

Is That So?

By EUGENE BURNS
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Strange as it may appear off-hand, birds, mammals, fish—just about every animal that exists is far from being at home anywhere in the woods or fields or streams as one might very logically imagine.

Most animals, in fact, have a very limited home territory (even though they may be migrators in season) which they know intimately and from which only flood or fire or dire disaster can evict them.

Except during periodic migrations when certain birds and mammals and fish follow long-established flyways or footways or runways, the extent of any wildlife range varies with the species, being small for a rabbit, much larger for a wildcat, and comparatively huge for a bear, points out Dr. William J. Long in *The Spirit of the Wild*. To this I would add, a trout which may migrate may have a home range no larger than a pool, and have a spot in that pool from which he refuses to budge rather than a few feet!

The physical cause of such variation is easily explained: a current of the stream brings the food to the waiting trout; a dozen acres of pasture and brushland are enough to supply a rabbit with all the food he needs; a wildcat must rove more widely for the animal food he likes best; and before a bear finds enough berries, grubs, ants, beechnuts, mice and small game to satisfy his rapacious maw, he must roam over a fairly large area—but in doing so, he takes a regular route for five, six or seven days. But this you may be sure of—he invariably returns and usually by the very same trail.

Along with it, every animal has an abiding sense of what we

may call security, explains Dr. Long. Inevitably he becomes fond of a range where every playground or refuge, den or sunny opening, pool or run of water is associated with food, comfort or safety.

And so, a robin returns to the same nesting place year after year; a young fox hunting all the winter night for food, returns at sunrise to rest near the den where he was born; a big trout returns to the same resting place under a tree root.

To put it to the test, trail a hawk sometime after the first snow has fallen for several hours as I have often done. When you first jump him, he will bolt—thinking only, perhaps, of safety; then watch him as you follow. He will make a big circle—perhaps three miles or so in diameter, but sure as shooting he'll eventually head back and by twilight you may find yourself near the very spot where you first jumped him from his daytime bed.

Seldom More Than Mile

For another, you might follow a brood of ruffed grouse as I have done in some of my forest ranger areas—I was going to say territory (for humans, too, like to identify themselves with home territories). An entire brood's home range for the summer will seldom extend more than a mile across, usually less. Come autumn, when the birds are mature, they'll scatter—but even so, each one will establish its own range, which thereafter it will use season after season. And the cock will return to the same log to drum, day after day, season after season.

The ruffed grouse's attachment to its familiar range becomes evident when you try to

drive him out of it. Flush him with a dog, and he'll usually make a long straight-away flight. Again, a second time he may thunder out of the brush well ahead of you—but still going away. About the third time, his flight may still be straight-away, but depend upon it, it'll be much shorter. And then, the fourth time you're almost on him be-



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fore he explodes right in front of you and whips back over your head, over the tree-tops and away on swift but sure wings back to the very spot almost where you came upon him originally.

Dislikes Strange Territory

Point is, like any other animal he does not like to go into strange territory—usually belonging to some other bird. And in which, by some strange chemical change, he is usually defeated. Turn about, defending his own territory, he becomes strong and usually routs the intruder.

Finally, let's take a fish. Many a time, happily, along streams in my ranger territory, I have observed trout. In one pool in particular I knew almost every fish by heart—knowing them by species, by size, and shape and color. Occasionally, I would wade up the stream to drive them out of their cover. They would rush frantically ahead of me; but only so far—and no

Clifford Bigham Named to FFA Post

Central Point—FFA member, Clifford Bigham of Crater High school, has been elected district vice-president for the Rogue-Umpqua FFA district, Edward Griggs, Crater High FFA instructor has announced. He will preside over eight chapters in this section of Oregon.

Bigham and Bob Eiden, another Crater FFA member, will leave next Friday to attend the national FFA convention in Kansas City. They will board a special convention car in Portland Friday evening.

farther, and then, back they would come, if need be, streaking between my legs to get back. And allowed a half hour to compose themselves, where would they be? You guessed it—right at their accustomed place, to the very inch almost. For them it was not only a home range, but also a place on the range where each regarded himself master.

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Free: By special arrangement with the editors of the Encyclopedia Americana, my panel of judges will award each week to the reader who sends me the best true-life nature adventure, the best nature observation, or the best question on nature and wildlife, a complete 30-volume set of this world-famous reference work in a handsome Sealcraft binding. Each week new submissions will be considered. Sorry, I simply can't answer your many friendly letters. Please address your letter to: Is That So? c/o Medford Mail Tribune, Box 575, Sausalito, Calif.

News About Books From the Library

With the approach of the national elections increased interest in all aspects of the political scene is evidenced at the Medford Public Library.

Information is available at the library on the issues and the candidates, the record of the present administration, the history of the Democratic and Republican parties, and on the procedure by which a President is elected.

The library also has books and other materials on citizenship, democracy, Congress, the Constitution, and the national and international issues involved in this election year.

Better Understanding
Among the books which can aid us to a better understanding of politics is Richard Neuberger's "Adventures in Politics." Writing from his experience in the Oregon state legislature, the author urges the armchair politician to assume responsibility and work toward the mature, responsible state government needed today. Other books of similar interest are Alben Barkley's "That Reminds Me," and John F. Kennedy's "Profiles in Courage."

The library also offers "A Democrat Looks at His Party," in which former Secretary of State Dean Acheson considers the pros and cons of both parties and explains his own choice. Opinions of the Democratic presidential candidate, Adlai Stevenson, are outlined in his "Call to

Political History

Malcolm Moos gives us a scrutinizing close-up of Republicanism working on the national level in "The Republicans," a book with a sense of political history from which younger voters can profit. Published appraisals of Eisenhower's record include Merle Pusey's "Eisenhower the President," a running account of the administration with attention devoted to the men of the "Eisenhower team."

Robert Donovan, the White House correspondent of the New York Herald Tribune, presents an informative and absorbing inside story of Eisenhower and his administration in his book, "Eisenhower; the Inside Story." A recent biography of Vice President Nixon is available in James Keogh's "This is Nixon."

Books on the candidates, the parties, and the issues to be decided upon in November have been set apart on a special shelf in the library. Red, white and blue posters carry this message: "Vote, but don't vote in the dark! Listen! Read! Look! Talk! Discuss! Think!—Use Your Library."

ELECTED CHAIRMAN

Tokyo—U.P.—Mao Tse-tung, Communist China's top leader, has again been elected chairman of the all-powerful central committee of the Chinese Communist Party radio Peiping has reported.

The United States has put to use only about 15 per cent of its total water power resources believed technically feasible for development. More than 100 million acres of land in the U.S., one-fifth of the land now available for crops, have been made arable by drainage practices.

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