

Hunters' Corner

(Continued from page 6)
population even if they dine on squirrel exclusively. "Incidentally weasels have staged quite a comeback this past two years. Hawks and owls dine on squirrel frequently as the red, bushy tails lying on the snow testify. Brer Fox catches one napping on occasion. Once I read in the snow where a fox surprised a squirrel by slipping between his stumps and his home tree. The luckless bushy-tail sprang for the trunk but Brer Fox picked him out of the air as a button. From where the fox took off and landed was a good seven feet. It was a tough witness to have been hungry for the fox and it was in short order he leapt it down in short order but left the tail sticking up out of the snow.

House cats are adept at catching squirrels; although I never witnessed how they do it.

NEST ROBBERS

Squirrels are inveterate nest robbers. On two occasions I caught them dragging fledgling robins out of their nest and once the 22 cal rifle saved the young of a Goldfinch in the Old Home Orchard. I heard the commotion among the birds as I was about to sit into supper but grabbed the rifle and ran. The squirrel was on a limb a foot from the nest and was edging its way closer despite the frantic dive bombing of the parent birds. The robins and barn swallows were also adding their voices to the alarm call but quietude settled over the orchard seconds after the rifle cracked. Squirrels will also pilfer the eggs from nests of Rufled grouse and Woodcock. Our song and insectivorous birds will also benefit by the current squirrel shortage this coming summer. I note from the bounty records that bounty was paid on 1502 skunk in 1957 an increase of 123 over 1956; on fox 564 an increase of 41 over 1956. The number of raccoon on which bounty was paid in 1957 was 504 in comparison with 656 in 1956—a shortage of 152. This bears up the general impression that raccoon are not standing up under bounty pressure as well as fox and skunk. I have been told that raccoon are two years old before they breed and would thus be at a disadvantage in comparison with fox and skunk whose young reproduce the following season after birth. Sometimes whole families will tree and the hunter who is lucky enough to be Johnnie on the sport may shoot them out one at a time.

WILL SURVIVE

Wildlife will fight for survival if subjected to extreme hunting pressure. Take skunks for instance. Before the bounty on their skins was imposed they'd saunter out from under a farmer's barn for a night's foraging before it was dark and return at sun-up. Their habits changed over the years and now a family of skunks may make their home under a barn or out-building all summer and fall and the farmer none the wiser until he spots their tracks in the spring. Foxes too are more adept in choosing the site of their dens and concealing same. Fox hunters tell me that their quarry is not so prone to spend the day in small woodlots where a hunter with hounds has them at a serious disadvantage. As one hunter commented recently, "There's lots of foxes in the big woods but they're scarce in the small woodlots." The raccoon has a lot to learn when it comes to dodging the bounty hunters but he's a smart animal when it comes to figuring out the angles. He'll come up with at least a part answer before many years have passed.

RABBIT CYCLE

The question confronting rabbit hunters at the moment is whether or not the cycle (disease) will hit them this Spring. It could be that the heavy toll taken by hunters this past season—November 1st till January 31st—may ward it off. One group of hunters took 102 out of one swamp during the hunting season. Another group of three took 70 rabbits out of two small woodlots in three trips. Yet another party of five bagged 39 in one afternoon. The winter of 1957-58 will stand as a rabbit hunting record for a long time. To begin with they were present in unprecedented numbers and the ground was bare practically all season. A white rabbit running before the hounds when there is now snow shows up like a skunk in a fog. The short legged Beagles had a field day this past season—the like of which may never occur again in the lives of the present day crop of rabbit hunters. Anyway boys you have no regrets. You most certainly made hay while the sun shone.

SHIP BREAKS FREE

TOKYO (AP)—The Japanese Antarctic expedition ship Soya, which broke into the ice pack sea Thursday from an ice breaker that trapper her for 46 days the 1,500 miles from the South Pole, the U.S. icebreaker Burton Island, steaming to the Soya's rescue, had been expected to reach her Saturday.

SHOW MORE INTEREST

LONDON (CP)—British industrialists have shown increased interest in Canadian markets since Canada's trade mission visited the United Kingdom last December. George Drew, Canadian high commissioner in London, said Thursday. Drew said Canada house received 103 business inquiries during January. From October to December last year the average rate of inquiries was 25 a month.

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