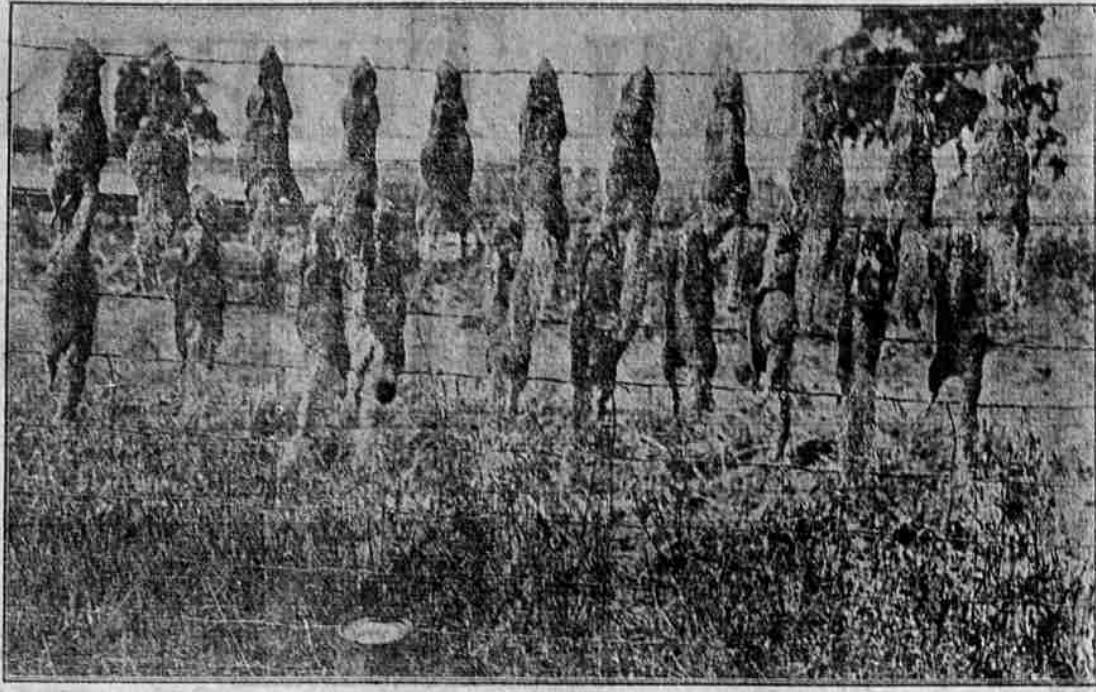


HISTORY AND HABITS OF CALIFORNIA DIGGER SQUIRREL

The California ground squirrel is probably known by sight to more people than any other one of our four hundred kinds of native mammals. It inhabits open ground in well-settled territory and it forages abroad during the daylight hours when its movements are most likely to attract attention. Numbers are to be seen from the windows of passing trains, and the traveler by automobile is often thrilled by the narrow escapes of those heedless individuals which dash across the road immediately in advance of him, not infrequently to their own undoing. Then, too, this squirrel has, perhaps, been more widely advertised than any of our other mammals. A few years ago it came into prominence as a proven disseminator of the dreaded bubonic plague, and it has become notorious for its exceeding destructiveness to cultivated crops.



Results obtained from Poison Barley scattered near grain field early one evening, the dead squirrels being picked up the next morning. Poisoned grain is effective if mixed right and distributed properly. (Photo courtesy California Monthly bulletin.)

The term "Digger Squirrel" is often applied to this species, more especially in the foothill and mountain regions, in recognition of its burrowing habits, to distinguish it from the tree-inhabiting gray and red squirrels. The book name, Beechey Ground Squirrel, much used in the literature relating to it, is derived from the accepted scientific name *Citellus beecheyi*. This name, beecheyi, was bestowed upon the animal by its original describer, "in honour of the able and scientific commander of the Blossom," Captain F. W. Beechey. The British ship "Blossom" cruised the Pacific ocean northward even to Bering Strait during the years 1825 to 1828. Collections of specimens were brought back from many localities visited, including San Francisco and Monterey; among these specimens was one or more of the squirrels in question. These were evidently preserved for the most part by Mr. Collie, surgeon of the ship, who is quoted by Richardson as stating that

"this kind of Spermophile" burrows in great numbers in the sandy declivities and dry plains in the neighborhood of San Francisco and Monterey, in California, close to the houses. They frequently stand up on their hind legs when looking round about them. In running, they carry the tail generally straight out, but when passing over any little inequality, it is raised, as if to prevent it being soiled. In rainy weather, and when the fields are wet and dirty, they come out but little above ground." And further information is given, according, for the most part, with what anyone can see for himself today in the same general region. This attests to the acuteness of observation of Mr. Collie, and also shows how the squirrels had already, some ninety years ago, begun to impress people with their numbers and boldness.

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How to Handle the Poison

By F. E. Garlough, Biological Survey.

In the early investigations on the digger squirrels, grains were soaked or boiled in strychnine solutions with the idea of impregnating the kernels with the poison. The squirrels, however, exhibited marked objection to the bitterness of grain so treated, and so amount of sweetening or "doctoring" covered this defect sufficiently to cause them to eat the kernels, though they hulled them out and tasted them.

The squirrels' habit of carrying grain in their cheek pouches, which is especially marked during the dry season, or when seeds are abundant, was at this time taken into consideration. It was thought that if strychnine could be held in a readily available form in a coating on the surface of the grain, sufficient of the poison would be assimilated directly from the cheek pouch to kill the animal, even though the grain was eaten. This became the actual basis on which has been developed one of the most successful of all rodent poisons.

An effective poison was only half the battle. The method of distributing it is quite as important. The first impulse in distributing poisoned grain, still followed by many, was to place it in the holes or in a small heap at the very entrance of the squirrel's burrow. But squirrels do not look for food in these locations, and much of the poisoned grain is lost by being covered by the animal running over it. Nature did not drop the squirrel's food into the burrows nor place it in neat little piles in front of them; she scattered it in locations not always near the burrows. Accordingly, the poisoned grain is not always near the burrows. Accordingly, the poisoned grain is not scattered on clean areas within three to ten feet of the burrows, around trees or rockpiles, along squirrel trails and in places where the animals feed.

The standardized formula resulting from these investigations, and the method for applying it, have been of immense economic value to California. Used in the dry season and properly distributed, the poison is entirely reliable. If prebaiting with clean, unpoisoned barley be practiced in advance of poisoning, the squirrel

pest can be practically eradicated by a single poison treatment in any given locality. The common mistake is in attempting to use the poison during the wet season, when results are less certain, the even under such conditions it is among the most effective of strychnine preparations. In general use in the state for the past six or seven years, it has very largely replaced the use of proprietary poisons at a small fraction of the cost of the latter. In clearing the squirrel pest from valuable agricultural areas, from irrigation systems, from nut groves and grain fields, the aggregate saving to the state must be expressed in millions.

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Under the stress of a patriotic impulse thousands of us purchased Liberty Bonds. We pledged ourselves at that time to support to the fullest our government. Now is the time when we are to be called upon to show that we were sincere in our promise. One way in which we can prove this sincerity is by holding on to the Liberty Bonds we bought last year so as to make it easier to sell the Victory Loan this spring.

In the three weeks following April 21 the government will offer to the people \$5,000,000,000 in short term bonds which is to be known as the Victory Loan. If the government bonds now outstanding are held close to par it will be easy to dispose of the new issue. If millions of dollars of the old issues are thoughtlessly dumped on the market it will be a harder task to sell the Victory Loan.

By holding the bonds you now have you will not only be doing a patriotic duty but retaining a sound investment for yourself. The investment you now hold involves no hazard. Any bank will accept government bonds as collateral if money is desired. Any investment house will in an hour's time change your bond into money if the circumstances require.

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LAW REQUIRES ACTION AGAINST GOPHERS, MOLES

The new law just passed by the recent legislature makes it necessary for every farmer to eradicate such varmints as gophers, moles, rabbits, and etc., whenever they become a nuisance or menace to any community.

The Jackson County Farm Bureau will carry on an educational campaign with regard to these pests during the season of 1919. Different methods will have to be employed to eradicate these animals and the law will probably not be enforced to the limit this season. The county agent will furnish information to any farmer relative to eradication of gophers, moles, rabbits, etc.

Gophers are eradicated by trapping and poisoning while moles can only be controlled by trapping. Various poisonous baits may be used for controlling rabbits and formulas for same may be obtained by applying to the county agent. Demonstrations will be given during the year in various parts of the county as to the best methods of trapping and poisoning gophers and for trapping moles. Do your share by co-operating with the farm bureau in this work and we hope to accomplish good results along these lines.

In the Circuit Court of Oregon for Jackson County.

In the Matter of the Determination of the Relative Rights to the Use of the Waters of Rogue River and its Tributaries.

Notice is hereby given that the final decree herein will be made and entered on Saturday, April 5, 1919, in open court.

F. M. CALKINS, Judge.

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