

WILD FOLK YOU MAY MEET

Presenting One of Many Interesting Specimens of the Widely Diversified Fauna of the Oregon Country.

3-29-31



—Photo by W. L. Finley and H. T. Bohlman.

The western skunk, whose personality probably inspired the writing of the theme song, "One Alone," from the "Desert Song." The utter disregard for the camera shown by this specimen, who is busily engaged in feeding on a strip of meat, is indicative of the self-esteem in which he holds himself and his powers of defense.

FEW creatures of the wilds are more fortunate than the skunk. Armed with his officially recognized weapons of defense and offense, he may proceed with a smirk of indifference where "angels fear to tread." He doesn't have to play with anybody and nobody, save another skunk, wants to play with him—more than once.

Nearly everyone has seen a skunk at one time or another and certainly no orthodox American family could be quite complete without its breathtaking domestic narrative which relates the experiences of "Uncle Will" or "Cousin Maud" with the skunk.

But aside from these characteristics, the skunk is a particularly valuable animal. His fur is extremely valuable and beautiful and his nocturnal raids on field mice and his daylight forays into the pastures for grasshoppers have made him almost indispensable in farming country. It has been observed that the major share of the animal's diet during the summer months is composed of grasshoppers and field insects. In the hop regions, the skunk has won a niche in the hall of fame for his depredations against the hop grubs, which lie in the earth at the roots of each plant.

A common fallacy has arisen throughout the country that the skunk scatters his scent with his tail. Biologists who have made a study of this habit (and they alone know how it was determined) find that the fluid is ejected from two glands at the base of the tail. The tail is held high over the body during the process and the two or three drops of musk which are spent are discharged in a fine spray. So powerful is this musk that this comparatively small quantity can scent the air for fully a half mile in the direction of the wind.

The animal hibernates during the more severe winter months and the young are born in the spring in dens or abandoned badger holes. When the young are quite small they are led out on nocturnal raids by their mother, who makes them walk in single file behind her. The young may be captured quite easily if they are approached silently from the rear and lifted by the tail.