

The

This is Young Naturalist Year: 1966-67
Do you have a Young Naturalists Club in your school?

Young Naturalist

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Native Cats of Canada

Part 1 — of two parts



J. C. Hadden/National Museum of Canada

The Canada Lynx is greyish with hair tufts on its ears. The legs are long for the size of the body, and its feet make prints in snow five inches across.

Some years ago a group of sportsmen in Alberta claimed that "Mountain Lions" (Pumas) were overrunning Banff and Jasper National Parks, killing all the game and invading adjacent hunting lands. The park authorities had no reason to doubt the reports of their own staff, who had evidence of only a few Pumas. They knew, moreover, that the area outside the parks was intrinsically better game range than the rugged country inside, was well stocked with game, and quite capable of supporting its own "lions". Nevertheless, when such a complaint is received, the thing for the government to do is to make a survey. I went out in the depth of winter to snowshoe around the mountains looking for cat tracks.

The Puma (a better name than Mountain Lion, or Cougar, or Panther) is a big fawn-coloured cat about seven feet long. A good part of this length is a very long tail. The animal weighs well over a hundred pounds and usually feeds on deer.

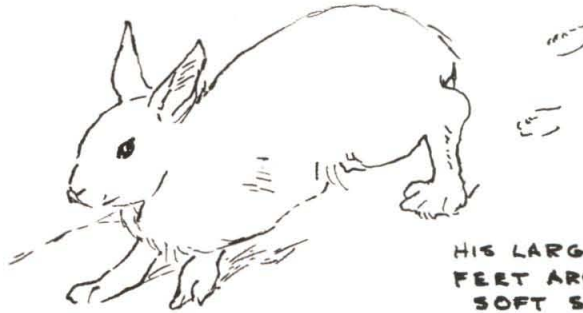
All cats, as you know, make rather round footprints, one in front of the other with more or less equal spacing. There are absolutely no claw marks; you know why, or do you? The Puma's prints in snow are about five inches across, and spaced eighteen or nineteen inches apart. Its feet sink into the snow and occasionally its tail

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WINTER SURVIVAL



THE SNOWSHOE HARE, A BROWNISH COLOUR IN SUMMER, BECOMES COMPLETELY WHITE IN WINTER TO HELP HIM HIDE FROM PREDATORS



HIS LARGE "SNOWSHOE" FEET ARE USEFUL IN SOFT SNOW



ONE PREDATOR, THE WEASEL, ALSO CHANGES COLOUR TO HELP HIM STALK PREY

THE WHITE-TAILED DEER MUST FORAGE FOR VEGETATION UNDER THE SNOW OR BROWSE ON TWIGS AND BARK. WHEN DEER POPULATIONS ARE HIGH SOME ANIMALS FACE STARVATION DURING SEVERE WINTERS.



JOHN BATEMAN

Club News



News this month is from three clubs. from Ottawa, Gayle Fisher, *Young Naturalist* correspondent of the *Macoun Field Club*, writes:

"I am in the senior division of the Macoun Field Club, and there are junior and intermediate groups below us; at the moment each division has about thirty members. We have already enjoyed four field trips this year. The first senior trip, to Pinks Lake in the Gatineau Hills on October 1, proved worthwhile for the study of lichen, mushrooms and fungi. The second senior trip, on October 23, arranged jointly with the Ottawa Field Naturalists, was a geological outing to Ramsey Lake, also in the Gatineau. On this occasion we learned about land formation and rock types. The junior and intermediate groups took a trip to the Merivale quarries, where they searched for fossils.

"We have also had films and speakers. Dr. I. Brodo, who supplies us with good leadership, talked about fungi and mushrooms. Mr. Lindsay, from the Department of Defence Research, spoke on harmful insects and other pests, mainly as they affect Canadian wheat. Mr. W. Baldwin gave a talk on the Chippewa Indians."

Dr. Brodo adds that the junior and intermediate groups studied rock outcroppings in Gatineau Park on November 5, and have spent two meetings learning about and examining things through the microscope, especially pond water.

The *Kingston Junior Naturalists* had an interesting field trip to Point Tra-

verse, a peninsula jutting out into Lake Ontario in Prince Edward County. A long-eared owl was seen, and Kenny Edwards found a saw-whet owl, a rare bird in eastern Ontario. "Another highlight," writes Dr. Cooke, leader of the club, "was the discovery of a hoary bat which was found hanging upside down on small branches of a cedar tree. When the branch was picked, the bat continued to sleep and could be examined in detail. Eventually it woke up, snarled at everyone and went back to sleep again."

The *Toronto Junior Field Naturalists Club* was featured in an article in *The Globe Magazine* on November 26, with photographs of club meetings and outings. Thirty-five members of the Fossil Group had a field trip to the atomic power plant near Pickering on Lake Ontario, where they examined rocks unearthed during the plant's construction. A new group has been formed within the club, to concentrate on the study of vertebrates.

BARBARA WILKINS

Many boys and girls have organized a natural science club in their school or classroom. If you have such a club, you are invited to share your experiences with others by reporting your activities in this column. We would be pleased to have pictures of your outings and projects. Be sure to describe your activities fully, giving the names of the leaders and assistants. Write to Mrs. Barbara Wilkins, Editor of *Club News*, 213 Rosedale Heights Drive, Toronto 7, Ontario.

An Idea for a Family Outing

Perhaps you can persuade Dad to take the family on a trip to the Waterloo County Arboretum. An arboretum is a collection of many kinds of trees planted for study purposes.

The arboretum, opened in 1964, required eight years for its development. About seventy-one kinds of trees have been planted in it to date, and

these have been labelled for easy identification. Forty-four of the trees are native to this part of North America, and twenty-seven have been brought in from other countries.

The Waterloo County Arboretum is near old highway seven and eight at the east end of New Hamburg.

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touches. You have to follow each track a little way to be sure of these details. It was a couple of days before I found Puma tracks (exactly where the park wardens said they would be) and I followed them ten miles in a straight line.

In the same region of Alberta there is another cat, the Lynx. This animal weighs about 20 pounds, has practically no tail at all and is greyish, with hair tufts on its ears. The Lynx has fantastically long legs for its body size, and big feet, and it also makes round prints about five inches across in snow, with a stride of eighteen or nineteen inches. The Lynx does not sink as far into the snow as the Puma nor does it move on a straight course. Since its food is rabbits, it travels in circles on rabbit runways.

There were plenty of snowshoe rabbits that winter, and plenty of lynx. On the first day out, with a companion, I checked three tracks in the willow flats of the Bow River Valley. In a short distance we satisfied ourselves that they were lynx, but we also saw that we had disturbed the animals, so we followed the tracks on a dead run. A couple of hundred yards ahead, the three lynx went up a big spruce to see what was going on. When we came near they plummeted thirty feet to the ground and one went past me about three yards away. That was the best look I ever got at a wild Lynx.

He was beautiful, in full winter pelt, with his ungainly proportions hidden by long fur. In summer you can see that the head and body are small, and the legs long and thick, with enormous feet at the end. In fact, no artist or taxidermist has ever had the courage to show a Lynx as scrawny, pin-headed, long-legged and big-footed as he really is. You should see one wet!

A Lynx is animated by rabbits. Remove this source of food and the Lynx just fades away. In fact, that is exactly what happens to the whole Lynx clan every ten years when the rabbits die off. At such times starved Lynx wander all over and behave in strange ways.

C. H. D. CLARKE

WOODLORE

FOR THE NATURALIST

What To Do When Lost

As soon as you have concluded you are lost, make a plan of action. Begin immediately to ration any food you have and supplement it with plant food. Let us hope you have had the foresight to bring matches, an extra coat or sweater in cold weather, and an emergency ration of food.

If you become lost in deep bush and someone who knows your general whereabouts will be looking for you, it is usually best to stay where you are rather than run the risk of wandering deeper into the forest. The accepted distress signal is three signals of any kind: smoky fires, flashes of light, gunshots, shouts, whistles. A reply to a distress signal is two signals.

It is dangerous to attempt to travel after nightfall, unless there happens to be a full moon and you are sure of your way out of the bush. Before dark select a dry, level site for a camp, preferably in front of a rock face that will reflect heat from your fire. Gather the poles and boughs you will need for a shelter and bed, and enough dry firewood, in chunks as large as you can drag, to keep a cheery fire going all night. Get the fire going, then go about making your shelter and bed in a leisurely, time-consuming manner that will put in the hours until you become tired enough to sleep. Sounds of civilization carry farthest at night; note

their direction for possible use next day.

To make an emergency shelter, hang balsam or spruce boughs with butts pointing up on a frame consisting of a ridge pole set in vertical crotched poles against which slanting sticks and cross poles have been laid. A fire set in front, preferably with a rock face as a backdrop to reflect heat, will help keep the shelter warm and dry.

A balsam (or spruce or cedar) bough bed is made of a large quantity of branch tips a foot or so long. Starting at the head of the bed, lay them in closely overlapping rows with butts pointing toward the foot.

JOHN MACFIE



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