

Journal - Aug 4 - 1941

MAKING THE BIRDS HAPPY

by

Irene Finley

The bird hospital at the Pittock Bird Sanctuary is humming and happy. Anybody would get a thrill to go out there and visit it, just to realize what can be done to save the feathered waifs injured on the highways and by-ways of ordinary traffic in the city. It is a common occurrence for birds in flight to mis-judge and strike telephone or electric wires, breaking a wing or striking head-on and being laid up for some weeks -- that is, if there is some good samaritan to take them in. And young birds are always falling out of the nest. Mr. and Mrs. Eliot take all invalids in and nurse them back to life with infinite care and understanding. And the birds show their gratitude by losing their fear and roam about the place like children.

When we entered the small livingroom of their cottage, Skookums and Mickey, two night-hawks that were patients at the refuge, were sitting on the arms of a comfortable blue and white over-stuffed chair -- lengthwise, of course, as is the night-hawk fashion of perching on fences or limbs of trees. In the out-of-doors the mottled coats of night-hawks blend with the splotchy limbs of trees and make them inconspicuous to curious eyes, for these birds hunt at night and sleep in the day time. Listen, and you will hear the eerie, resonant sound as they drop through the night air to pick up insects on the wing. When a night-hawk hunts for food, all he has to do is to fold his wings, open his wide mouth, which stretches from ear to ear, and drop like a small singing torpedo.

Skookums was brought to the refuge by Mr. and Mrs. Homer Goehler, of 3925 East Burnside. On June 19, Mrs. Goehler picked him up on the street in front of one of the Five and Ten Cent stores. It was one of those afternoons when the rain came down in torrents, and Skookums was wet and helpless. His left wing was hurt, he had a bump on his nose, and most of his face feathers were gone. He looked as if he had been in a collision, and he felt like it.

Mickey, the younger night-hawk, was brought in by Mrs. McKown, of 1217 N. W. 25th Avenue. She gave him the name of Mickey because it was just as good for a girl as for a boy, and she didn't know which he was.

We took them outdoors and let them try their wings. Skookums was a full grown bird, but he could fly only a short distance with his injured wing, which was well on the way to mending. Mickey was half fledged and wafted away on soundless wings, but he always came back to Mrs. Eliot, his god-mother who fed and petted him. Both will be guests at the refuge for some weeks yet until they are ready to go out into their world again.

Five o'clock was feeding time, and they were ready. Skookums took his place on a little pad on a shelf in the kitchen. Nearby were little dishes of hard-boiled egg yolk mixed with pabulum and a little milk; also a plate of fresh hamburger. Some of the patients are given small doses of viosterol to strengthen them if they have bad wounds. Hanging here and there on the bushes outdoors are suet and nesting materials and bird houses tacked up in safe places.

"Open your mouth, Skookums," said Mrs. Eliot. "No, that isn't wide enough. Open wide!" He opened wide and the pink cavity almost covered up his face. Two little ladles full went down with a gurgle and a flutter of wings. Then he rocked sidewise on his pad and settled himself for a nap, his long-lashed lids drooped over his big dark eyes. Mickey had not learned to open his mouth in child fashion and had to have the little ladle inserted in his bill. But he liked his supper and smacked his lips. Then he, too, cuddled down on his useless looking little feet.

Mrs. Eliot says that birds that come in with broken wings or an injury that needs a splint seldom get well enough to leave for good. They stay around the dooryard and come in at night to sleep somewhere on the back porch. The screen door is always left ajar for them. You never can tell whom you will find tucked up in a corner of that porch.

We went out into the yard. Mrs. Eliot called, "Bobbie! Jimmie! It's bread-and-milk time!" From somewhere in the bushes two young robins came hurrying to that call. One of them lighted on Mrs. Eliot's white hair, and

all three went into the house for supper. She ladled bread and milk into their gaping mouths until they stood up like pokers. If Mr. Eliot lies down in the day time for a nap, Jimmie perches on his chest, pulls at a button on his shirt, or tweaks an ear, or anything else that is tweakable.

These two young robins are not injured and are getting old enough to leave home. Sometimes they come in at night, and sometimes they don't. Jimmie was brought in by Mrs. Obee and Mrs. Reyburn, who raised him on angleworms bought at a down town store. Mrs. Frampton brought Bobbie in.

There have been many guests at the bird refuge. There was Cheerie, the tanager, who welcomed everybody who came to the door, made a merry-go-round of the shade on a big lamp, and was generally a good fellow. And there was Willie, the goldfinch, who couldn't make up his mind whether to leave with a flock of his kind that came through on migration, or to stay with his human friends. In the end, the call of the wild took him away.

MUSK-RAT, NEW INDUSTRY FOR OREGON

by

Irene Finley

The sun was setting on Tule Lake, the last flooding light making a sea of gray-gold of the broad smooth expanse of water. Far out in the middle could be glimpsed a rim of green, the great growth of tules and bulrushes which in reality grew from ten to fifteen feet high directly out of deep water. Here were the nesting places of coots, ducks, rail, and many other water birds. And here, too, were to be found the rounded mounds of dead tules hidden in the tall reeds, houses of the musk-rats. In the evening the musk-rats were afloat--always the evening for the musk-rats.

The boat idled as we threaded the water roads and dounded one bunch of tules after another. The eye caught sight of a half submerged bunch of refuse with a bit of dead tule sticking up. It moved. The bit of dead tule at one end dropped down. There was a wallop in the water as the musk-rat submerged, and sunk. He had been watching us as we were near his house.

Pushing into the thick green mass that towered above us, we searched for the house. There it was hidden in the green, seemingly floating on the water, but in reality tied to the tule stems. As we approached, a hen coot flapped away with frightened cries. And there on top of the musk-rat's house was her nest with nine dirty eggs.

In general structure and in the character of the teeth, the musk-rat is simply a great mouse, but in shape and habits it is a small edition of the beaver. It is for the most part a vegetarian, digging into the roots of a plant with a few slashing strokes of its strong fore-legs and eating with gusto. Small fish and frogs form a part of its diet also. But its greatest value and fame rest in its fur. Today musk-rat fur is one of the most durable skins for coats, and is colored in many forms for a large market.

Tule Lake in Oregon is the center of the musk-rat trade in the West as conditions here are ideal. In 1931, the first musk-rat was found here. A little later some stock from the Great Lakes region was introduced, which was

rated as the largest and finest in the country. In 1933, trappers began to take hides from Tule Lake. The fur-bearers rapidly increased in numbers and the crop in importance, until the past season when the value of the pelts taken exceeded \$35,000.

The policy has been for the Bureau of Reclamation to issue trapping permits to a limited number of trappers to operate on this lake and also the Upper Klamath Refuge. The permits are free and each trapper is assigned to an exclusive territory and is allowed to use only 150 traps.

The musk-rat season on Tule Lake terminated on March 15, 1941. 26,834 musk-rats were taken from the fourteen trapping units on the sump. On a 50-50 share-crop basis, the government and the trappers each received 13,417 skins. The total income realized by the trappers was \$21,265.98 for their share of the skins taken during the 1940-1941 season. To our knowledge, the Tule Lake Refuge trappers received the highest average price per hide on record. Therefore, this industry offered by the government is a valuable asset to the state.

It is believed there should be some selective trapping to increase the musk-rats on the refuge and to reduce the number of fighting males. The males kill each other, and a certain percent of the young, and also some of the females. They dominate an area which would otherwise support many more musk-rats.

It was reported by Mr. D. A. Holmes that the Tule Lake musk-rat furs which he purchased equaled or bettered any musk-rat furs in the West. This was based on the uniform size, thickness of hides, grade of fur, and the excellent care given the furs by the skinners. Mr. Holmes also stated that many of these furs would be used in the manufacture of aviators' uniforms in our national defense.

The sun had set as we rowed slowly back to shore. The water was high in the lake. We followed the ridge of an old dyke now almost submerged, and there in little water-cut arches here and there a musk-rat was making his evening toilet, *combing his wet brown hair with long fingers.*