Even when they're to be canned, as were ours.

I removed the hook, secured my line and called it quits for the day. But just for the day. I'll be out there again, eager as ever, next time that call comes in, "Albacore!"

CRY OF THE WILD

(*Continued from page* 61)

state of mind, a loon's call can be thrilling, maniacal, haunting, nostalgic or terrifying. It has been mistaken for many things. Once, on a canoe trip in the Timagami region, Dan Marsh and I met another party of anglers on their way back to base camp. Newcomers to the northland, they were utterly terrified. They said they had been driven from a camp on a rocky peninsula the night before by wolves howling and prowling all around them. They hadn't heard wolves at all, of course; they'd heard loons. These weren't the first men to be fooled. At other times in other places, crying loons have been mistaken for everything from men in pain to evil spirits.

The Crees of another generation believed that the loon's cry was really that of a warrior denied admittance to the happy hunting ground. Even today the Crees regard the birds as supernatural. The Chippewayans considered them supernatural too, but in a different way. Since a loon's cry can be anything, really, from a wail to a yodel or a distinctive eerie tremolo, they took its calls as a sort of prophetic code. One kind of cry signified that fishing would be good the next day; another that someone in the tribe would die soon.

On occasion, loons have actually helped mounted policemen and game rangers patrolling deep in the bush by blowing the whistle on illegal trappers in springtime with a sudden cry that has been described as crazy and as laughter. To most listeners, though, the loon's call is lonely rather than like laughter, and sorrowful rather than crazy.

An adult loon is a handsome bird roughly the shape and size of a small goose. That would be about 8 or 9 pounds in weight and from 28 to 36 inches long. It has webbed feet so far astern that walking on land is virtually impossible. The bill is dark, pointed and sharp. Adult plumage is never complete until the third year, and then it becomes an identical, striking pattern of black and white for both sexes. The neck is shining greenish black with either white or black-striped white throat patches. From a distance the body color seems black, but actually it's a unique checkered pattern of white squares and dots on a black background.

Draw a line from Maine to Oregon, and the breeding range of the common loon is generally north of it as far as Baffin Island. The loon is a migratory bird; its winter range includes open water along both seaboards, the Great Lakes and the Gulf coast.

Laying eggs on dry land is one qualification for being a bird. In this, the loon just barely makes the grade. The average nest is not elaborate and is usually located just a couple of feet above high water and as close to the edge as possible, to save walking. Islands are preferred nesting sites. Precisely the same spots are used year after year. Only one or two olive-drab eggs are laid, in early summer. Both males and females incubate. They never renest if a first attempt fails, as many other birds do. If all goes well, though, the young ones are off the nest when the first big invasion of fishermen reaches the north country. It's then that most anglers see them.

It isn't difficult to find a loon's nest in late June or early July. Just paddle along the shore of a northern lake far enough, and eventually a female loon will catapult off the bank, shrieking as if a bobcat was close behind. From there she'll volplane across the surface, for a mile if necessary, trying to lure you into following. Look around where the bird first appeared, and you'll find a nest.

Some Alaskan Eskimos living along tundra lakes make long detours deliberately not to find nests. They credit loons with many extraordinary powers, and firmly believe that a female, if frightened, will dive beneath a kayak and puncture it from below.

Al Staffan and I once had an unhappy encounter with a loon family on Reed Lake, deep in the Manitoba wilderness. While fishing a bay that seemed alive with northern pike we flushed a female and a single baby from the vegetation close to shore. The female fled toward the open lake. About 150 feet away she began to scream, flutter and demonstrate wildly. Meanwhile the baby, which probably had just left the nest, followed close in the shadow of our canoe, paying no attention to its frantic mother.

We shot several pictures of the sooty little ball of fluff and then leaned hard into the paddles to get away and leave the young one to its parent. We weren't more than a couple of canoe-lengths away when there was a heavy boil on the surface and the little one vanished—calories for a pike. In some lakes, pike must account for many of them. On the other hand, loons certainly account for many small pike.

The eggs of a loon are hatched in about three weeks, and the young ones hit the water immediately. Although the adults feed them for a month or more, a training course in swimming and diving begins right away. At first just getting under water is a chore for the small birds, but by late summer catching a submarine meal is no problem at all.

When a loon sights a school of forage fish, it simply crash-dives, outdistances them, and swallows them underwater. It dives by compressing its body and feathers enough to drastically reduce

buoyancy, and it can go deep—loons have been found trapped in the nets of fishermen two hundred feet down. There is much disagreement on how long loons can stay down, because any loon can return to the surface completely undetected—with only the bill exposed—if there is the slightest ripple on the water. Some ornithologists believe a loon can stay down, if necessary, for ten or fifteen minutes.

The common loon is a true trencherman, but of fish almost exclusively. With a stomach completely filled, one loon was captured with 15 flounders from 4 to 6 inches in its gullet. Finding a loon with an empty gullet is virtually unknown.

A loon swims gracefully and effortlessly, rather like an otter, cavorting under water. There is disagreement on how he does it, but he probably employs his feet alone for propulsion. The wings, small for the bird's size, are partially folded and used only for maneuvering.

Flying is no easy matter, but once a loon is aloft it's a strong, swift flyer that has been clocked at around sixty miles an hour. The actual process of becoming airborne is a dramatic, major effort, though, not unlike getting an overloaded aircraft off a runway. The loon has one of the smallest ratios of wing area to body weight of any bird anywhere. Depending on wind and how well filled its stomach is, it needs from fifty feet to a quarter of a mile to "taxi." For that distance, the bird half runs and half flies across the surface in a truly wonderful demonstration of wings beating on water. Loons rarely exceed two or three hundred feet in altitude, even during migration. They never fly at less than top speed—probably because it's impossible.

Landing is equally spectacular. After a couple of tight circles to lose altitude the bird slides in belly-first, like an amphibious airplane, rather than feet first like a duck or a goose.

The difficulty in attaining flight has been the undoing of many a loon. Often they've been attracted by the abundant living in a fish hatchery, but once down there they have to stay. Invariably they're unable to leave because of the short "runway" or "flight deck" in most rearing ponds. Their appetite for smelt and alewives has entrapped them wholesale in seines, gill nets and trotlines. One lake-trout fisherman in Lake Superior once hooked forty-eight loons during a migration on a 200-hook trotline baited with herring. The sudden freezing of a northern pond or marsh has been fatal to many a loon too.

Nowhere in North America are loons very numerous. Instead they're evenly distributed over a wide range. Nor are they gregarious like ducks or doves; rather they stay apart in nothing larger than family groups. The only attempt at sociability between them seems to be long-range gossip from one hidden cove to another. One calls, a neighbor answers, and more join in to form a mournful chorus. These spontaneous concerts can happen either in daylight or after dark. On an otherwise silent night, to hear one break out can be a chilling experience for a traveler alone in camp far from his home base.

Many wild creatures are so shy that humans seldom see them. The loon seems to enjoy showing off, lolling in the water and preening in full view of watchers. One habit, a rolling preen, is almost comical. The bird rolls over on one side and while waving the upper leg leisurely in the breeze, something like an ape, preens its breast vigorously. Next it does the other side. After that it may rise upright on the water, flapping both wings noisily. But if a canoe comes too close, it suddenly slips from sight.

Four species of loons live on this continent. The common loon is much more plentiful than all its cousins—the yellow-billed, black-throated (or arctic) and red-throated species—put together. The range of the last three extends into Asia and Europe. All are very similar in habit and diet.

From time to time the loon has been described as a nuisance by anglers and commercial fishermen, but it's hardly a true indictment. There aren't nearly enough of them to make a difference anywhere. On the other hand, their wild, weird calling contributes much in atmosphere to what wilderness we have. A single encounter with them can make a trip more memorable.

Once, when a still, damp February day broke over a Louisiana marsh, I heard the haunting half laugh, half cry of a loon. It sounded out of place there. It reminded me of a cold, clear lake I knew in Canada 2,000 miles away.

FIRST DEER

(*Continued from page* 67)

of the river like some giant creature from another age and stood rocking back and forth on its hind legs, no more than thirty feet away. Its small eyes, like blazing coals, seemed to be boring holes right through us. Water dripped off its great hooked claws. Its lower jaw dropped down to expose a mouthful of yellow teeth big enough to cut a salmon in two with one bite.

All I could think about was the tales I'd heard Alaska woodsmen tell Dad in our home; how they'd been charged and chewed by grizzlies or how they'd seen grizzlies maul their companions to death. Now here was a grizzly in front of us and, weighted down as we were with bloody venison, we couldn't have come upon it at a worse time. My new .30-30 felt awfully small in my hands, and at the same time heavy as a crowbar. I had a feeling that, no matter what happened, I wouldn't have strength enough to lift it to my shoulder.

Dad whispered, not turning his head, "Watch his ears!" They were lying flat at first, and then they began swiveling around. Flared nostrils tested the air as his huge brown head twisted from side to side. Dad spoke again, and I sensed an easing of tension in his low voice. "We're lucky, boy. This one's only curious. We'll just stand quiet a minute or two."

Pretty soon the grizzly stopped twisting his nose. Swinging around, he dropped to all fours and stalked stiffly away into the devil's-club. I could still hear the drip of water off his claws. That puzzled me until I realized it wasn't water I heard at all. It was the thumping of my heart.

Dad said he hoped all the other grizzlies would be as uninterested in us as this one. Now that the salmon were