

SEEDS.

A material to which greater attention might in some instances be given, is the wild rice, *Zizania aquatica*. This makes an excellent ingredient in soups, especially meat soups. At present it is obtained mostly from the Indians. It has frequently been sown in marshes to attract wild fowl, also as an article of food.

THE SONG OF THE PORCUPINE.

BY P. A. TAVERNER.

Mr. Macnamara's interesting paper on the Porcupine in the January, 1918, number of THE NATURALIST, reminds me of an experience I once had with this species that may be of interest to the readers of the article referred to.

I was paddling close along the shore of Lake Muskoka late one bright moonlight night in early spring, probably May. As I crossed the mouth of a small deep dark bay, I heard a most peculiar succession of cries coming from the shadows at its foot. It was like the continued ya-ya-ya-yaa-a-a-a of a young baby and rose and fell with prolonged querulous quaverings. Wondering at what could originate such sounds in the woods I knew so well, I followed up the sounds, landed and forced my way into the underbrush in their direction. They seemed to proceed from near the top of a large ash tree near the shore. While manœuvring about trying to get the newly leafing branches outlined against the best illuminated parts of the sky, the idea suddenly suggested itself that such cries might well proceed from a cub bear. The thought was disquieting for if the mother found an intruder about she might misunderstand the purely scientific designs of the investigation. I retreated immediately and with haste, and soon had a safe body of water between myself and possible danger. The sounds continued for some time, longer in fact than I cared to stay, and I left without discovering their origin.

A few days later, however, in broad daylight, the same cries were heard just back of the house and immediate investigation showed that they proceeded from a big fat "porkey" in a small maple tree, who was telling the whole world how mournfully happy it was in the warm spring sun. I presume it was of the nature of a love song and for the attraction or delectation of a mate, at least another porcupine, presumably a mate, was found in the vicinity shortly after.

I have never heard this spring song of the Porcupine since, nor have I ever met a northern woodsman who seemed acquainted with it. A superficial

search of mammalogical literature has failed to reveal detailed references to it and I think, therefore, it may be worthy of record in these pages.

MAMMAL FOOD OF THE GREAT-HORNED OWL.

Late in the afternoon of December 31st, while following skunk tracks in a small strip of hardwood bush, four miles north of St. Thomas, Ontario, I observed a Horned Owl in a maple overlooking what appeared from external signs to be the winter den of a skunk family. The bird was secured and on picking it up I found the odor of skunk very pronounced.

On opening the carcass three days later for sex determination, was surprised to find the ligaments and fat surrounding the stomach full of porcupine quills. They were quite pliable, slightly bleached and appeared to have been in the bird's body for some time. Two pellets of skunk hair about the size of robin's eggs were the only contents in the stomach. The owl appeared in spite of the quills to be in a healthy condition.

C. E. JOHNSON.

A CROW POLYGAMIST?

In the latter part of May while passing through the Rideau woods near Ottawa, I saw an exceptionally large nest situated about forty feet up in a white pine tree, and a crow circling and cawing above it. As I climbed the tree two more crows flew from the nest which contained eight eggs, without doubt two sets, as four of them had the light ground colour blotched chiefly on the larger end, while the other four had a darker ground colour, and were profusely blotched.

CLYDE L. PATCH.

UNUSUAL FOOD OF THE GARTER SNAKE.

While two friends and I were standing by Kingsmere Lake on May 5th last, a green garter snake left the shore, swam a few yards into the lake, ducked its head under the water and swam back to shore with a trout about three inches long in its mouth. The fish was held by the middle but on reaching the shore it was dropped on a small piece of wood and immediately taken up again by the head and swallowed. Not more than three or four minutes had elapsed between the time the snake left the shore and it was back again with other fish in its stomach.

J. M. MACOUN.



Taverner, P. A. 1918. "The Song of the Porcupine." *The Ottawa naturalist* 32(1), 6–6.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/17589>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/368536>

Holding Institution

MBLWHOI Library

Sponsored by

MBLWHOI Library

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: Public domain. The BHL considers that this work is no longer under copyright protection.

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.