

Outdoors

by: Kevin Moore and Alexia Barnes

"Familiarity with mammal signs — tracks, droppings, gnawings, scratchings, rubbings, dams, nests, burrows — can open up a delightful field for the outdoor traveler. The mountain climber and the touring skier ... the hiker ... the visitor to national

parks, the wilderness traveller ... the serious field biologist ... by conscious evaluation of what he sees before him." O.J. MURIE

N.B.: At the last meeting of the Gazette staff, there was a general desire to add a bit of humor to the paper. This article written before that meeting will hopefully provide some of it

as well as an understanding for an interesting hobby.)

Before you go off to find your dictionary, scat is simply, nothing more than animal droppings. For those of you who have now continued to read on, the rest already having heard enough shit from professors as well as writing enough of their own so that they are experts in the topic; we shall concentrate on non-human scat. In other words, that scat found in wilderness settings minus yellow toilet paper.

Many of you are wondering why one would write on such a topic let alone study it or its associated practices. Well, rest assured that it isn't simply a recent development of the ecological movement or a perversion of our "new" society or morality but has been studied for centuries. Man, the hunter, has probably observed animal tracks and scat since he left the gathering stage. If he had mastered this art then maybe AUSTRALOPITHE-

CUS would be alive and well today. But it's use by "primitive" tribes still lives on. The owners of Nova Scotia, The Micmac Indians, used scat when Europeans first infected America, as means to follow their prey, and could tell if they were following the same animal, whether it was male or female, and even if she was pregnant. Of course human droppings were studied by "civilized" man for such other important qualities such as foreseeing the future, a common custom with Egyptians scatologists of the royalty, or the search for disease symptoms.

Modern biologists using modern methods and analysis as well as careful observation are able to determine sex, pregnancy, physical condition of the animal, food consumed, range and other useful information not only for a biological point of view but also from a political/economic viewpoint.

These facts are important

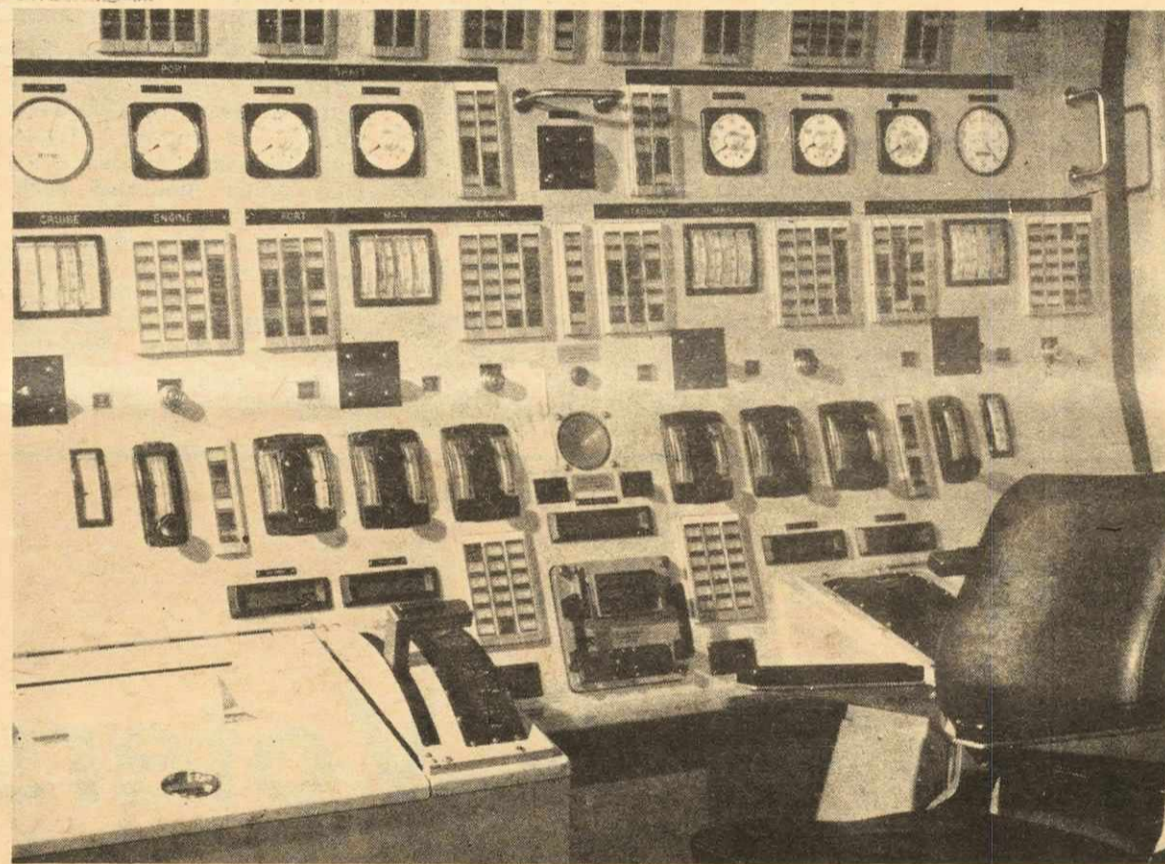
especially if one considers the wide ranging cougar, or the borrowing mole, and the hard to approach Canadian Goose and then realize the problem encountered in obtaining biological data from the animal or in some cases from observation.

Observation can lead to detailed behavioural studies but the defecation aspect of behaviour is just as important as other aspects especially when one considers that many mammals scent mark as part of their territorial behavior although this is usually urinal marking. Of course for some species, study in the wild cannot be done properly without scatological investigation. The meadow mole for example is extremely hard to study unless scat presence is noted, and amounts examined. The study of food source is related directly to scat studies. "First they kill for food and then they kill for fun."

In passing we should note that the regurgitation of many birds such as hawks, owls, and gulls are as important to study since most cannot pass solid material as scat but simply as liquid form. But to elaborate would only be a poor precis of Michael Rosen's article several issues back. I get a dollar for that.

For collecting purposes, scats are easier to collect than almost any other natural object. It doesn't have any noted loss as would the removal of living organisms or minerals for collections. If left alone in the sun then they will dry without any smell and then can be stored in plastic pill bottles or boxes. To spray them with plastic available in spray cans for models allows them a longer life as well as a more comfortable feeling in your own head.

A collection such as that three feet away on my bedroom dresser that will grace the front room of my new apartment in April, will perform at least one function and that being of a conversation piece. But for all who are naturalistically inclined, scat provides another enjoyable aspect to hiking or camping as well as the fascination in dissecting a bobcat scat and finding out what is in it. H. LEWIS (PREDATORS WILDCATS, FOXES, AND RACOONS THEIR EFFECT AND THEIR MANAGEMENT IN NOVA SCOTIA) list after several years study the contents of digestive tracts and mainly scats of the three species mentioned in the title and to simply relist the contents of food eaten by the fox to show the varied contents of scat: mice, domestic fowl, snowshoe hare, muskrat, birds (other than domestic fowl and game birds), white-tailed deer, apple, garbage, beetles, porcupine, shrew, cattle, racoon, domestic cat, marten, egg, fly, oats, barley, cranberry, hazelnut, fish, insects (other than beetles), red squirrel, sheep, pheasant, Norway rat, **Rubus** (rasp- (cont'd on pge. 13)



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