

Is That So?

By EUGENE BURNS
Ranger-Naturalist

Mention fox and what do you think of? Thanks to fable, legend and myth—unless you've had personal experiences of your own—immediately, there comes to mind a handsome sly cunning creature. Thanks to our literature, Reynard has been outwitting his dull enemies for centuries by invariably coming up with superior resourcefulness.

This master strategist supposedly had no end of tricks up his sleeve. He can double back on his tracks, run upstream in a brook, dash over the backs of flabbergasted cattle or sheep with glorious abandon to elude his grounded pursuers. Odds that might well dismay the most resourceful human are as nothing for him to solve.

Actually, this animal is not nearly as smart as tradition and folklore would have us believe. In fact, let's take some of the commonly-believed tricks apart. Ernest Seton Thompson in *Wild Animals I Have Known*, states that a fox will run along the rails just before a train is

often Fido chases off into the water after a stick he will still come back with his fleas. Fleas remain close to the skin where there would be enough air imprisoned by the fur to prevent wetting for some time. And it takes time, even for a fox, to wet clear to the skin.

Furthermore, most aquatic mammals with fur have fleas—such as beaver, muskrat and otter—and they spend a good share of their life submerged.

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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, or 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; care of Medford Mail Tribune, Box 575, Sausalito, Calif.



due, knowing that his scent—always poor on iron—will be destroyed by the train and knowing also that there is always a good chance of the hounds being killed by the engine.

Now it was never made clear to those who carefully and objectively analyzed this fox story just where the fox procured a copy of the railroad timetable or how he so conveniently managed to get his enemies started in pursuit of him precisely at train time.

The same author states that Reynard took poisoned bait intended for his personal consumption and slyly dropped it into the burrows of certain animals that had offended him.

Cottontail Makes Headway

This is not to say that during hunts, the fox has not demonstrated unusual wiles to throw off his pursuers—backtracking and then leaping to one side and making off in a new direction, or running through a shallow brook—but look, doesn't a no-count dumb jackrabbit do just about as well? And have you ever heard of a jack being eulogized? No, indeed—the jack is not a matter of tradition. But then there is the little cottontail, thanks to a series of stories, who is making good headway in building up a lore of uncommonly good sense.

Quite recently an expert wrote an account in one of the leading weekly magazines telling of an artful fox in southern Illinois who got rid of his fleas by cleverly backing slowly into a pond while holding a tuft of wool in his mouth (in other versions it is a piece of wood), slowly submerging tail first. The fleas (also clever beasts) to save themselves came forward onto the piece of wool (or wood), which was then set adrift by the fox.

Story Goes Way Back
This story, with embellishments, appears also in the scholarly book, *Living Mammals of the World*. But it fails to make all the acknowledgements. These go back to 1643 when John Swan mentions the story in his *Speculum Mundi*; and before that, when an earlier writer Olaus Magnus (1490-1558), a Swedish ecclesiastic and historian, wrote about it.

But now, anyone who has been around a dog with fleas knows that regardless of how

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HILTS

Fire Destroys Hilt's Home

By MRS. M. F. CAVIN

Hilts—A fire, believed to have started from faulty wiring, destroyed the home of Mr. and Mrs. Carl Woodruff and children about 11:30 p.m. Tuesday. The family's personal belongings were destroyed.

The Hilt's volunteer fire department, using both trucks, was unable to save the structure. Firemen concentrated on saving neighboring houses and buildings.

Mr. and Mrs. Woodruff are former residents of Round Mountain, Shasta county, and have lived here a short time. He is employed in the sawmill.

Mr. and Mrs. D. Baratto of Mt. Shasta were recent visitors at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Joe Foggia.

Mr. and Mrs. F. Gargini and Carlo Favero of Mt. Shasta were recent visitors at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Pete Favero.

Mrs. Elizabeth Maquire spent Wednesday night in Yreka, after attending a family dinner for her daughter, Mrs. William Kleaver. The dinner was given by Mrs. Rod Baumbach.

Mr. and Mrs. M. Zannotta of Denver, Colo., visited Sunday at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Joe Foggia. Mrs. Zannotta and Mrs. Foggia are cousins.

Mr. and Mrs. Jake Lindner of Mt. Shasta were dinner guests at the home of Mr. and Mrs. M. Sief Sunday.

Nick Fremeyer made a business trip to Chester recently. During the Labor day holiday Mr. and Mrs. Fremeyer and family visited in Alturas.

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Ayres camped out at Medicine lake during the Labor day holiday.

Guests at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Itala Marin and family last week were Mrs. Marin's cousin, James Hilburn, and daughter of Portland.

Mrs. William Wiley attended a Girl Scout meeting in Yreka Wednesday. Several directors from Medford were discussing the budget for the Girl Scout troops.

Guests Friday at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Claude Wasson and family were Mrs. E. Foster of Hawkinsville and Mrs. M.

Dunlap and children, Roddy, Ellen and Leslie Ann, of Stockton.

Guests at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Pat Lynch this week are Mr. and Mrs. Ben Lynch of Sacramento.

Dinner guests Friday evening at the R. M. Cavin home were Mr. and Mrs. Delbert Black of Yreka.

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Trinca and daughters, La Wana and Nancy, recently went on vacation trip along the Oregon coast.

The Contract Bridge club met Thursday afternoon at the home of Mrs. Al Simmen. Those present were Mrs. Evan Maupin, Mrs. Frank Graves, Mrs. M. G. King, Mrs. Ernest Spannaus, Mrs. Fred Haynes, Mrs. William Wiley and Mrs. Malcolm Robinson. High score was won by Mrs. Simmen, second high by Mrs. Maupin, and low by Mrs. Malcolm Robinson.

The Hilt's Elementary school picnic was held Monday, Sept. 9, at Jackson hot springs. Each family brought a potluck lunch. Ice cream and soda were furnished by the PTA. Transportation was furnished by the various parents.

Mrs. Robert De Avilla and children of Yreka spent Tuesday

Friday, September 13, 1957

Presley Girl Friend Denies Engagement

Memphis, Tenn.—That 18-carat sapphire ring pretty Anita Wood is wearing, a gift from Elvis Presley, is not an engagement ring, she says.

It was rumored around Memphis, where the 19-year-old blonde met Presley less than a year ago, that matrimony was pending. But Miss Wood said Wednesday it just isn't so.

"Just a gift," Miss Wood said when the Memphis Press-Scimitar called her in Hollywood to check out the rumor.

The rock 'n' roll entertainer bought the ring in Hollywood while dating Miss Wood, it was reported.

at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Groves.

Mrs. Roy Rushton and son, Ronnie, of Medford visited at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Dick Williams Tuesday. Mr. and Mrs. Williams returned to Medford with Mrs. Rushton where they will spend several days.

Mrs. Agnes Cunial, who has spent the past three months in Yreka with relatives, returned home Sunday.

MEDFORD (OREGON) MAIL TRIBUNE—THREE

CENTERLINES EXPENSIVE
Baton Rouge, La.—Road officials say Louisiana motorists may take white highway centerlines for granted . . . but it costs more than \$300,000 a year to keep them there.

BOARD CHAIRMAN DIES
New Haven, Conn.—Charles R. Robbins, 70, chairman of the board of directors and former president of A. G. Spalding & Bros., Inc., sports equipment manufacturers, died Sunday.

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