

# Uncle Sam At War on Beasts of Prey

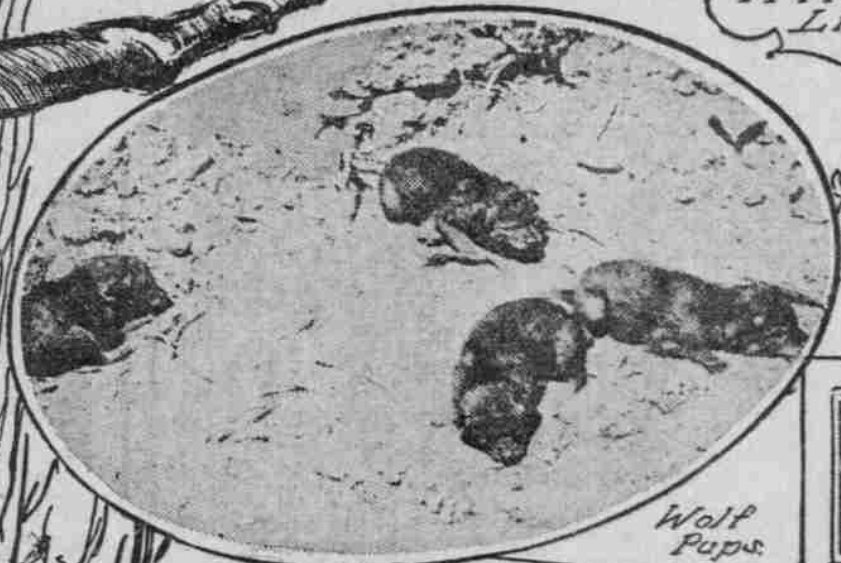
Campaign of Extermination is Being Conducted in National Forests.

A Grey Wolf. The Most Destructive of All Predatory Animals in This Country.

A Mountain Lion.

Wolf Pups.

Coyote.



Forest Hunter and His Trophies.



Preparing Poison for Prairie Dogs.

BY RENE BACHEL.

ONE of Uncle Sam's most difficult problems, relating to the preservation of wild game in this country, is that of dealing with predatory creatures, such as wolves and wildcats. To keep down their numbers the Government for a number of years past has employed professional hunters and trappers.

It is mainly a forest problem, for most kinds of wild game are forest products. Probably three-fourths of all the important game animals of the Western states dwell within the borders of the National forests, and the question of their proper management and perpetuation is one that has to be reckoned with by the Forest Service.

The National forests are great natural game preserves, maintained by Government. Not only is it sought to encourage the breeding and increase of the desirable wild animals within their borders, but "plants" are being made in them of buffalo, elk, pronghorn antelope and other valuable species now threatened with extermination.

The Wichita game refuge is one of the showplaces of Oklahoma, famous for its scenic beauty and, with its forest cover and rare game animals, attracts visitors from far and wide. A herd of buffalo has been established there and, already numbering 48, is increasing rapidly. Also there are elk, antelope and wild turkeys.

The elk come from the Yellowstone region, where there are actually too many elk. There is not grass enough to feed them, and so they perish in large numbers of starvation. Hence the plan, first adopted four years ago, of shipping bunches of them to the National forests in Colorado, Wyoming and elsewhere. Already more than 500 have been planted in this way, and the success of the enterprise is marked.

It is popularly supposed that the elk in this country have been killed off by hunters, the result being that alarmingly few of them are left. As a matter of fact, however, they have been "eaten out." In other words, the sheep and cattle have consumed their food supply. In winter, when they come down into the valleys, they no longer find plenty of grass—a natural hay, cured on the stem—to feed upon. Cattle and sheep have been before them, and the land is cropped bare. Suffering from hunger, they gather about the farmers' haystacks, climbing on each other's backs to get at the hay, which is so protected that they cannot reach it. Consequently they starve and die.

There are now in the Grand Canyon game refuge at least 10,000 deer, the increase of their numbers being largely due to an active campaign waged by the Forest Service against their natural enemies, especially the mountain lion and "bobcat." In this kind of

work, all over the West, the Government foresters work in co-operation with the Biological Survey, which is the branch of the Department of Agriculture that has special supervision over all matters relating to birds and mammals.

Predatory animals destroy not only game, but also domestic stock—sheep, cattle, hogs and chickens. But the number of them grows smaller each year, and the damage they do is correspondingly less. During the last year there were killed in the National forests 71 wolves, 60 pumas, 57 lynxes, 523 bobcats, 240 bears and 2146 coyotes. In addition, eight wolf pups were destroyed.

Wolves and coyotes are transient visitors, frequenting the forests only during months when game and domestic animals are most abundant. They are bred, born and spend most of their lives in the foothills and plains outside the forests. Under these conditions, those killed in the forests are replaced by others from outside ranges, and this will continue until the Government institutes a general movement to destroy the animals throughout the length and breadth of the public domain.

The most destructive of all beasts of prey in this country is the big grey wolf, which still roams over the thinly settled ranch country on Montana, the Dakotas and parts of Nebraska, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico and Western Texas, where stock-raising is the principal industry. In earlier days it was the buffalo wolf; now it is the cattle wolf.

Each wolf costs the ranchman \$1000 a year. Such an animal will kill a cow or calf every three days, or 100 head of cattle per annum. Its victims are mostly calves and yearlings; but, when these are not available, it will kill cows and even full-grown steers, attacking them from behind and literally eating them alive. Even if only slightly bitten they will die of blood-poisoning.

Hunting these wolves with dogs and horses is a thrilling sport. No hound can overtake them in a straight-way run, and not even the dearest and largest dog is a match for one. Sometimes the wolf, if cornered by a pack of dogs, will turn and kill a number of them.

The big grey wolf is animated by a lust for blood; he kills for the love of it. His insensibility in availing traps set by the most experienced trappers is almost beyond belief. To avoid leaving a trail, he will travel over the roughest places, and it is next to impossible to get him with a poisoned bait, so suspicious is he, and so keen to distinguish the scent of a man.

The successful fight made by the Government against predatory animals infesting the National forests and adjacent ranges has encouraged settlers

to take up the business for themselves. Not long ago, in Oregon, there was an epidemic of rabies among the coyotes, causing widespread apprehension and resulting in serious losses of livestock. At the request of settlers, officers of the Wallowa National Forest were assigned to destroy the brutes, and so successful were their efforts that the sheep with lambs were soon grazing unattended—a condition of affairs without precedent.

The gray wolves are becoming steadily scarcer. They are retiring before civilization, and eventually will be exterminated. With the small prairie wolf, or coyote, it is quite otherwise. He may be said to welcome civilization and thrive in the midst of it. The stranger who visits Santa Fe, New Mexico, or many another Western town, may hear coyotes at night howling about the hotel in which he is lodged.

The coyote makes himself at home in well-populated country, raises his young under the settler's nose, and, in spite of poison and traps, increases. In Spring he follows the sheepman's herd up into the mountains, there to prey on lambs or even ewes. In Autumn he comes down with them and winters close to the farmer's feedlot and chicken coops.

While the individual gray wolf is most destructive, the coyote, by reason of his numbers, is the worst enemy of game animals and domestic stock. The amount of damage he individually does has been estimated all the way from \$100 to \$250 a year. As the settlers express it, he is "pizen on sheep." He will kill them for sheer devilment. To catch him is difficult, for he is extremely cunning and can outrun any dog. Inasmuch as the female produces from eight to ten young in a litter, coyotes multiply with enormous rapidity, if allowed to breed, and the business of keeping down their numbers is expensive and troublesome.

On the other hand, oddly enough, there are well-informed persons who contend that the extermination of coyotes would be a misfortune. They are the principal natural enemies of the prairie dogs and jackrabbits. In California, not long ago, a bounty of \$5 was voted by the Legislature for every coyote killed. Seventy-five thousand of them were destroyed during the following 12 months, but immediately thereafter a plague of rabbits followed and it was claimed that the balance of nature had been unwisely disturbed.

The puma, or mountain lion, is another beast of prey which officers of the Forest Service are obliged to take into serious account. It is very fond of deer meat. But, above all, it is a killer of horses. There are regions in the Rocky Mountains where it is almost impossible to raise horses on open ranges, because these great cats

kill the young colts as fast as they are born. The mountain lion is very keen of scent and hard to trap, but to human beings it is harmless. When run down and exhausted it will lie flat on its back and spit and snarl, but may then be dispatched without danger. Will C. Barnes, an expert of the Forest Service, told the writer of an occasion when he chased a puma for half an hour around a clump of trees, part of the time on foot, trying to rope him.

With the wildest it is much the same way. The creature acts as if very fierce, but will never attack a man. At the same time it is a dreaded killer of sheep, and especially lambs, destroying them for the pure lust of bloodshedding. Mr. Barnes knew a wildcat to kill 90 sheep in one night in an Arizona camp, tearing open the throat of each victim and leaving it. Next day the animal was run up a tree by dogs and killed.

Wildcats (otherwise known as bobcats) and lynxes are easily exterminated by traps and dogs. Commonly, they are chased into trees, knocked down with stones and clubs and beaten to death. Bears, with the exception

of the grizzly, are not dangerous, and do comparatively little damage, though now and then one acquires a taste for mutton or pork, and makes forays upon sheepfolds and pigpens. The black and brown bears do no harm worth mentioning to man or beast, beyond robbing an occasional camper's outfit of sugar and bacon.

The recent rise in the price of furs has attracted many professional trappers, who have either sought employment from the Government in the National forests, or have obtained permits to hunt and trap predatory animals therein. There is money in the business, the pelt of a coyote, for example, having a present market value of \$5. With a view to extending the work as much as possible, the Forest Service makes it a practice to lend traps and even to give poison to settlers and other private individuals.

The prairie dog is hardly to be classed as a predatory mammal. Nevertheless, he is recognized as very harmful, and the Forest Service is operating with the Biological Survey for the destruction of the species, which is being successfully wiped out over great areas. Whole counties in Kan-

sas, long abandoned to the "dogs," have been redeemed for stock-raising. It is estimated that 250 prairie dogs will eat as much grass as one cow. Thirty-two of them will eat as much as would feed one sheep. Inasmuch as no use whatever has been found for the dogs, it is impossible that such a condition of affairs should be tolerated. Not only do they eat the grass, but they convert the territory they occupy into a bare desert, on which there is no further growth for many years afterward. Having used up one area in this way, they move on to another, extending the mischief indefinitely.

It has been found that the most effective way to deal with prairie dogs is to feed them poisoned grain, a teaspoonful of which is placed near each burrow. With one bushel of wheat are mixed three ounces of sulphate of strychnine, half a pound of cyanide of potassium, a teaspoonful of oil of anise, and two quarts of heavy New Orleans molasses. This is used in February, when the little animals are hungry. Three men on horseback, shooting a spoonful at each burrow and working across country and back as a farmer would sow wheat can put out four bushels in a day, baiting 16,000 holes. This will dispose of nearly all the prairie dogs, and any holes that show signs of occupancy may be similarly treated the following season.

The really serious problem, where predatory animals are concerned, has to do with wolves or coyotes. The latter usually travel in packs, sometimes as many as eight or a dozen of them together, and they are destroyed by poison or traps. Meat alone is of little use as bait; there must be something else to attract them, and the worse it smells the better. Old trappers, for this purpose, allow half a pound of raw beef to decompose in a wide-mouthed bottle; then add oil tried out of prairie dog fat, with half an ounce of arsenic dissolved in alcohol, and one ounce of tincture of Siberian musk. This mixture is applied to grass and weeds near the trap, so that the coyote may roll about and get caught.

Even by such means the big gray

### How Baked Earth Is Useful

TERRA COTTA means literally baked earth. It is usually employed as though it meant only architectural ornaments made of baked clay. Yet Michel Angelo made stamps of it; the Japanese use it cleverly painted as "imitation bronze" for busts, tea jars and bowls, and the ancient Greek children had terra cotta dolls, with movable legs fastened by wooden pegs.

In the trade today pieces of clay work for architectural ornament over eight inches square are called terra cotta; under that size they are called ornamental brick.

The famous Della Robbia ware of Italy was of terra cotta covered with opaque enamel, and painted. England used it much. From the time of Henry VIII it was popular in large buildings, and since Queen Anne's day it has been used for ornamenting smaller houses.

For a while it fell into disuse, but since the use of iron and steel in buildings has come into fashion good architects are employing terra cotta as a more honest material, and hence in better taste, than galvanized iron sanded to simulate stone. It is common to build the lower stories of a house of stone and the upper stories of brick, with terra cotta decorations.

Terra cotta can be produced in a variety of colors, and while rains leave stone surfaces dingier, they brighten surfaces made of the clay. It is as durable as stone; it can be produced in more shades and colors; it can be molded into a great variety of designs; it can be given more delicate outlines than stone; it is lighter than stone.

### Well Gushes Hot Water

IN THE Flathead Indian Reservation, near Camas, Mont., is an artesian well containing hot mineral water, said to be the only one in the world. Around it, within a mile, are other artesian wells in which the water is clear and cool.

A few years ago the Government threw open the Flathead Reservation, and those who were successful in the drawing now own fine ranches in a fertile valley. Artesian wells have been struck at a depth ranging from 90 to 305 feet.

In the Summer of 1912, on a ranch within a mile of one of these cold wells drillers were at work when, at the depth of 244 feet, hot water gushed upward with such force that the drillers were forced to flee. In a few days the rush of hot water had washed a large hole, with the drill still in, though incapacitated.

The well was finally curbed so that it could be used. The water is 120 Fahrenheit, flowing at the rate of 60 barrels a minute.

S. O. S. Signal, Philadelphia Ledger.

"Why are you flying your flag upside down, Suburbs?"

"To let the neighbors know that the cook's gone and all invitations are off."