GENERAL NOTES

OPOSSUM IN VERMONT

A full grown opossum was caught by A. A. Roberts, a professional trapper, at Dorset, Vermont, in the heart of the Green Mountains, in mid-December, 1920, long after the ground and streams had become frozen. The skin was seen by the writer. It was lightly furred, indicating that perhaps the animal had been in captivity, but inquiries in the locality and an item placed in local newspapers failed to locate any person who had had one of the animals as a pet. I can find no other record for the taking of this animal in Vermont, which is far north of its usual range.—GEORGE L. KIRK, *Rutland, Vermont*.

OPOSSUM CARRIES LEAVES WITH ITS TAIL

A number of years ago five living opossums were sent to the Field Museum of Natural History from southern Illinois. In the lot were one nearly grown female and four young, not her own, about the size of large house rats. After arrival they were kept temporarily in a wire-covered barrel. The second night the large female literally "ate alive" one of the young, and afterwards forced her escape from the barrel. She had eaten the hind quarters of the unfortunate youngster without first killing him, as attested by his contorted carcass and awful facial grimace when found cold and stiff next day.

After this episode I kept only one young opossum alive, in order to make a few studies from life of so curious a mammal. When the fall days began to grow cold I gave this fellow a thick carpet of autumn leaves in his box cage. Though he ate heartily of meat scraps, fruits, and vegetables, he was not contented. When not sound asleep in his favorite corner he pounded solemnly around and around his cage like a wild tiger, with a funny preoccupied look on his grinning face. One morning when I glanced into his cage I was surprised to see him pacing around his beat with a large bunch of leaves tightly rolled up in his long, prehensile tail. He carried this bundle so long, around and around in tireless pace, that I left him without learning the object of his action. Later he repeated

this carrying of a bundle of leaves in his tail a number of times. I noticed that he had made a half hearted attempt to build a nest in one corner, but had abandoned the idea and slept anywhere that he happened to be when drowsiness overcame him.

Opossums of course use their tails with agility in climbing, but I have never seen a note in mammalian history on the use of the tail as a carrier of material of any kind, so thought this account might prove of interest to readers of the Journal. The accompanying sketch shows accurately the manner in which the tail was employed in carrying bundles of leaves.—LEON L. PRAY, *Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago*.

NOTES ON THE EUROPEAN HEDGEHOG

Extracts from my journal, written at Ultuna, Sweden, 1898: *August 4*. A member of the faculty of the Agricultural College, located here, informed me that every night a hedgehog (*Erinaceus europæus*) was seen to leave a thicket near the campus, and make for the shrubbery along a small stream, where it fed during the night. We went out that evening to watch for it, and had about given up seeing it, when we heard a woman talking and found her in earnest conversation with the hedgehog. It stood a few feet away gazing at her, but on seeing us turned and ran under a building where it was captured. It did not roll up until I had handled it roughly. I was told that these animals fed on mice, berries, and scraps thrown from the kitchen.

August 5. Among the twenty-five specimens caught today, were two *Erinaceus*. One was taken in a steel trap baited with bread and set by the side of an out-building; the other in a Schuyler rat trap set in a barn and baited with rolled oats.

August 11. Last night I caught another *Erinaceus* in a steel trap baited with rolled oats. . . . A half-grown hedgehog that I keep in my room shows displeasure, when disturbed, by sniffing through his nose and making a noise in his throat that sounds like heavy heart-throbs. Occasionally he shakes himself, rattling his spines. When placed on a couch, he shows fear of falling, creeps cautiously to the side, lies prone, and peeps over the edge. I offered him bread and boiled potatoes, and, though he accepted them, he took a piece of raw meat much quicker. At first he started to roll up, but, on scenting the meat, uncoiled, accepted and ate it very slowly, all the time grating his teeth. He does not use his front feet while eating. Whenever I handle him he rolls up so tightly that it is difficult to find the opening. He does not attempt to bite [he did later however] even when I catch him before he is tightly closed and tickle his belly. I have just induced him to walk six inches to my hand and take a piece of raw meat from my fingers.

August 12. My pet *Erinaceus* is very interesting. He eats the bodies of both *Sorex* and *Neomys*, chewing the meat fine and eating slowly. It took him eight minutes to eat a half grown *Microtus*. Last evening I knocked from a table, and broke, a glass candlestick; and during the night the hedgehog awakened me by rolling one of the pieces about the floor. Then he began scratching on the side of the chamber vessel and I chased him away, but he returned and I had to remove the vessel in order to sleep. He is very active. I can call him from