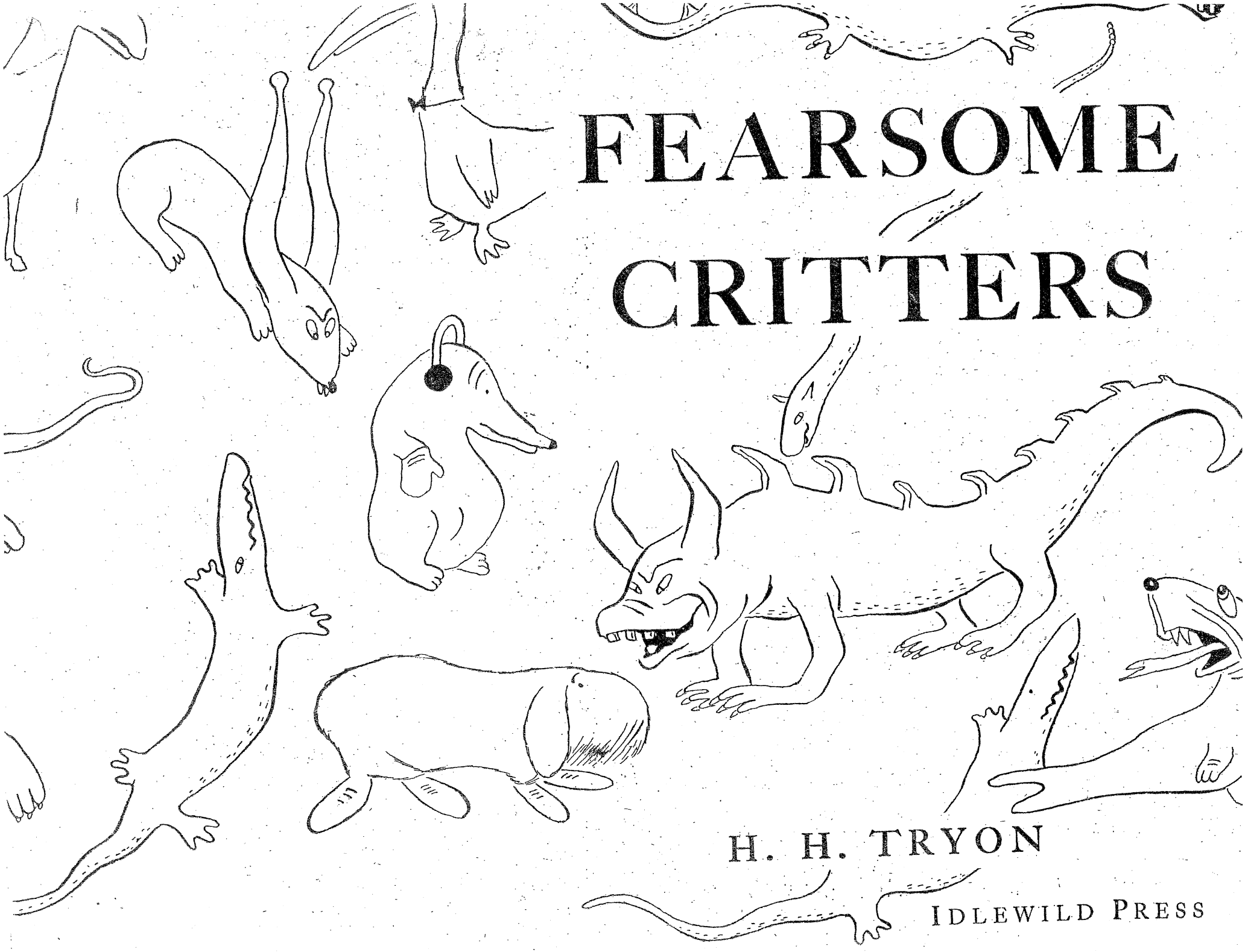

# FEARSOME CRITTERS

H. H. TRYON

IDLEWILD PRESS

# FEARSOME CRITTERS

BY

HENRY H. TRYON

ILLUSTRATED BY

MARGARET RAMSAY TRYON



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CORNWALL, N. Y.

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## DEDICATION

*To those who have held the bag on a Snipe hunt, who have jumped sideways at the call of the Treesqueak, who have studied the trail of the Side-hill Gouger, and who perhaps have had a ring-side seat at a Badger fight, this little collection is sympathetically dedicated*

# PREFACE

The thought of preserving the various legendary woods varmints in some permanent record form first came to me about thirty years ago when making a cruise of Sandy Bay Township for the late Roy S. Marston. It occurred to me then that these tales, originating chiefly in the logging camps and on the drives were a definite bit of American folk-lore, an integral part of the history of American logging and lumbering and well worth recording. So I have been collecting them for a good quarter-century.

Tall tales of adventure and hair-breadth escapes have always sprouted wherever the lumberjack has started timber operations. The logger, the North woodsman in particular, is an imaginative fellow, with an inborn fondness for practical jokery of various sorts. Hence, with the adventurous yarns there has appeared an array of woods animals frequently terrifying, sometimes vicious, sometimes merely unique, whose appearance, characteristics, habits and habitat have for long been told and re-told with a gradually increasing degree of astounding detail for the puzzlement and temporary terrorization of some camp greenhorn.

It is by no means unlikely that a number of these tales received their initial impetus through a woodman's being well startled by some odd noise, or perhaps by sighting some queer shape while travelling after sun-down. Such an experience, we've all had them, is as a rule quickly followed by a feeling of relief coupled with gratitude that our temporary panic had no witnesses. And the rest of the trip back to camp has often been employed in weaving the whole incident into a carefully-embroidered tale to be tested out at the first opportunity.

My first personal introduction to a specific "critter" was while fighting fire on Attean Lake in 1908. Dick Fisher had landed me a summer job in the woods, but the cruising work had been suddenly interrupted by the bad fires which broke out that year. I was utterly new and green; but it just happened that the principal introducers, Sam Clarke and Walter Laurison (I wonder where they are now?) selected another youngster as a victim. This lad opened the way by remarking that on the trail back to camp that afternoon he had heard an extraordinary, screech-like cry which he could not identify. Given this opening, the team-play developed between the two older men was simply marvellous. "How did it go?" inquired Sam, full of seeming fatherly interest. "Oh, I don't think I could imitate it," replied the lad. A moment's pause. "Reckon it was one o' them tree-squeaks," put in Walter at the precise psychological moment; "they're common hereabouts in July." "What's a tree-squeak like?" asked the victim, deliberately putting his foot in the trap. "Wa-al—" drawled Sam, and the game was on. It was like watching two highly skilled bridge players. Sam would lead with a colorful bit of description, and Walter would follow suit with an arresting spot of personal experience, every detail being set forth with the utmost solemnity, and with exactly the correct degree of emphasis. At the end, so deftly had the cards been played that the listener was completely convinced of the animal's existence. This method of presentation is widely used. For the best results, two narrators who can "keep the ball in the air" are necessary, and perhaps an occasional general question is tossed to someone in the audience, such inquiries being invariably accorded a grave, corroborative nod.

The surprising number of helpful letters received brings out several interesting points. It is clear that nearly all these mythical creatures originated, and still flourish to a considerable extent almost wholly in the Northern Forests.



Despite diligent inquiry, I have brought to light very few Southern species. It is stimulating to speculate on the reason for this scarcity. Of course, woods labor in the Southern camps is chiefly colored. Isn't it possible that the Negro woodsman or logger, while possessed of plenty of imagination, is perhaps not given to this particular form of mental horse-play? His imaginings art apt, I think, to follow more serious lines, with a considerable dash of definite superstition in the mixture, and such fearsome creatures as his mind may conceive are very likely to be accorded a firm belief.

Another point for discussion is the actual age of these tales. I must admit that thus far I have not found a satisfactory answer. Some of my correspondents hold that they go back over many years, perhaps a century or longer, while others, men who were working in the woods in the '70's and '80's, state that they began to hear such yarns only along towards the end of the nineteenth century. It seems clear, however, that the Hodag, the Treesqueak and the Side-hill Gouger were well known in the Northeast fully seventy years ago, and have since migrated westward, exactly as the logger followed the virgin timber, across the northern tier of states to the West Coast. Granting the existence of these particular animals, it is not unreasonable to assume that they had various other companions. But whether they flourished as far back as the days when Thorea climbed Mount Katahdin I cannot say. It is a difficult point to prove, and perhaps I am yielding to the will to believe, but I do feel it to be more probable than otherwise that many of these tales are really quite old, and have been handed down verbally through the years, just as the old Scottish and English ballads have been passed on down in the Southern Appalachians. It is common knowledge that America has grown at a tremendous pace, so rapidly in fact, that much true folk-lore was born, lived and died with

no chance of ever becoming a part of our permanent records. Without doubt this has happened to a good bit of woods lore. Things have just come about too fast.

In sifting the host of letters sent me, I have tried to sort out such animals as seem to enjoy, or to have enjoyed, a fairly wide distribution. Creatures of limited range and only occasional appearance, unless possessed of highly unusual qualities have not been included. For instance, I think I should mention here, but without detailed description, the Cross-feathered Snee, Montana, which can exist only in sub-zero weather, the Linkumsluice, Maine, the Snow Worms, Washington, and the Timberdoodle of Pennsylvania which bites savagely and won't thereafter open his jaws until he hears thunder. With these should appear the Celofay of Maine. This is a unique beastie, and it is only after much consideration and chiefly because he doesn't seem to be any too well vouched for that I have not accorded him a place among the "regulars." He is a sort of phantom wildcat equipped with ventriloquistic powers, and can easily project his fearsome squall clear across a section, right up beside you, in fact. Or he can reverse the situation and toss his yowl into some distant cedar swamp while he stealthily stalks you with malicious intent. His name reveals his French-Canadian origin, being an obvious corruption of "C'est la fée."

To the foregoing should be added the Will-am-alone, Maine, a small, squirrel-like animal of playful but vicious tendencies. He loves to roll up little balls of poisonous fungi and drop them on the eyes or in the ears of sleeping woodsmen, causing strange dreams. Parties well foxed with alcohol seem to be his especial prey. Then there is the Pomola, the Mount Katahdin area, the Wunk, mentioned in Riley's poem "The Raggedy Man," the fearsome Wendigo of Canada to which Dr. Drummond has devoted an entire poem, the Wympsis and the Whopperknocker. You



can't shoot this last-named fellow. His vision is so keen that he can see the sparks in the chamber of your rifle before the bullet leaves the muzzle.

I have striven to confine myself wholly to the woods animals. There are numerous other fields open for similar exploration. The lore of the cow-camps, for example, is richly studded with glittering accounts of most peculiar varmints. But I have consciously not included any of these, finding plenty to do in my own territory, that of the logger and the lumberjack.

To make proper and complete acknowledgment of the many courteous, interested and helpful suggestions I have had would fill a fair-sized volume. My most sincere thanks are herewith expressed to all of these good people who have helped make this book, and in particular to Mr. William T. Cox for permission to use certain information from his book "Fearsome Creatures of the Lumber Woods," to Professor Fay Welch of the New York State College of Forestry Faculty, to Mr. B. B. Bickford, the veteran guide of Gorham, N. H., who has generously laid at my disposal his years of experience in the White Mountains, to Mr. Lake Shore Kearney for permission to employ certain abstracts from his book, "The Hodah," to Mrs. P. M. Clemens for the fascinating data on the Yamhill Lunkus, and to Professor Charles E. Browne of the University of Wisconsin Faculty for a whole tote-load of accurate and authentic facts. Nor should I omit mention of the "Idaho Statesman," and Mr. N. C. Villeneuve, who has granted me leave to reprint both the story and the picture of that amazing feline, the Wampus Cat. Without the help of these, and literally dozens of other kindly folk, my collection would have remained a rather thin affair.

HENRY H. TRYON.

*The Black Rock Forest,*
*Cornwall-on-the-Hudson,*
*New York, U.S.A.*

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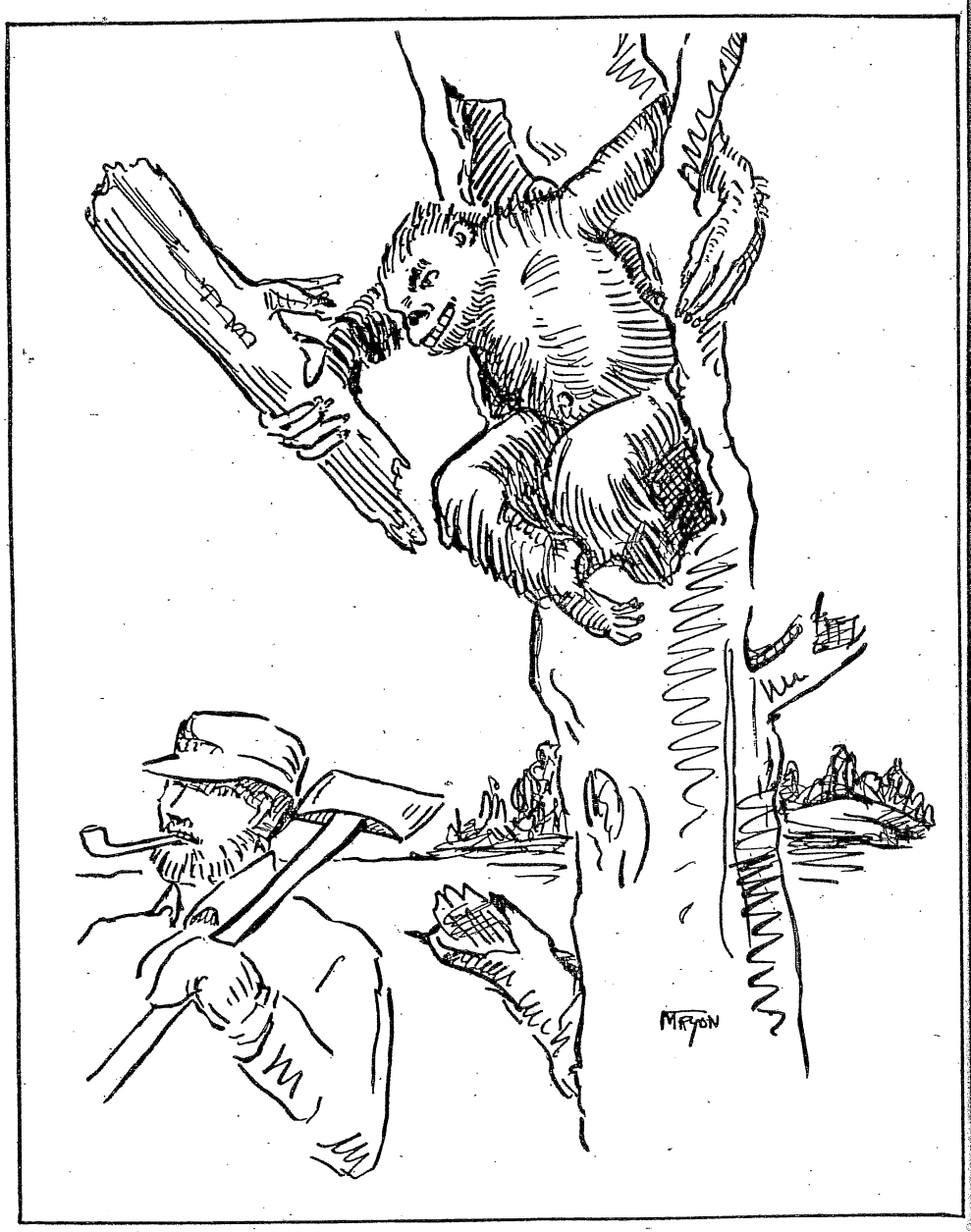
# FEARSOME CRITTERS




AGROPELTER



# THE AGROPELTER

*Brachiipotentes craniofractans*

A peevish quadruped, highly resentful of the logger's intrusion upon his woods home. Common, and well-known from coast to coast, but limited to the Northern forests. The beast's ugly disposition is attributed in part to its diet of Hoot-owls, High-holes, and dozy wood.

As with many of these elusive, nimble creatures, a detailed description is lacking. But it is fully established that the Agropelter (sometimes called the Widow-maker) has a sturdy body topped by a villainous, ape-like countenance. His outstanding equipment is a pair of long, muscular arms. Stealthily reaching out from his lair in the top of a hollow tree, he can snap off a heavy dead limb and either drop or hurl it with deadly accuracy on the pate of the woodsman passing beneath.

He is a marvellously rapid tree-climber and traveler, swinging himself, acrobat-fashion, from limb to limb. In picking a home site, he selects a tree having numerous dead branches and a dozy upper bole, and which stands handy to a frequently traveled trail. He quickly eats out a roomy nest. The pups (born on February 29) always arrive in odd numbers.



AXE-HANDLE HOUND

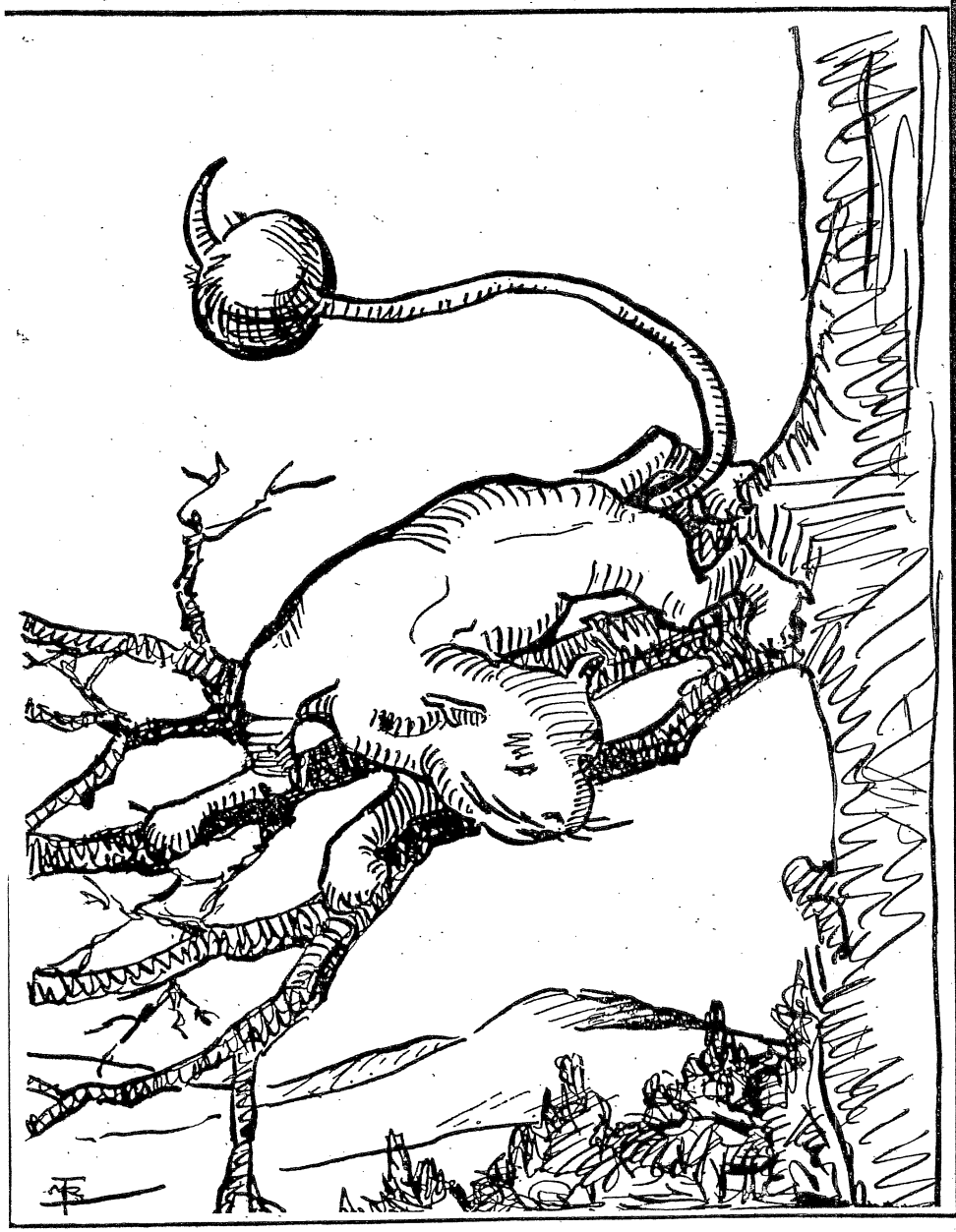


# THE AXE-HANDLE HOUND

*Canis consumens*

The bane of supply and depot camps on Northern logging operations. Has a head shaped like a Peavy axe. The body is slender and axe-handle shaped, with short stumpy legs. Looks a good deal like a dachshund, but really bears a closer resemblance to B. B. Bickford's bureau dog.

Distinctly a nocturnal prowler. Frequents the camps after nightfall, hunting for axe and peavy handles, of which it is voraciously fond. One hound has been known to consume two boxes of DB handles and sixteen six-foot peavy stocks in one night's eating. They make nice pets, but are costly to feed. Jim Peters once tamed one. That was short-sighted, because Jim had a wooden leg made from an axe-helve. The only way he could keep his leg whole was to wear it to bed. But he got rid of the pup by feeding it red oak handles, which it dislikes as heartily as any experienced chopper.



BALL-TAILED CAT



# THE BALL-TAILED CAT

*Felis caudaglobosa*

In the early days this feline undoubtedly enjoyed a much wider circulation than at present. Recent surveys indicate that it is now pretty well confined to Harney County, Oregon, and Sullivan County, Pennsylvania. A fair-sized animal of about the dimensions of a wildcat, but with a far more aggressive disposition.

Its chief physical characteristic is a hard, heavy, bony ball on the end of its tail. The feet are clawed as with all true cats, making it an excellent climber; and this species has the stealthy habit of lying out on a limb, and when the unsuspecting lumberjack passes beneath, the Cat drops on its victim and pounds him to death with the ball. In the rutting season the male uses this instrument to call the female by drumming on a hollow log.

This species has occasioned much discussion and peppery argument. It has often been confused with both the Sliver Cat and the Dingmaul. A careful study of the equipment and habits of the three species shows plainly that they are by no means the same. It is quite possible that they are all distantly related; perhaps the Ball-tailed boy is a less highly developed variant of the same phylum.



CACTUS CAT



# THE CACTUS CAT

*Felis spinobiblulosus*

Once very common in the Southwest, and well-known in the Pueblo and Navajo country. Now practically extinct, living chiefly in the memories of the few remaining oldtimers. At one time frequently seen in the great cactus districts, being especially abundant between Prescott and Tucson. Occasionally reported from Old Mexico.

The cat-like body is covered with thorny hair which grows particularly long, sharp, and rigid on the ears and tail. The latter is branched in cactus fashion, these branches having scattered thorny hairs similar to those growing on the ears. The distal portions of the foreleg radial bones are formed into two sharp, knife-like blades which the Cat skilfully employs in making deep, slanting slashes at the bases of the giant cacti. He performs a number of these operations, always in a circular beat exactly 80 chains long. By the time the Cat has completed the circuit, the sap exuding from the cacti first slashed has fermented into a sweet, intoxicating pulque which is greedily lapped up by the Cat as he makes his second trip. By the time he finishes this round he is pretty soundly pickled, and usually waltzes off into the desert, rasping the bony forelegs across each other as an accompaniment to delighted yowls.

In the earlier days when this animal was more common, thirsty Mexicans often trailed him and would anticipate him in making the second circuit. This practice became so widespread that it probably hastened the extinction of the species. Occasional cases have been reported where the Cactus Cat overtook the marauding Mexican and flogged him to death with his spiny tail. Owing to the reddened blebs appearing on the victim's hide, such deaths were usually attributed by the laity to a severe attack of prickly heat. But the oldtimers knew better. It was the Cat.



COLUMBIA RIVER SAND SQUINK



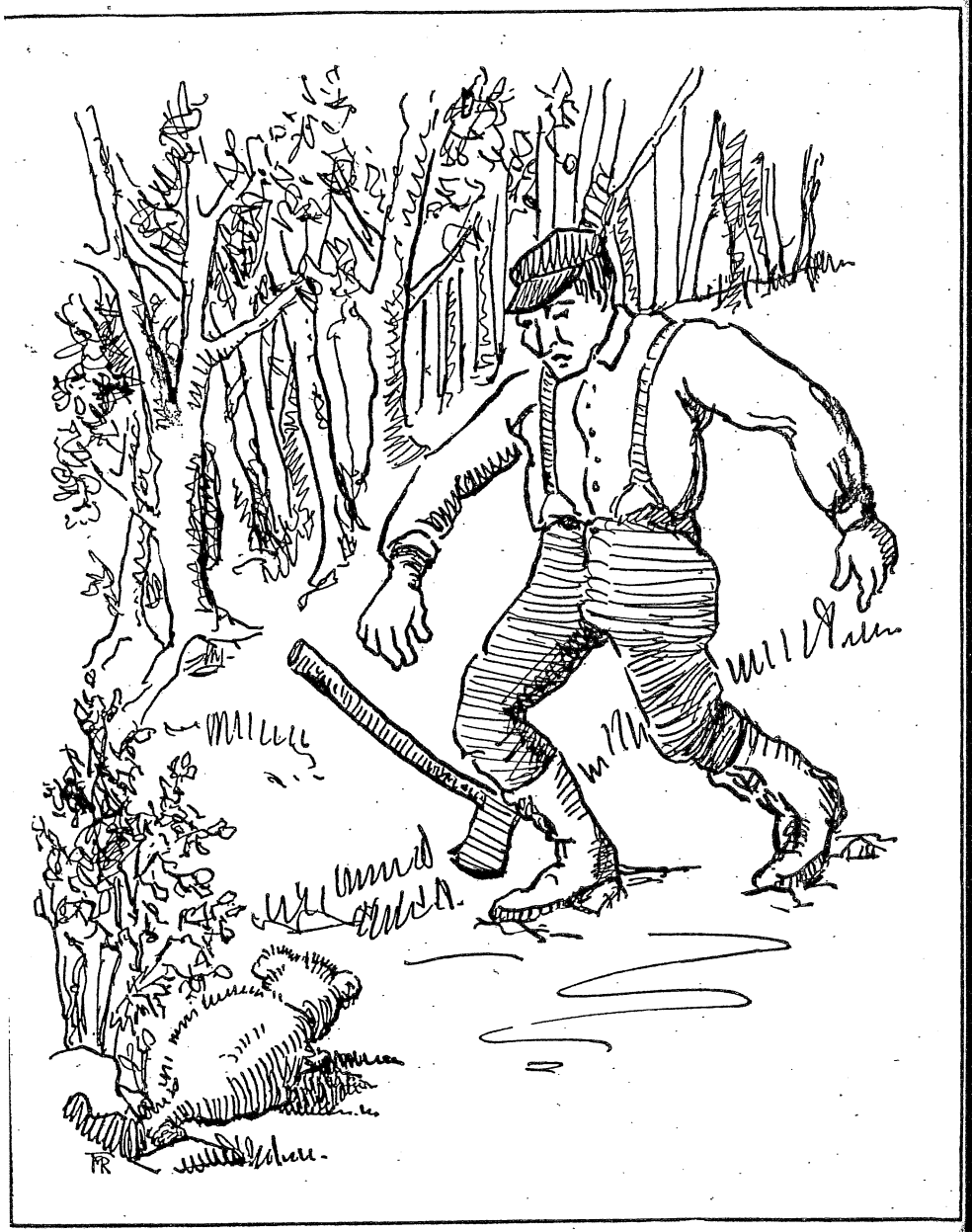
# THE COLUMBIA RIVER SAND SQUINK

*Anguillamvorax coruscens*

Of limited distribution, but possessing most unusual characteristics. Reported to date only by prospectors, hunters and sheep-herders in the remote mountains of Washington. Built somewhat on the lines of a coyote, somewhat on the pattern of a bobcat, but with ears like a jack-rabbit. The tail is long and bushy, and is carried recurved along the back the same as a squirrel's.

A nightly prowler. Emerges after dark and slinks down to the river to fish. The Squink isn't particularly fussy about its diet, but has a great fondness for electric eels. Probably on account of their higher pH content. When hungry it is a timid animal. But its courage returns after feeding, and it will then stalk boldly along the mountain trails until it sights a prospector returning from town. Thereupon the Squink will precede its victim by two or three rods, slowly waving its long tail and touching one ear and then the other. The previous few miles of travel on a heavy feed of electric eels generates a substantial charge of static, and these alternating contacts produce a series of brilliant discharges which invariably please and attract the traveler, who follows and is never seen again.

Several nests of this animal have been located and carefully examined. They were all lined with portions of old inner tubes, while the eggs (for the Squink is oviparous) were shelled with bakelite.



COME-AT-A-BODY



## THE COME-AT-A-BODY

*Quadrupes improvisus*

Reported by Mr. B. B. Bickford of Gorham, N. H. Not found outside the White Mountains. A short, stubby, rather small animal, resembling a woodchuck but having very soft, velvety, kitten-like fur. Harmless, but surprising. Has the terrifying habit of suddenly rushing directly at you from the brush, then stopping only a few inches away and spitting like a cat. A strong mink-like scent is thrown, and the Come-at-a-Body rushes away.



DINGMAUL (PLUNKUS)



## THE DINGMAUL (THE PLUNKUS)

*Saxicatellus vociferens*

Well known in the White Mountains. In fact, above timber line in the col between Mt. Adams and Mt. Jefferson of the Presidential Range there is a conspicuous, flat-topped boulder which for many years has been known as "Dingmaul Rock."

Conclusive, exhaustive researches have clearly proven the existence of two distinct varieties—The Northeastern (S. *vociferens* var. *pulsens*). Both varieties are cat-like, being long, slim, slick, sorry-looking gentlemen having wolf-like pelts. Their bodies are long, with short, powerful legs. As Irvin Cobb has put it, "He's built low to the ground like a carpet-sweeper." The head is round, sessile, feline, with tufted ears and glowing eyes. Neither variety is harmful, but both possess a curious, inquiring nature. They are fond of lying out in open, sunny spots (the top of Dingmaul Rock, for example), and carefully scrutinizing what goes on in the valley below.

The tail is very long, frequently twice the length of the body; but the California variety carries a medium-sized, bony ball on the end thereof. This is used to keep off flies, to pound on dead trees to produce a supply of soft slivers for lining the nest, and, in the mating season, to beat on the male's chest to call his mate. The female also wears a ball a shade bigger than the male's. But she only uses it to bean him with when he gets too obstreperous.

Ranger Bill Gott once watched one of the California variety galloping along the crest of the Siskiyous, with the ball lashing violently from side to side and striking the trees with tremendous force. "That," commented Ranger Bill, "is the biggest kindlin' cat I ever saw."

The cry of the Eastern species is a dreadful, horrendous wail, while the call of the Western variety sharply resembles the toot of a logging donkey. The females of both species invariably whelp on the top of a large, exposed rock.



DUNGAVENHOOTER



# THE DUNGAVENHOOTER

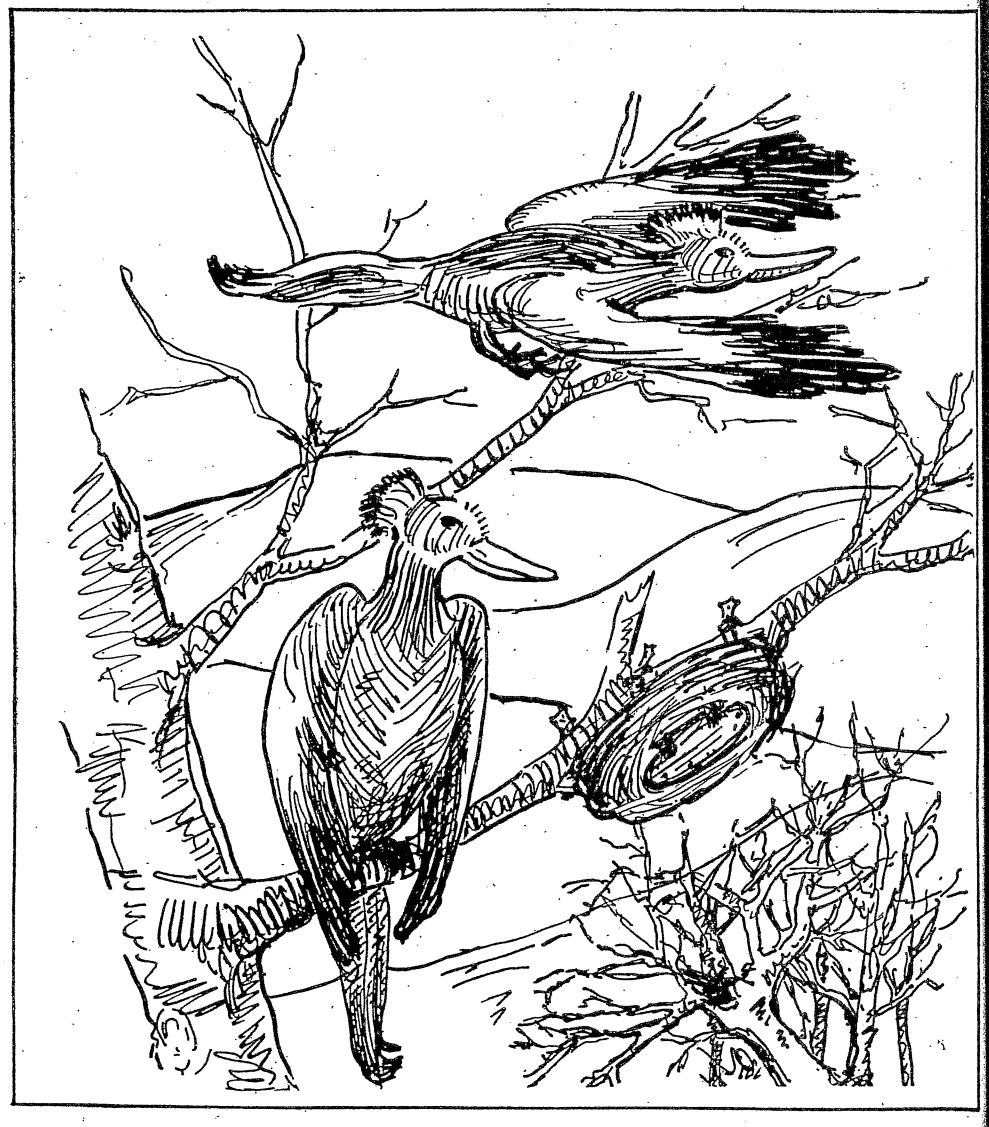
*Crocodilus hauriens*

Formerly quite common from Maine to Michigan. Today only occasionally met with on the Upper Peninsula of the latter state.

A marsh-dweller, dangerous to human beings. Shaped a good deal like an alligator, but curious as to equipment in that he has no mouth. The nostrils are abnormally large, the legs short and the tail thick and powerful. The only cry is a loud snort.

Concealing itself with Satanic cunning behind a whiffle bush, the Dungavenhooter awaits the passing logger. On coming within reach of the dreadful tail, the victim is knocked senseless and then pounded steadily until he becomes entirely gaseous, whereat he is greedily inhaled through the wide nostrils.

Rum-sodden prey is sought with especial eagerness.



FILLA-MA-LOO BIRD



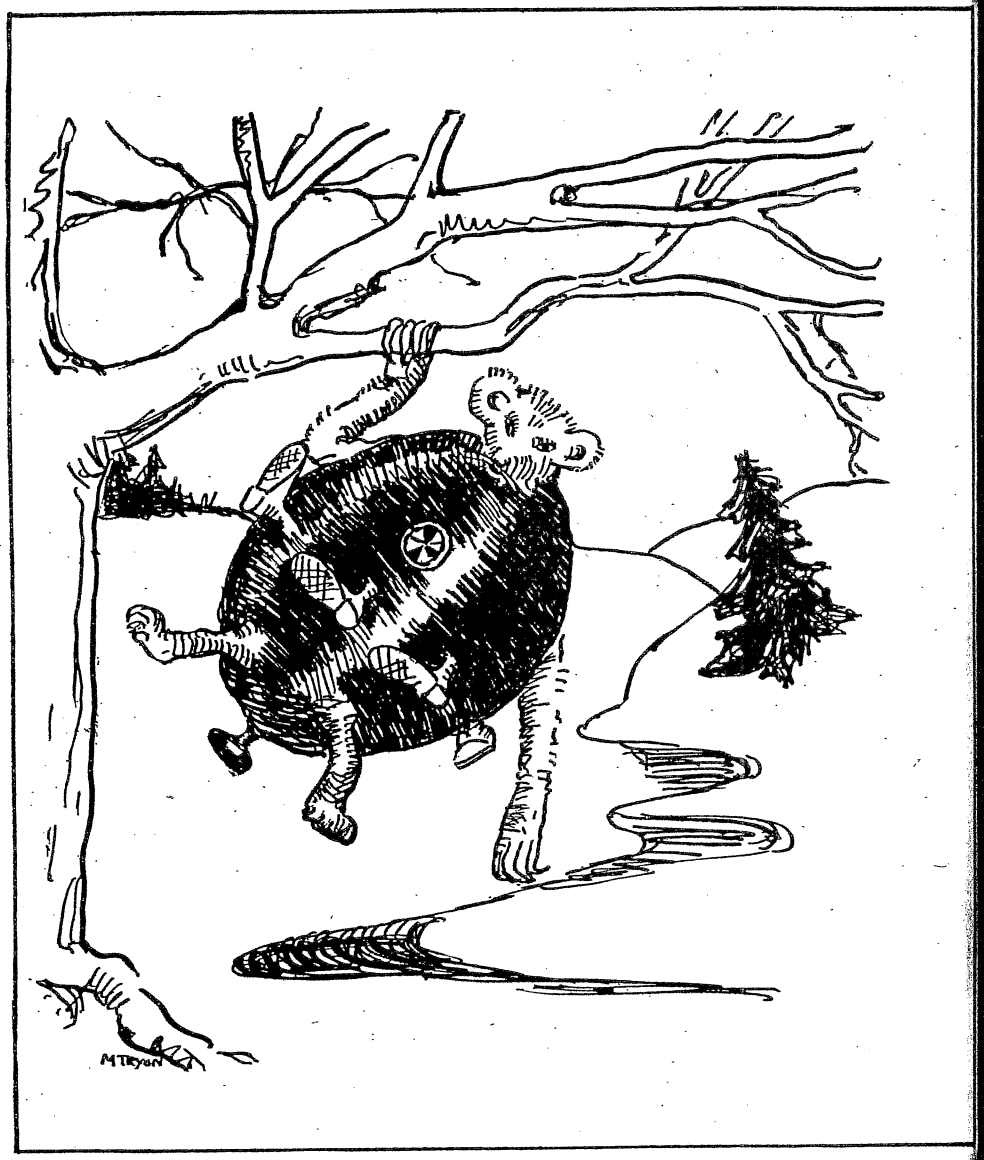
# THE FILLA-MA-LOO BIRD

*Fulica stultusregrediens*

A curious character, varying widely from the usual run of feathered animals. A bird distinctly low in intellectual curiosity, showing complete and consistent indifference as to where he's going. He prefers only to see where he's been; hence he always flies backwards.

A rather rare species, frequently heard of, but seldom seen. Authentic reports are none too common. This is odd, for a turkey-like head on a long bottle-green neck sparsely spangled with large, silvery scales, a black right wing and a pink left one make a color combination hard to miss. The nest is usually built upside down; the eggs (seven to a clutch) are invariably Grade D. The call resembles the clank of a Johnson bar being shoved into reverse.

Variously called the Goofus Bird, the Flu-fly Bird, etc.



GUMBEROO



# THE GUMBEROO

*Fornax rotor*

An uncommon, but nevertheless well-known and thoroughly authenticated animal. Paul Bunyan often met them in the Upside Down country. His description, given to me personally, was as follows: "A pot-bellied body, almost exactly like the bunkhouse stove, even to the umbilical damper, and covered with very tight, tough, black, shiny skin; a pair of long, powerful, monkey-like forearms, and a little round head and no neck. His head sets right down on to his shoulders like a hop-toad in a cool spot. He's got three bowed rear legs, each with a clawed foot clutching an iron ball, the same as an iron stove. There's no speed in these rear legs, but they're handy for wading dumps. For real travel he's got eight pairs of strong, springy legs set around his middle. He's plenty rapid on these. He'll go to a hilltop by swinging from branch to branch with his forelegs, then toss himself out a rod or two, landing sideways on the middle legs and rolling over and over down the hill, moving faster than the eye can see. That's why he's so rarely observed. The hides from the middle legs used to make fine waterproof boots, but they're pretty scarce now."

The Gumberoo was usually found in burnt lands. Practically an indestructible animal. Bullets always bounced from his taut hide, but heat would make him swell and explode. S. W. Allen photographed one, but the negative exploded.



HIDEBEHIND



# THE HIDEBEHIND

*Ursus dissimulans*

A highly dangerous animal, but, owing to its intense aversion to the odor of alcohol, never known to attack an inebriate. One bottle of Uno beer has been proven to be a complete safeguard even in thickly-infested country.

A biggish beast, standing about six feet and walking erect. The slender body makes it possible to hide completely behind the bole of a ten inch tree. The pelt is long, thick, and black, and the tail is carried recurved. Looks like a French sheepdog's. Almost impossible to tell whether the critter is going or coming, and practically hopeless to locate its face—if any. The short, well-muscled forelegs are equipped with grizzly-like claws.

Its food is chiefly intestines. Leaping from its hiding-place with a demoniacal laugh, it swiftly disembowels its victim with one swipe. Sometimes the fiendish howl frightens the prey to death before the blow falls.

The Hidebehind is never found in the open. He always conceals himself behind a tree trunk. His marvellously quick, stealthy gait makes it possible for him to stay constantly behind his prey, no matter how quickly the suspicious victim may spin about in the hope of glimpsing the marauder. The beast can go seven years without eating.





# THE HODAG

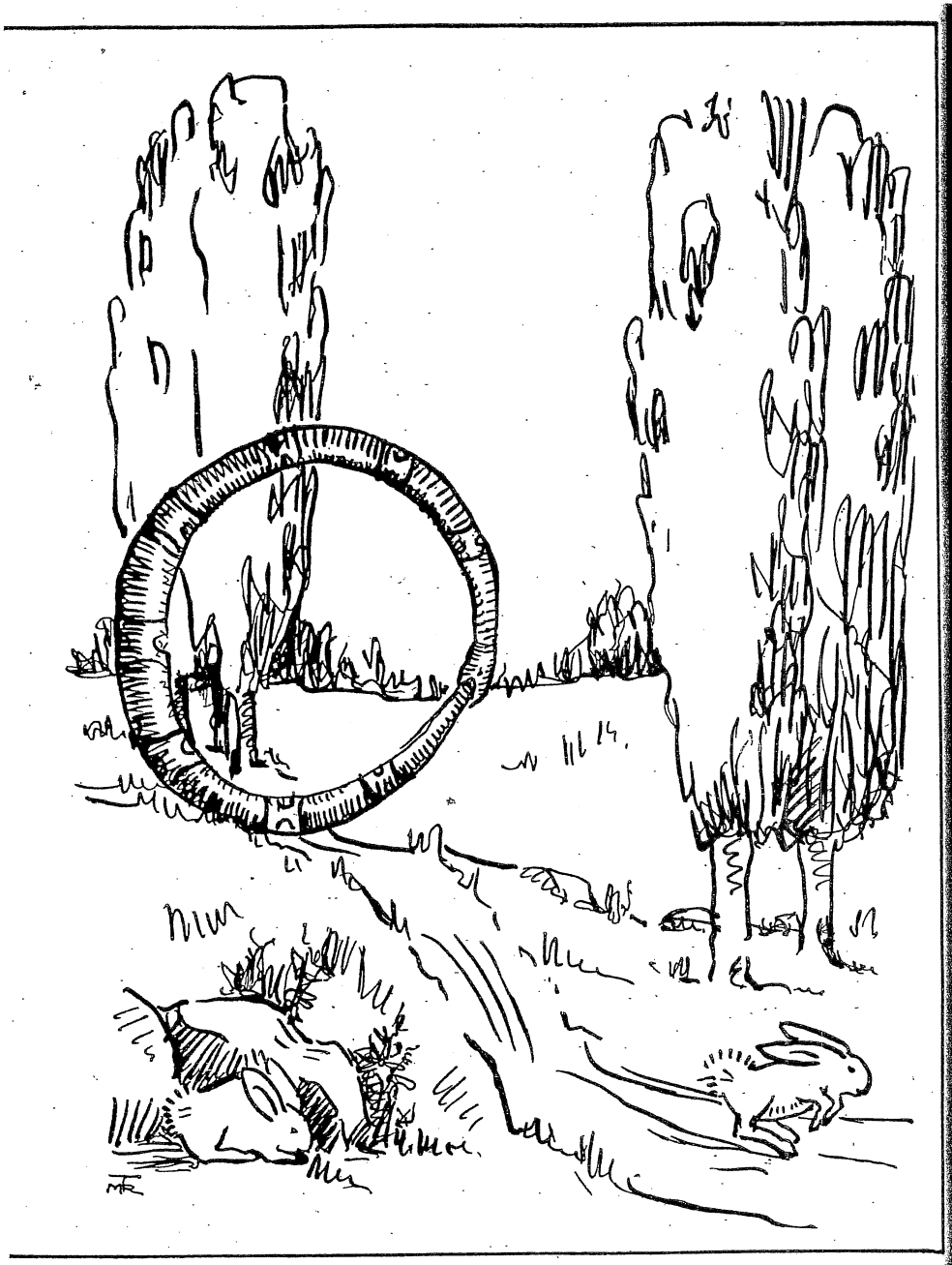
*Deformis corniger lacrimans*

Reported in Maine many years past, and in 1895 captured and positively identified near Rhinelander, Wisconsin, by Mr. F. S. Shepard, the Hodag is indubitably one of the best-known of the larger and more dangerous woods varmints. It is now very rare, probably owing to the increased use of lemons in cookery, for Hodags and citrus fruits are in the same ratio as wolves and wolfbane—probably more so.

A distressingly ugly animal. The knobbledy head wears a pair of prominent, bulging eyes and two heavy lateral horns something after the fashion of a male stag-beetle. The claws are stout and powerful, the tail carries a terminal hook, while a row of jagged, stegosaurian dorsal spines complete the picture. The smaller front teeth were formerly often used for umbrella handles.

The Hodag is fully aware of his upsetting appearance, and is given to frequent fits of bitter weeping. I once had a handful of the extremely rare crystallized Hodag tears, but an acquisitive lady friend collected them, believing them to be fine amber. She had them strung into a neck-yoke—and then went and spilled a Tom Collins on herself. Of course the lemon juice dissolved them instantly.

This fellow can't endure being laughed at. When angry, he is fierce and dangerously aggressive. But a pair of lemons is ample protection against a whole herd.



HOOP SNAKE



# THE HOOP SNAKE

*Serpenscirculosus caudavenenifer*

A well-known menace. Its existence is thoroughly established by numerous reports from highly creditable parties. The characteristics appear to be about the same in all regions. Its habit of tucking its tail in its mouth and rolling at incredible speed in pursuit of its prey, or a fancied enemy, is not duplicated, fortunately, by any other member of the animal kingdom.

The tail ends in a stinger carrying venom of such power that a dose of but 0.003 p.p.m. is sufficient to make even the leather-skinned Hodag turn green and swell up and die inside of an hour. No wonder that folks wise in woods lore are wary of this circular engine of destruction. He may travel on just one cylinder but that's all he needs.

The speed reached in rolling is nothing short of remarkable. A full-grown jack-rabbit is pie for this Snake. A mature Snake, when hooped, has a diameter of 1.5923 feet. He has been clocked, after being enticed on to a cleverly designed rolling metered platform at an r.p.m. of about 1056, or a straightaway speed of some 60 m.p.h. The only way to outrun him is to climb over a fence. The Snake must unhoop to get through.

There are many authentic cases of death from this reptile's venom; possibly the most convincing bit of data is that, in a fit of pique, a Hoop Snake stung one of Paul Bunyan's peavy handles. Of course this handle was a sizeable stick to start with, but the venom swelled it to such dimensions that Paul cut it up into 946 cords of wood. And then the dang stuff wouldn't burn. Just lay in the stove and hissed.



HUGAG



# THE HUGAG

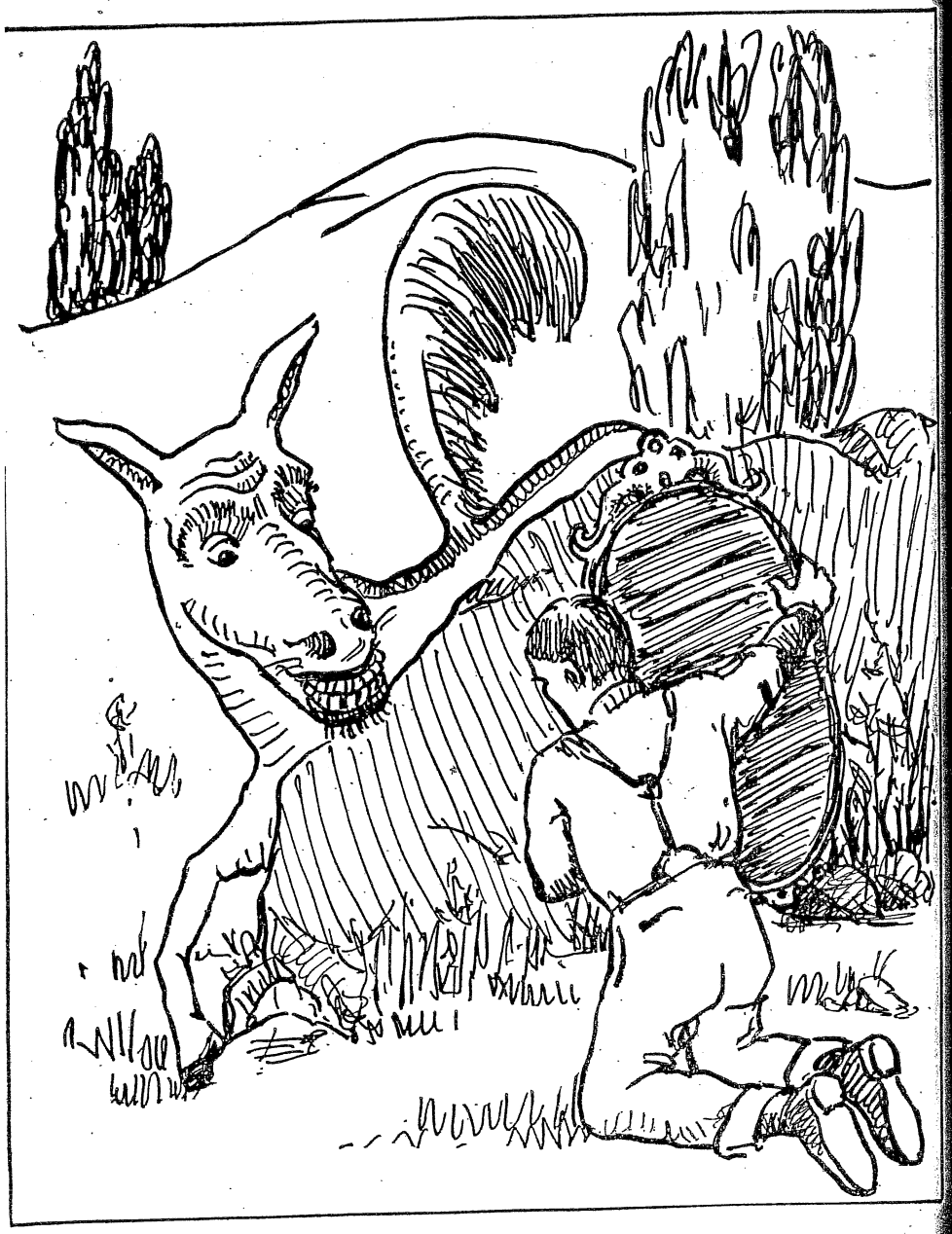
*Reclinor rigidus*

The biggest animal in the Northern forest. When full grown, stands about thirteen feet high and weighs around sixty hundredweight. The snout is warty, and the ears coarse and floppy, like a pair of tired gunnysacks. The head is clean bald and curiously lumpy and bumpy. The best phrenologist in the world would throw in his hand if asked to make a reconnaissance of this party's dome. Instead of hair he wears pine needles; and a steady diet of pine knots makes the pitch ooze constantly from his pores.

The legs lack knee, fetlock, or hock joints so the Hugag can't lie down. Has to sleep standing. Usually braces its splayed feet and leans against a tree to take a nap. Such sleep-trees are often badly bent, usually remaining so.

He is not dangerous; when aroused he merely bristles up and looks like a heap of pine slash. To catch one, just saw a few of his favorite sleep-trees two-thirds through. If he falls down, he can't get up any quicker than a greenhorn on skis. The huge animal does little harm save when he leans against buildings. It is wise to clean them out before erecting camps.

Found around the Lake States, in western Wisconsin, northern Minnesota, and as far north as James Bay. The last one reported killed was up on Turtle River—a young one, weighing barely eighteen hundred pounds.



LUFERLANG



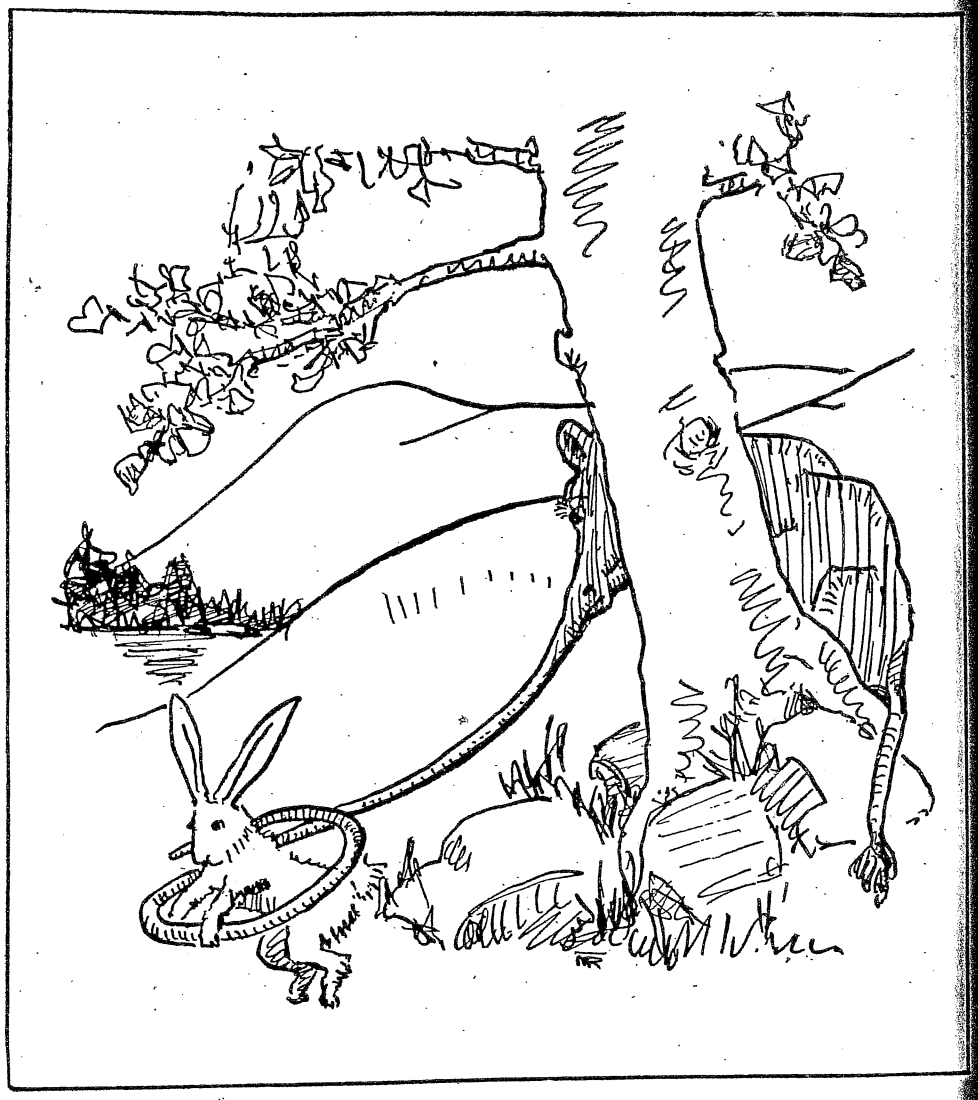
# THE LUFERLANG

*Spinacaerulea tresarticulosus*

A dangerous fellow to meet up with. Very likely to attack without any provocation. Bites but once a year, but the bite is sure death.

Certain unique features make it easy, however, to identify the animal. A dark blue stripe down the spine, a bushy, swivel-jointed tail set in the middle of the back (this appendage is most useful in keeping off the flies) and all four legs triple-jointed are what the traveler should look for. These legs make it possible for the Luferlang to run equally fast in all directions. In case of an attack, the victim should suddenly hold a large mirror up beside himself. The double image will so confuse the beast that he will rush off in disgust.

The biting season usually occurs on July 12. An orange-colored handkerchief conspicuously displayed will invariably afford full protection. Green clothing of any shade should be studiously avoided at this season, as it serves to arouse the animal further.



ROPERITE



## THE ROPERITE

*Pseudoequus nasiretinaculi*

A gregarious animal, about the size of an under-nourished pony. Formerly existed in herds in the Sierra foothills, but not reported for many years. Probably extinct by now.

Extremely active and fast. The skin is leathery, giving complete protection against sharp rocks and thorns, while the flipper-like legs are much over-developed, affording a half-bounding, half-flying gait. The outstanding peculiarity is the rope-like beak and the marvellous deftness with which it is manipulated. Jack-rabbits are frequently run down and lassoed, as is now and then an unwary logger.

There exists a Digger Indian legend that these creatures were the spirits of the old Spanish ranchers of the early days



RUMTIFUSEL



# THE RUMTIFUSEL

*Villosus sumptuosus*

In luring a victim within its reach, this animal employs one of the oldest strategic devices known—that of playing on the cupidity of its prey. Being a rather slow-gaited beast, it has to resort to some form of low cunning.

The Rumtifusel is large, strong, and ferocious. The pelt is fine, long, and thick with a rich color like a mink. The body is oddly flattened—somewhat the way old Hank McGinnis looked after he'd rolled off the porch roof following the annual firemen's dinner, and sort of spread himself out so flat we just slid him edgeways between a couple of shed doors for a coffin. This shape makes it possible for the Rumtifusel to drape himself closely over a stump, or about the butt of a tree standing near a tote-road, in such adroit fashion that he looks exactly like a high-grade fur coat or robe that someone has dropped. Naturally, the passer-by comes over to have a closer look. With a lightning-fast flick of its blanket-like body the Rumtifusel completely envelops its victim. The numerous minute, sucking pores lining the inner ventral surface are promptly brought into action, and in no time at all the bones are sucked clean.

Some of these high-ginger scientists will tell you that those little balls of fur you often see beside an old stump were spit up by owls. Don't you go and swallow that yarn. Those balls are all that's left of the clothes worn by some greenhorn who ventured too near.



SANTER



# THE SANTER

*Nodiocties palustris*

One of the few marauding varmints reported below the Mason and Dixon line. Common in western North Carolina. Rarely dangerous to mankind, but a frequent predator on livestock.

His body is long, covered with reddish long hair, his head is large, round, and bald. His legs and feet are long, and his eyes are small with a mean look. His tail is almost as long as his body, and has eight hard knots in it. Looks like a string of beads. He can swing this flail with plenty of power and skill—enough to knock out a cow or a hog with one slap. And obviously this tail can be effectively used in combat. But he can travel so fast he seldom has to put up a scrap.

Lives mostly in wooded swamps in the neighborhood of small villages where cattle and hogs are kept. A remarkably fast animal, but rarely seen. Its cry is a piercing, baby-like wail. Dogs will seldom run one.

A calf known to have been killed by one of these varmints near Statesville, showed eight distinct bruises, seven on the body and one on the broken foreleg. The hair about each bruise was severely singed.



SIDE-HILL GOUGER AND SUB-SPECIES



# THE SIDE-HILL GOUGER

*Membriinequales declivitatis*

We've had a good bit of perceptibly acrimonious discussion as to the correct vulgate name of this engaging little animal. Some Easterners say "Side-hill Badger," some Californians insist that "Side-hill Winder" is correct, there are some vigorous proponents of "Godaphro," "Prock," and "Side-hill Wowser," while a few technical parties claim that "Gyascutus" is the one and only. The majority of the pleadings are in favor of the "Gouger," so we'll stand on that.

Always a dweller in hilly country. He has to be, since his nigh legs are shorter than the off pair. There are six to eight pups in a litter, and once in a great while some of them arrive with the relationship reversed. After being weaned, these sports are rarely seen again by their orthodox-legged brothers and sisters. Normal Gougers must obviously travel counter-clockwise around the hillside, and in making their daily rounds for food they wear the characteristic, partly gouged-out paths so familiar to woodsmen. These paths were once very common in New England, but to-day they are thought to be most frequently seen in the partly forested regions of the West.

I am indebted to Mr. Bill Ericsson of North Haven, Maine, (and various other points) for the following account of how the Gouger population migrated from New England. "It seems," said Bill, "that the Gouger population was getting too thick. There warn't enough food to go around, and somebody just had to move out. A pair of these ambitious little varmints, one orthodox, one abnormal-legged, got together and decided to strike out for a new location. Of course they could navigate on the hillsides and slopes all right; but they knew mighty well they'd bog down on the flats, so when they struck level going they just leaned

against each other with the longer legs outermost, sort of like a pair of drunks going home from town." This mighty smart adaptation of a natural deformity took them well across the Central States and made it possible for them to found the Gouger colonies now existing in the West.

The well-known Chinese ecologist, Dr. He Hop Hi, has piled together much interesting data on the now extinct Gouger colonies in northwestern Nebraska. There is ample evidence that many years ago the chalk bluffs in this area were populated by numerous such colonies. Careful excavations have revealed successive superposed Gouger civilizations whose arrangement closely resembles those uncovered in the ancient Greek cities by Drs. Tsountas and Manatt. Following centuries of existence here, these animals became geared to travel solely on the south slopes where food was plentiful. But a great climatic shift took place, with the Virginian element pushing northward and limiting the accustomed food supply to the northern slopes. The Gougers migrated thence, but, while food was plentiful, travel was impossible. Fossil remains prove clearly that they rolled to the bottoms of the slopes and starved.

### *M. decl. var. semihirsutus*

This sub-species is found only in the extremely steep hills in West Virginia and to some extent southward in the southern Appalachians. He is similar in most respects to M. declivitatis save that constant brushing of the nigh side against the steep slopes has worn the fur entirely away, leaving the hide so beautifully tanned and polished that it fetches an unbelievably high price for alligator suitcase stock. The off, or downhill side wears a thick thatch of shaggy, curly brown hair much like buffalo pelt. Col. Harry S. Knight of Camp Wood, Arizona, is authority for



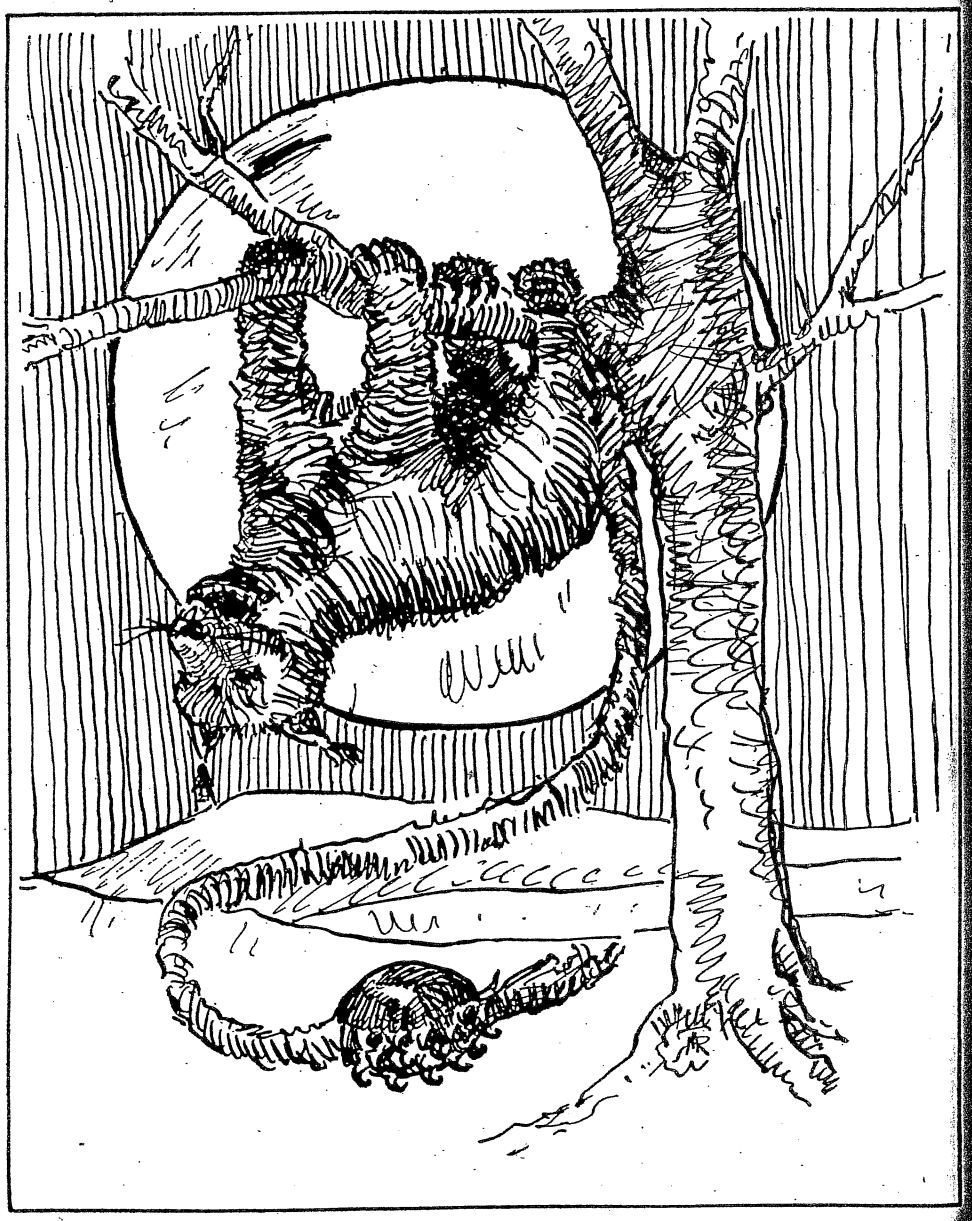
the statement that "a Side-hill Gouger is jest a burrowin' buffalo, sized down and growed crooked."

This species sleeps in a shallow depression with the head pointed counter-clockwise around the slope. In hot weather the fur side is down; in winter it is turned uppermost.

### *M. decl. var. robustissimus*

Another variant species, the Yamhill Lunkus, is not uncommon in Oregon. This is a far larger and more powerful animal than either of the foregoing species. It has now and then been domesticated for farm work. Mr. G. C. L. Snyder gives an interesting account of a visit to Ab Eades' farm on Peavine Ridge where a pair had been broken to draft work. "The Lunki," says Mr. Snyder, "were the size of a nine months old calf, with a neck about as long as a piece of rope. The sturdy legs were normally arranged, but they could be turned about so the animals could travel just like anything in reverse."

Mr. Eades was clearing up a piece of land. He had four big owls (*Bubo eruditus*) trained to carry a rope around the top of a tree to be removed. The Lunki were yoked to this rope, and with one easy heave out would come the tree, roots and all.



SLIVER CAT



# THE SLIVER CAT

*Felis glabraspiculata*

A northern pine-woods dweller. Harmless on the ground, but dangerous when up in a tree. A big animal, sometimes reaching three hundred pounds weight. Its ears are tasselled and its eyes red, with horizontal slits. A mature Sliver Cat carries a tail eleven feet long with a hard ball on the end. Half of this ball is polished smooth, half is studded with a burr-like, barbed growth. Like the Dingmaul, the Cat beats the ball on his chest in the mating season, being careful to use only the smooth side.

But the chief function (or should it be secondary?) of this tail is to obtain food. Crouched on a limb overhanging the trail, the Cat pats the passer-by on the head with the polished side of his ball, and then slaps the burred side into the senseless victim's hide and draws him up to the roost to be consumed.

A Sliver Cat crouched on a limb, with his ball-tail poised for instant action, makes a startling silhouette against the full moon.



SNOW SNAKE



# THE SNOW SNAKE

*Aestatesomnus hiemepericulosus*

During the year of the Two Winters, when the July temperature dropped to —62°, these pink-eyed, white-bodied, savage serpents crossed over from Siberia via Bering Strait. They are bad actors; the venom is deadly, with a speed of action second only to that of the Hoop Snake or the Hamadryad.

Hibernating in summer but becoming active in winter, the Snow Snake coils on a low drift where its pure white color makes it wholly invisible to its prey. One strike is sufficient. Mankind is not often bitten as he makes too big a mouthful. But sometimes a Snake will get over-ambitious. When this does happen, tanglefoot oil is the only known remedy.

"I was treed by a Snow Snake" is still a much-used explanation of a late home-coming.



SPLINTER CAT



# THE SPLINTER CAT

*Nasusossificatus arbordemoliens*

How often do we see big trees that have been snapped off, split, or shattered? Such breakage is frequently erroneously attributed to lightning, high winds, or snow and ice. These natural factors do cause some of this damage, but the experienced woodsman knows well that the bulk of it results from the moronic activities of the Splinter Cat.

This powerful feline, harmless to mankind, is found in nearly all the timbered regions of North America. Like many of the cat tribes, he is strictly a night traveler and hence is rarely observed. But he's often heard, and the abundance of his work is ample evidence of his existence, numbers and activity.

A heavy, chunky body with a short wheelbase, mounted on tremendously powerful legs, with the countenance terminating in a wedge-shaped nose formed of unusually dense bone, the Splinter Cat goes a-roaming in search of hollow trees, since bees, honey and coons are his favorite diet. He climbs a tree, guns himself at the desired bole, and projects himself at it with terrific force. The bony nasal process splinters and shatters the stem, sometimes snapping it clean off. If the Cat finds food in the ruptured trunk, he is temporarily appeased. If not, he goes immediately for another tree. And right there is the big trouble. The Cat doesn't use any judgment in selecting trees, he just smashes one after another until he gets a meal. Unlike more intelligent parties, he doesn't seem to be able to learn the outward signs of a bee or coon-tree.



SQUONK



# THE SQUONK

*Lacrimacorpus dissolvens* Sudw.

Probably the homeliest animal in the world, and knows it. The distribution was once fairly wide, the usual habitat being high plains where desert vegetation was abundant. History shows beyond dispute that, as these areas gradually changed to swampy, lake-dotted country the Squonk was forced to take to the water. Of distinctly low mentality, it traveled constantly counter-clockwise around the unaccustomed marches in search of fodder. With time, it developed webbing between its toes, but only on the submerged left feet. Hence, on entering the water it could swim only in circles, and never got back to shore. Fossil bones dredged from these lake-bottoms reveal that thousands perished of starvation in this manner.

To-day the Squonk is met with solely in the hemlock forests of Pennsylvania. It is a most retiring bashful, crepuscular animal, garbed in a loose, warty, singularly ill-fitting skin. The Squonk is always unhappy—even morbid. He is given to constant weeping over his really upsetting appearance, and can sometimes be tracked by his tear-stained trail. Moonlight nights are best for Squonk hunts, for then the animal prefers to lie quiet in its hemlock home, fearing, should it venture forth, that it may catch a glimpse of itself in some moonlit pool. Sometimes you can hear one weeping softly to himself. The sound is a low note of pleading somewhat resembling the call of the Cross-feathered Snee.



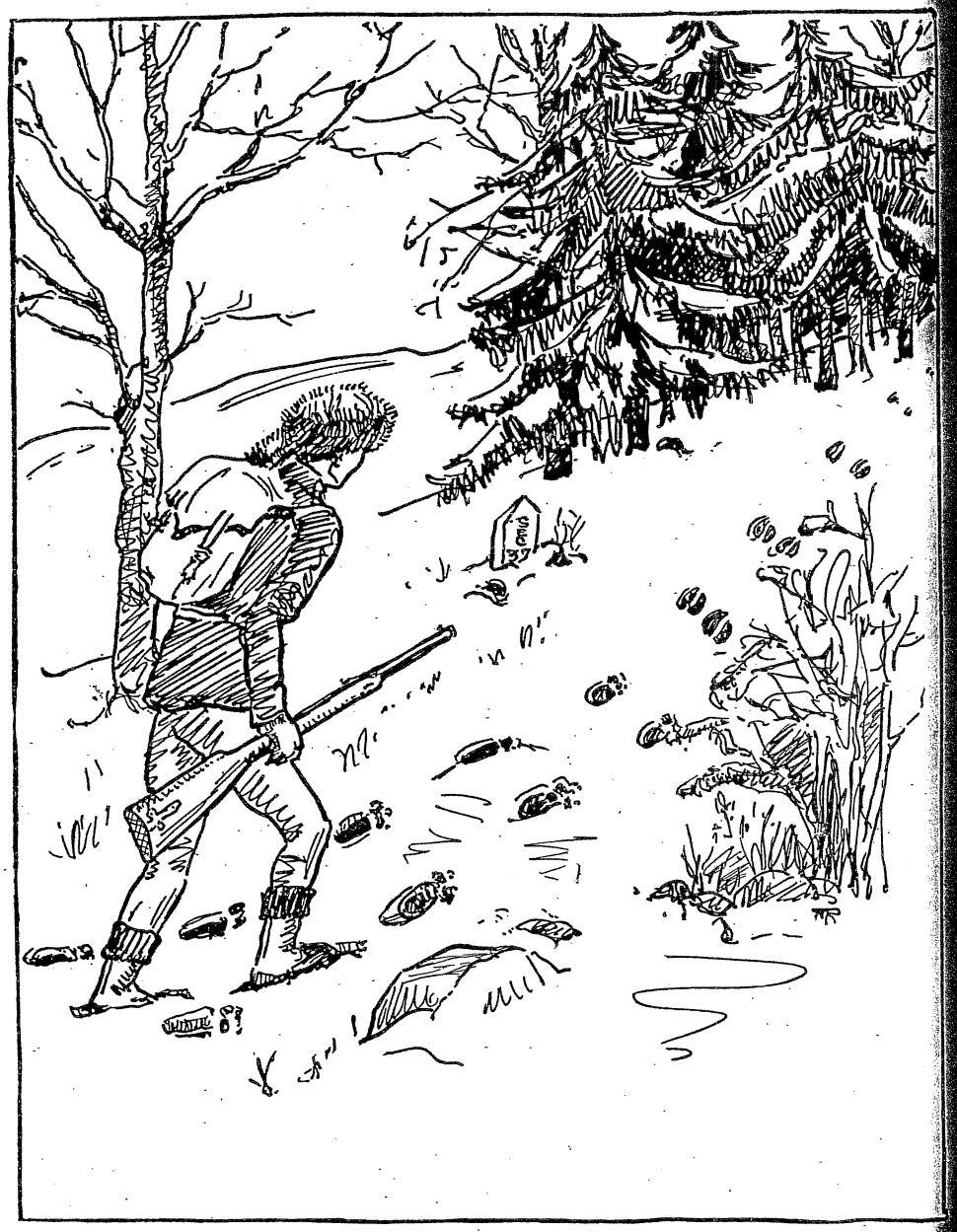
SWAMP AUGER



## THE SWAMP AUGER

*Natator palustris var. perforens.*

This boy, often mistaken for an old snag, is found in fresh-water lakes. He carries a swivelled proboscis especially adapted to boring three-inch holes in the bottoms of boats, and will do so unless stopped. But his work can be easily halted either by tickling his snout or by sprinkling it with cayenne pepper. Either procedure will make the Auger sneeze violently, which he hugely enjoys, and he will then hold his expectant nose tight in the hole until the boat can be beached.



TOTE-ROAD SHAGAMAW



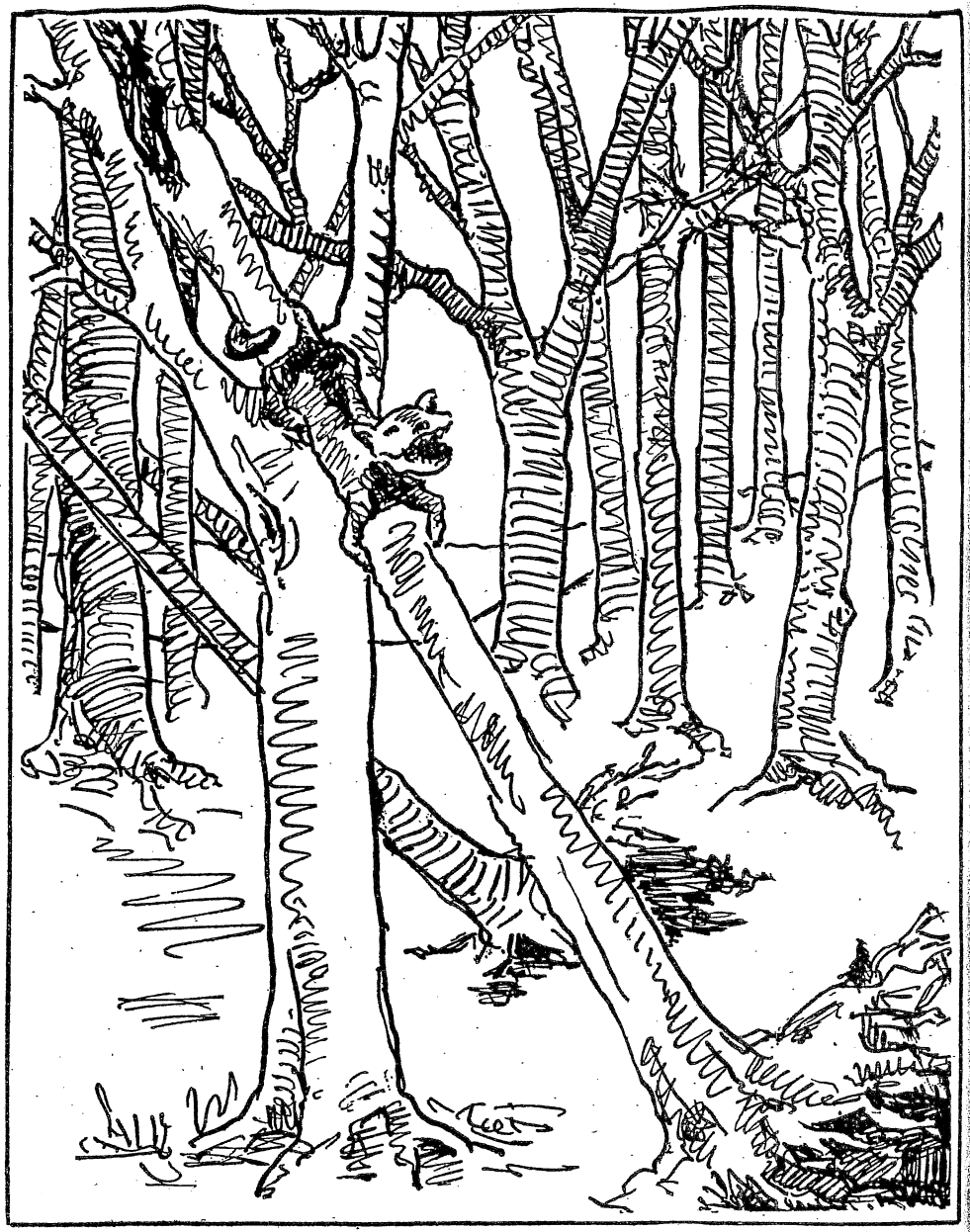
# THE TOTE-ROAD SHAGAMAW

*Bipedester delusissimus* Sudw.

Found to-day exclusively in Maine. At one time common on the Allegash waters, and still reported from New Brunswick. While distinctly forbidding-looking, he is shy and quite harmless.

Pretty much of a puzzle. Nobody seems to have any idea how he originated. His front legs end in bear paws, while his rear ones are shod with moose hooves. He always walks erect, sometimes using the front pair, sometimes the rear pair of legs. The change from bear to moose tracks occurs regularly every twenty chains. The shift in his trail marks has dumbfounded many an inexperienced woodsman and trapper. Since the beast is of low mental stature and probably imitative, it is believed that he makes this regular swap either from watching surveyors or because he can only count up to 440.

His usual beat is along tote-roads, where he eats mittens, rubbers, caulked boots and other forgotten or discarded apparel.



TREESQUEAK

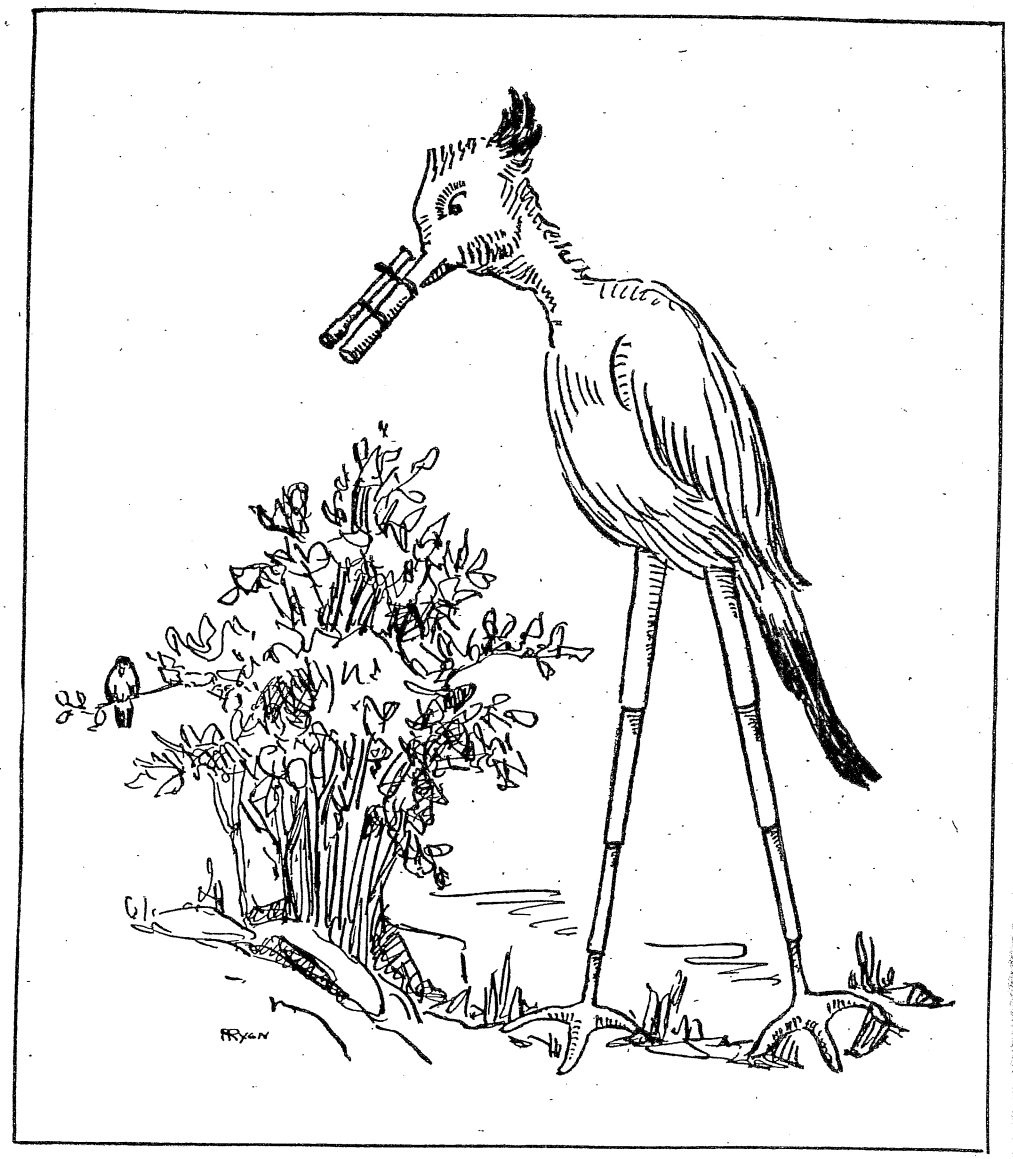


# THE TREE-SQUEAK

*Arborexusta stridens*

Some folks will claim that the mating call of the Tree-squeak is just a dry tree lodged in a "school-marm." But we old boys know better. The sound is made by an untrustworthy animal still quite common in the North Woods. Built something like a weasel, and with the same nice, friendly disposition, he is chameleon-like, and can wrap himself around a tree-trunk and match the bark exactly.

He is sometimes aggressive, but only after a long, dry spell. Has a variety of calls; a whine like a panther, a squeal like a young pig, and sometimes a roar like a bunch of cannon crackers at a shotgun wedding. Look out for him on windy days along towards sun-down.



TRIPODERO



# THE TRIPODERO

*Collapsofemuris geocatapeltes* Sudw.

Usually seen around construction camps and engineering jobs. Seldom found about logging works except where railroad location and construction work is going on.

Birds and other small animals constitute his main diet. He is not a fast traveler, but his extension legs (just like a transit) make it possible for him to prowl close to the ground. On spotting game, he slowly extends these legs until he gains a clear sight over the brush. Focussing the 4-power 'scope, the rifled, gun-like beak is carefully trained on the victim, a hardened clay pellet from the magazine in the cheek-pouch is inserted in the breech and puffed swiftly on its way. The target is instantly knocked senseless, and is then slowly eaten.

Seldom does the Tripodero miss. He is a deep student of ballistics, and has fine judgment of distance, wind and drift.



WAMPUS CAT

# THE WAMPUS CAT

*Aquilamapprehendens forcipe*

Since the first specimen was discovered scratching false blazes on mountain trails, the Wampus Cat has been blamed for a variety of forest tribulations. If a Wampus wades a stream, the fish won't bite for seven days. When the Wampus is on the prowl the only game abroad is the fool hen. The howl of the Wampus on a lonely night will curdle a crock of sourdough. Females of the species may be killed only with a crosscut saw. The males, practically indestructible, carry in their fur the germ of blister rust. Under the influence of a full moon, the glare from their eyes starts forest fires. Their footprints are visible only in solid rock. They steal prospectors' picks to brush their teeth.

Now the Wampus—still abundant in its native Idaho and particularly large and violent during the season when the crop of dudes yields a bushel to the picket-line—has an opportunity to redeem itself. A favorite pastime of the feline is snatching eagles. Trappers on the Salmon River are plagued, they say, with eagles killing deer. The game department is angry with the eagles and seeking a solution to a vexing problem. Eagle lovers—their name has been legion—are angry with the game department.

The simple solution suggested by the Wampus Society, which is composed of every man who has seen a rampant Wampus Cat at dusk menacing a mountain lion with a jackhammer, is that the burden be turned over to the Wampus breed. Once the Wampus reaches the eagle country the feathers will fly. Nature has endowed the marvelous cat with an amazing right forearm. It works like a folding pruning hook on the pantographic principle.

The Wampus lurks on a craggy promontory with its tufted ears aslant like the budding prongs of a young goat and its voice softened from the customary howl of a dis-

franchised banshee to the bleat of a kid. When an eagle approaches, the strange arm shoots out with astonishing speed and direction. The eagle is caught and reeled in.

If the Wampus is hungry, he devours the prey, feathers, beak, and all. If his mood is playful, the Wampus extracts the tail fan only and releases the bird. The feathers are given to the Indians. Wampus Cats are friendly with the red men. That has been offered as one reason why Indians never have turned in a Wampus fur. Primitive trappers of the primitive areas who have caught them declare that the hide runs mostly to quills anyhow and the color is akin to a Christmas necktie.

Origin of the Wampus, on the authority of Stanley Basin mountain men, dates back to the old-fashioned beaver. It seems that a trapper's dog surprised a beaver far from water. There was nothing for the animal to do but climb a tree. But beavers don't climb trees. So it became a Wampus Cat.

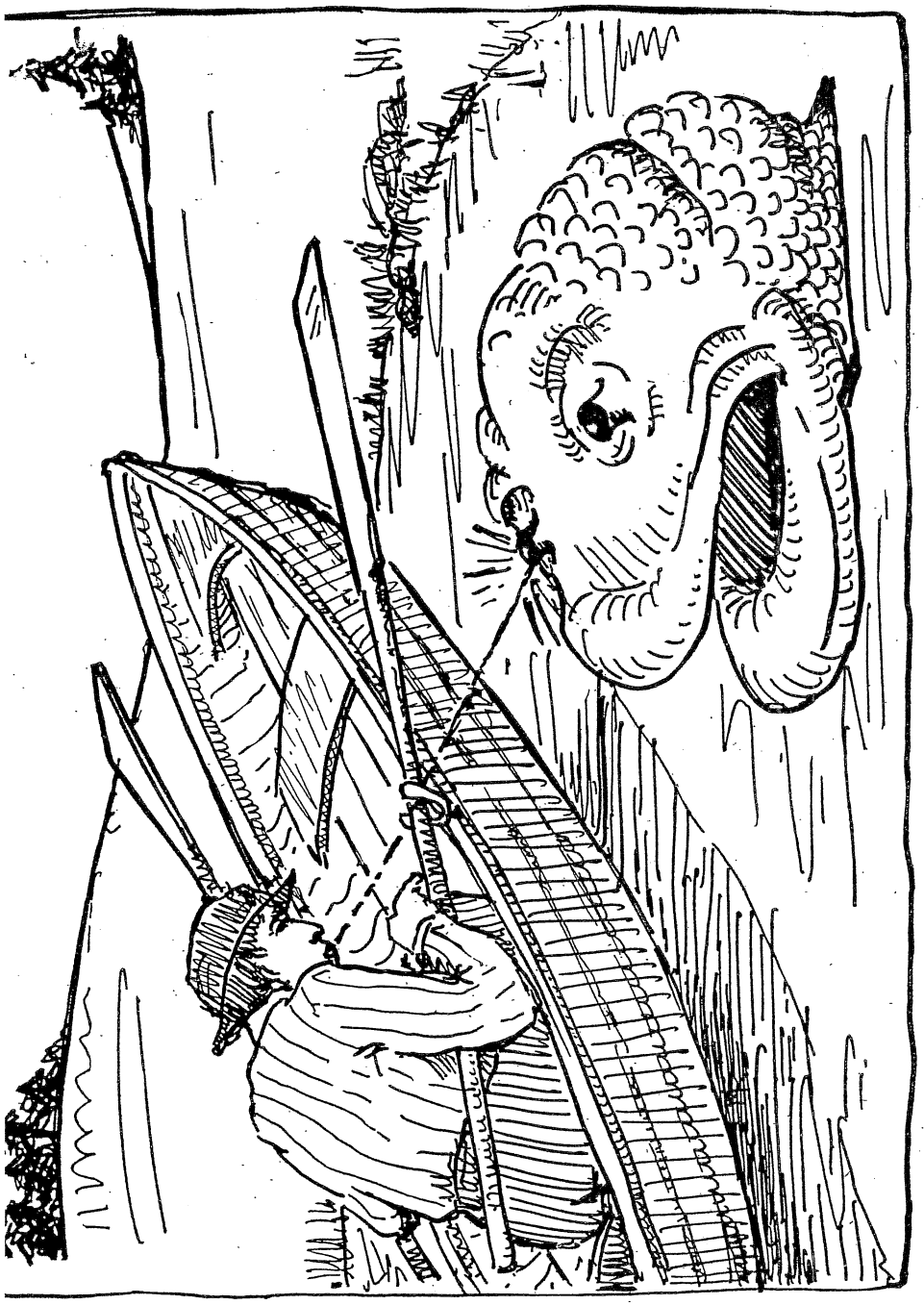
Once lured to the bailiwick of the wicked Salmon River eagles, the quick-witted Wampus will swiftly eradicate the fowls of the air, perhaps not even sparing the wild turkeys recently planted there. A Wampus knows an eagle, but trouble is anticipated when the eagle and the turkey cross into a new species known as the Turkeagle. The Wampus could not tell them apart because he cannot spell.

The biggest puzzle brought to the attention of the Wampus Society is how to dispose of the Wampus once it has exterminated the pernicious eagle. Gorged on its favorite food and happy in the free, wild environment of the Middle Fork, the Wampus might decide to stay permanently. No predator is known that lives on Wampus meat. The Wampus might become a plague worse than the bird it is called upon to exterminate.

Only one Idaho beast has ever put the Wampus to rout. The Whiffenpoofit has the way but seldom the will. The



Whiffenpoofit comes down both sides of a river at once. Even the deadly Wampus cannot make up its mind which flank to attack, so it folds its pantographic arm and resolves itself into a midnight screech.







## THE WHIFFENPOOF

### (Sometimes called the Gilli-Galoo Fish)

*Piscisabsurdus tumescens*

A tasty fish, found only in perfectly round lakes. Hence quite rare. To catch him, row to the exact center of the lake, using the hogyoke to determine position, and bore a square hole in the water. Bait the edge of this hole with a bit of cheese, preferably Brie, Stilton, Liederkranz, or best of all, Limburger. The Whiffenpoof will quickly scent the bait and come for it. When he emerges, spit tobacco-juice in his eye. This will make him so swell with rage that he won't be able to withdraw into the hole, and you can easily net him.



WHIRLING WHIMPUS



# THE WHIRLING WHIMPUS

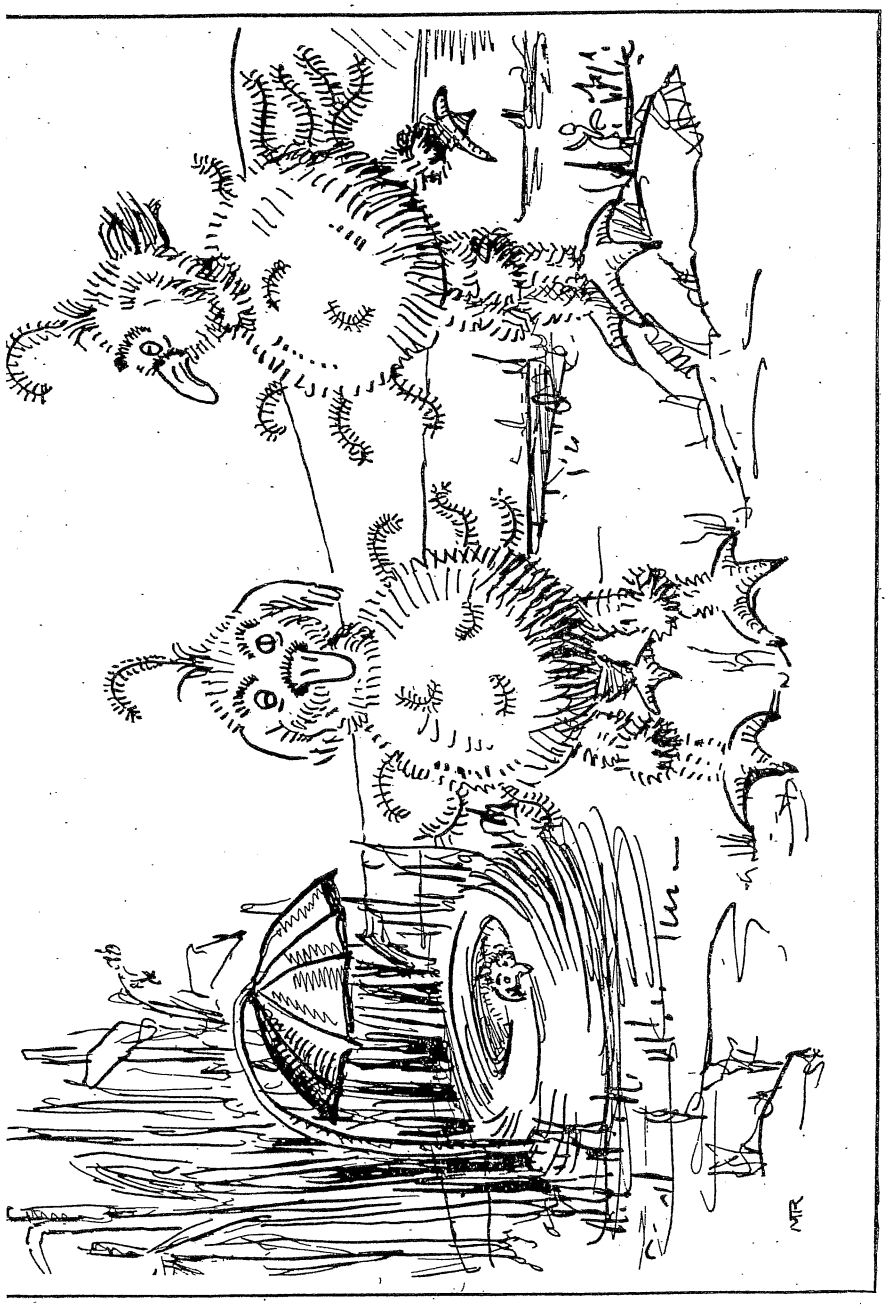
*Turbinocissus nebuloides* Sudw.

Lives along the hardwood ridges of the Southern Appalachians, and is doubtless responsible for the occasional complete disappearance of hikers in that area.

A chunky beast, some seven feet tall, with a body about the size of a coal-oil drum and roughly furred. The equine hind legs unite at the fetlock, terminating in one broad hoof. The front legs, disproportionately long, sinewy and powerful, end in broad, bony paddles. When standing at ease, the Whimpus usually rests these on the ground.

The Whimpus is wholly carnivorous. Deer, bear, oxen, turkeys, humans—they're all grist to his mill. About sundown time he will take a stand by a bend in the trail and begin to whirl on his single hoof. The maximum speed (2150 r.p.m.) is quickly reached and is accompanied by a peculiar droning sound. At top speed the Whimpus is practically invisible, a little dust or a few leaves eddying about being the only indications of his presence. He's often mistaken for a small twister. The unwary, home-bound hiker, on hearing the odd droning, usually starts to investigate it. The instant he steps within the circle of those flying, flailing bony paddles he is deposited thereon in the form of an unctuous treacle. The Whimpus then promptly cuts his throttle, slows down, and crawls under a nearby patch of rhododendron to lick off his syrupy supper.

A Whimpus was recently reported from Nebraska by a chap whose name, age, and previous condition of veracitude are unknown to us. He swears that he saw one at precisely 11:32 P.M., on June 23, 1935, just as he was emerging from a roadside gin-mill We are dilligently seeking confirmation of this report.







# THE SNIPE

*Scolopax inexplicabilis*

A common bird, occasionally seen, but never yet caught. Legions of sharp-eyed young foresters, engineers, cruisers, cookees, rodmen and hard-rock apprentices have made repeated, careful, and valiant attempts to corral one, but notwithstanding the bushels of careful advice and instruction handed out by the older hands in the party, success has not yet been attained. Seldom does the seasoned woodsman make the attempt; he is probably too discouraged to try again. But he is often willing to travel along with the hunting party just to see what happens, or perhaps to offer an occasional word of advice.

Many years ago I was taken on a snipe hunt and was able to get a good look at one bird which strayed near the bag I was so carefully holding. I couldn't get my hands on the little fellow, but I did have time to study him a bit, and I find that my observations tally very closely with a detailed report received from Mr. Howard S. Gardner. Here's the summary.

A bird of marvellous coloration: greens, blues, pinks, and here and there the glint of gold. Wears both fur and feathers, with the fur side inside, like Mudjekeewis. Stands erect, about 17 cm. high on two legs, but has a third auxiliary slightly aft, for use either as a stabilizer or as a starting mechanism. Lacking this additional leg, permanent unstable equilibrium would result. The eyes are fired with a constant, sulphurous glow, occasionally emitting small showers of sparks. One pupil is vertical, one horizontal, and winking is done alternately, keeping the Snipe constantly on the alert. His sharply hooked little beak is mounted on a bull-wheel base like a steam shovel, making possible the capture of insects without turning the head.

All in all, a most interesting and elusive animal. The fur-

and-feathers combination makes the ideal protective coat for the natural marshy habitat. When the Snipe is swimming, the ridged feathers fold back, forming a perfectly smooth outer surface which reduces skin friction to a minimum. With the fur inside, the Snipe possesses a waterproof, fur-lined overcoat.