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## A Plea for Protection for the Much-Abused Porcupine

W. E. Sanders Urges That the Little Animal Bearing the Same Name as This District Should Not be Destroyed or Persecuted. Homely, Clumsy but Intensely Interesting is the Porcupine.

Although there are not as many porcupines in this Porcupine District as there were when the area was named, there are still enough to recall the association there should be between the district and its odd little namesake. In the last issue of "Forest and Outdoors," W. E. Sanders makes a plea for the protection of the much-abused porcupine. He says:

This homely, clumsy, but intensely interesting animal is the subject of much dispute as to whether he is a desirable citizen or the reverse. One writer will say that they should never be killed because a lost person can always utilize them for food, while a recent writer in Rod and Gun goes on to the opposite pole and advocates their elimination because they destroy trees—many trees—as many as two per animal per year. It is worth while to think of these statements and of these arguments and conclusions to discover what bearing they

have in the world of nature. To begin with I should like to ask that we do not commercialize the whole world and everything that is in it. Surely we do not need to place dollars and cents value on every single item in nature and strike a balance, and then urge the destruction of everything whose influence we consider to be on the wrong side. Have we not reverence for Nature or for the God of Nature, who placed these wild things on the earth for a definite purpose in each case? All nature is interdependent. Without plants we will have no seeds with which to feed birds, squirrels, mice and such small game. Without insects we should have no insect-eating birds, thus banishing at one stroke all of their beauty and song. Without the smaller life we can have no owls, hawks or eagles thrilling us at times with their grace and power on the wing. And if it is not necessary to destroy any of these in order that we may have the others. Our mice will increase in incredible proportions if unchecked—and yet sometimes their numbers fall so much that the predatory species depending on them must turn to other sources of food. Our small birds increase annually from one hundred to five hundred per cent and the law of nature is that this annual increase must be destroyed—utilized is a much better word—within the year of their birth. Predaceous birds are necessary for the control of the smaller ones and it is impossible for us to single out any one species—provided that the species has not made an enormous increase on account of changed conditions, and say truthfully that such and such is unnecessary or even injurious. A species which may appear injurious when viewed under certain conditions may prove to be very necessary when those conditions have altered, and we should be excessively careful to err a dozen times on the side of preservation before erring once on the other side and condemning to destruction a species which is known to do certain things which may perhaps inflict a few dollars of problematical or theoretical loss on the country at large.

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I was moved to such thoughts as these about the much condemned porcupine on a recent camping trip in the French River country, where Porkie was much more in evidence than I had seen him before. A journey of a mile along the shores at dusk would usually be rewarded by the sight of several of these stupid, inoffensive creatures prowling along the shores, where they might have found animal food, perhaps (do they ever use it?), and where they certainly took their pick of choice succulent rushes and other water plants for the evening meal. Even in the daytime one could not fail to find them, and each night they invaded our tinware and other camping equipment. But they did us no harm, and if they should do five dollars worth of damage to a camp—that is that paltry sum to the pleasure of seeing a wild animal of comparatively large size in plentiful numbers? The writer in Rod and Gun who advocated the extermination of the species because of its enormous destruction of trees in the forest made the statement that one such animal would destroy two trees each year. One wonders if he stopped to consider the number of trees and the number of porcupines in a square mile. If trees stood ten feet apart there would be a quarter of a million such trees to the square mile, and trees suitable for destruction by porcupines would be much smaller, and probably average six feet apart or less, and of such there would be a million to the square mile. A moment's consideration would show that even if there were two hundred porcupines to the mile, their inroads on the forest would be too trivial for serious consideration, and as their food consists chiefly of poplars and less valuable trees and shrubs, the so-called destruction might even prove to be beneficial service from that lowest possible point of view—the sordid basis of dollars and cents—because the removal of those inferior growths gives the more valuable conifers a better chance. But, in all seriousness any possible damage by these animals may be absolutely ignored because nature re-forests on a prodigious scale. Three years ago an old oak on my own land fell because of rotting interior; it provided grand provender for the open fire-place and gave us months of evening enjoyment, and now where that one oak stood, there are some things like two hundred seedlings, each one doing its little best to out-top the others, because the forest, too, is a battleground, where everyone tries to down all the others, and very, very few survive to maturity. Left to themselves, the ground on which my one oak stood and which is now covered by 200 small ones, might, in 20 years, perhaps twenty, and 100 years six, each one of which would still be endeavouring to outgrow, and thus kill the others. And, what is happening with my oaks is happening with the forest trees. Nature starts off with twenty where she will eventually use one or two, and so we can easily spare a generous livelihood to Porkie and his interesting family.

A large porcupine was found in an aspen tree near our cabin one day cutting off branches three feet long and letting them drop, thereby encouraging every little conifer in the undergrowth, though it can hardly be thought that Porkie knew that he was carrying out the very plan the God of Nature had in mind when poplars and porcupines were created. My inquiring friend Stuart L. Thompson wondered what Porkie would do if company came up the tree to visit. Porkie knew. He went out on the limb as the climber ascended, and when the limb was shaken and jarred he refused to be dislodged. Then the climber went above, and Porkie, seeing his chance, made for the trunk and started down, just as a boy does, first one hand, then another, then two feet together, and, quite regardless of the terrestrial spectators, he came down at our feet and walked—then ran a few steps and disappeared.

The abundance of this animal in 1926 teaches us another thing—lovers of the wilds are becoming more considerate of the denizens of the forest, and this conclusion was confirmed by conversation with campers. But all are not alike, and some still desire to Kill—Kill—Kill. Is it not time that pressure be applied to such persons, and that guns and rifles be prohibited during the close season so that wild life may be increased even more? Everyone who loves the wilds knows that every animal killed before his visit, lessens his own chance of enjoyment by just that much, and we owe it to our children and our children's children, that they, too, should be able to partake of the same joy that we ourselves have in the graceful, beautiful and interesting in nature.

### NINE MINING CAMPS ARE SHOWN ON FINE NEW MAP

One of the most comprehensive maps yet published of the great Pre-Cambrian mineralized zone of Central Canada has been prepared for Wright, Wilson & Austin, members of the Standard Stock and Mining Exchange, for distribution to those interested. This map takes in nine mining camps covering an area of over 1,100 miles in length and also shows the mines of most importance where major developments are now taking place and in which also is marked the developed water powers, one of the most essential factors to successful mining.

He who can take advice is sometimes superior to him who can give it.

## GEODETIC SURVEYS AND PROTECTION OF FORESTS

Triangulation Stations in Gatineau District Selected as Sites for Fire Lookout Towers.

While aerial patrols give indispensable aid in the detection of forest fires in undeveloped areas, lookout towers from which the country in all directions is visible are more frequently used for this purpose in organized districts. The proper location of these towers is a matter of great importance since the expenditure on towers, telephone lines, and trails, is large and, if the towers are not built on the most commanding elevations the best results will not be secured.

The usefulness of a triangulation system similar to those laid down by the Geodetic Survey, Department of the Interior, as an aid in the selection of sites for fire lookout towers was demonstrated in a most comprehensive and conclusive manner during 1927 in the Gatineau valley north of the city of Ottawa. Here a triangulation net was required as a basis for aerial mapping by the Topographical Survey, Department of the Interior, to aid in developing the forestry and water-power resources of the area. A large industrial company offered its co-operation in the work, because apart from the value of the triangulation as an accurate basis for mapping the district, a system of 80-foot steel fire-lookout towers was being planned by the company for the protection of its timber limits, and it was felt that the parties sent out by the Geodetic Survey would be able to indicate the best positions for these towers.

The reconnaissance for the selection of triangulation stations was begun in 1927 and the southerly 4,500 square miles of the area was adequately covered by a primary net along the Gatineau river with stations as required. Of the nineteen primary and secondary stations selected all but two will be immediately used as tower sites. Five of these sites had already been selected by the company as the locations for 80-foot steel towers when the work started, and they were incorporated with the triangulation scheme; the other twelve tower sites were accepted by the company.

The average distance between towers is about sixteen miles, as it is estimated that in hazy, dry weather, when fires are most likely to occur, it is impossible to discern smoke at a greater distance than ten miles, even though in clear weather the country can be viewed to much greater distances. At one station on the highest point of Mount Diable east of Maniwaki, Quebec, elevation 2,600 feet, the country is visible for fifty miles in all directions in clear weather. Under these weather conditions several other lookout towers are visible from this station.

The above is but an example of how through close co-operation economy can be effected by the judicious choice of station sites so that the towers which the Geodetic Survey of Canada, Department of the Interior, build can be utilized to provide the basis of detailed topographic information, to promote the conservation of the resources of the country, and in addition to prove serviceable to industrial development.—National Resources of Canada.

Sudbury Star:—The English organist who got fired for playing "Onward, Christian Soldiers," as a wedding march was doubtless a married man.

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