

FOR those who can afford neither time nor money for an extended trip after the big game of the country the Rocky Mountain goat is a quarry which can be obtained within quite easy distance and one which will afford abundant opportunity to test the hunter's powers of endurance and climbing powers, if not so much his accuracy of aim, and will give him a trophy rather more out of the ordinary than the common deer which can be shot anywhere without much difficulty.

Some of the best country for goat in the province can be reached within a day's journey by motor boat or steamer from either Victoria or Vancouver. They are not difficult animals to shoot once you get to where they are, as they are not easily alarmed, and they will usually afford very easy shots; as a rule though they will give you a good stiff climb before you get to close quarters, and when you do you must be careful where you aim, as, unless hit in a vital spot they will carry away a lot of lead.

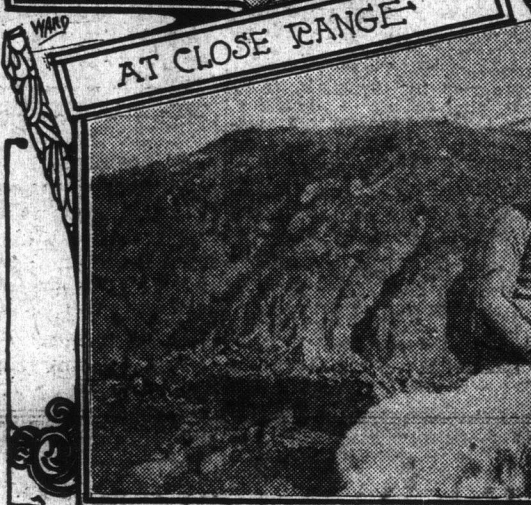
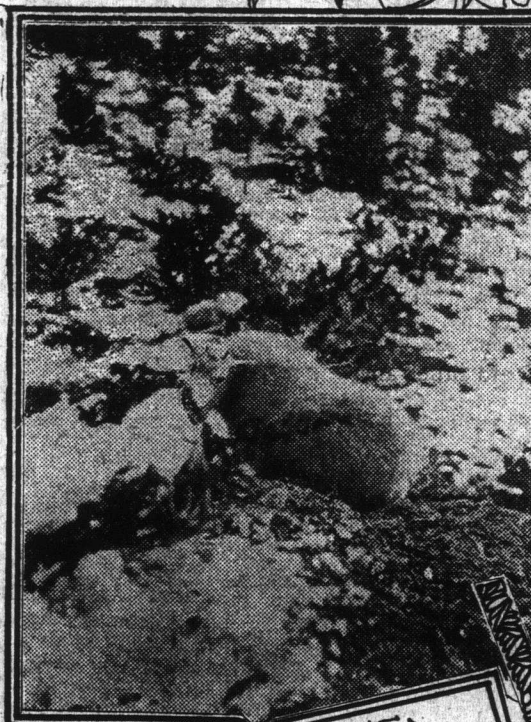
Any of the inlets of the mainland coast will afford good goat hunting, and a sharp look-out from a boat will often reveal one or two lying down on the extreme edge of some rocky ledge high up on the mountain sides. At the height at which they are most likely to be seen they will appear as very small white specks, and it will need a good glass, unless they move, to help to distinguish them for certain from patches of snow.

I have not hunted them often; few people do, as once one has obtained a good head they lose interest for the majority, the flesh of any but the young kids not being very tempting owing to the decidedly strong odour and correspondingly strong flavor. A young kid however, is by no means to be despised by the hungry hunter. Though, as I say, I have not hunted them often, many a time have I spotted them on the mountain slopes and even watched them playing together as they worked their way up the mountain in the early morning after being down to the seashore presumably for salt.

They are interesting animals to the naturalist, being as much an antelope as a goat and affording one of the very few instances known of an animal not confined to the arctic regions retaining a white coat all the year round.

Clumsy and ungainly in appearance, their agility is marvelous, and success in hunting them depends a good deal in being able to get above them, as, when disturbed, they will almost always try to escape upwards, and, while suspicious of an approach from below, they can generally be very closely approached by the hunter who has made a detour so as to come upon them from above.

The first attempt I made on the life of one of these creatures, though not exactly a complete success, was very typical of a day's hunt on the inlets near home. It was on a branch of Jervis inlet, rowing quietly, along and scanning the mountain sides for game as I went, I suddenly spied about half way up a steep mountain with a rugged top three white specks gradually moving higher and higher. It meant a steep and a long climb, but they were the first goats I had seen and I quickly came to the conclusion that I wanted one of them and wanted it badly. I knew it meant a whole day, but it had to be, and, rowing to shore, I made the boat fast in a safe place and started on the long climb at about 10 o'clock in the morning. By about noon I had made pretty good progress up the hill, and on the way had started a band of about six deer at which I had fired a shot in salute without effect, which, however, did not bother me at all as my anxiety was all to bag a goat. The going was getting very steep by this time, and I was beginning to get rather discouraged and to blame myself for a wasted day, when, on coming round a corner, I saw a big white animal as big as a well-grown calf, lying down on the extreme edge of a precipice staring down at me. It was an awkward shot from where I was, and, as the goat did not seem to be worrying itself unduly over my approach, I determined to try and manoeuvre into a better position before trying a shot. By making a flank movement out of sight of the enemy I managed to get on a level with it with a narrow ravine between us. I judged the distance to be not more than fifty yards, and, as the goat, though he had his eye on me, did not seem to be the least bit concerned about my near presence, I took my time and took up a comfortable position before opening fire. Why I did not shoot it through the heart at the first shot I have never been able to understand,



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but the truth must be told, and three shots were fired, all in vain, before he slowly rose to his feet and moved off into a stretch of country where I found it impossible to follow. That was the last I saw of goats that day.

On my way down the hill I was partially consoled by an opportunity to vent my chagrin on a wretched deer which had the temerity to stand to be shot at a short range and which I could not miss without shutting my eyes. It was nightfall before I regained the boat and I had to make camp in the dark and possess my soul in patience as far as goat hunting was concerned until a later day, when I had my revenge in full and shot at and killed the largest Rocky Mountain goat which it has as yet been my fortune to see. It will be seen from this simple narrative that hunting goats is not without a spice of excitement, and though goat-hunting is easily obtained it is not so tame as not to have a zest to it, and is certainly not to be undertaken by the man who is unable to sustain a stiff day's climb and a long outing over rough country.

LATE NESTING OF A NIGHT-HAWK

Most sportsmen are interested in natural history, so that it will not be going far out of the province of this page to relate the following incident observed by a Victoria gentleman while out for a stroll near the city. Coming suddenly over a little ridge of rock he started a night-hawk, which flew up with one of its young in its claw; an examination of the spot from which it rose disclosed another young one on the ground. After depositing the first one in safety the old bird returned and hovered round the disturber of its family privacy in evident distress until the human intruder had retreated to a good distance when it bore off the second young bird also.

The incident is remarkable in two ways, affording an excellent opportunity to observe the habit of this bird of bearing away to safety the young which it hatches and rears on the bare ground without even an attempt at a nest, and also being an instance of very late breeding for this species. All the other insectivorous birds have left us for this year some time ago.

ISLAND PHEASANTS

If criticism is good for the soul, corroboration is sometimes very pleasant. I have received a letter from a reader of the sporting page of the Sunday Colonist in which he bears me out in the remarks I made last week on the subject of the deterioration of the Island pheasant. The writer is an old sportsman of considerable experience of

shooting in the old country, and tells of the days when the ring-neck was not so common in the country as the old dark-necked English pheasant; in those days he says "we were always instructed to shoot every ring-neck we saw, as they don't like to see them." Continuing, he goes on to say, "When six or seven guns meet for a day's shooting on a well-kept estate you get the tip when you are all assembled at the start, to shoot the cocks and not the hens the first day; then perhaps a week or so afterwards there will be another party; then you get the tip to shoot so many hens each gun, the keepers of course having taken stock as near as can be after the first day's shooting as to the predominance of cocks or hens."

"If the cocks are too numerous, they run the hens too much at breeding time, so that they arrange the shooting to equalize them as well as they can. The last year's old hens want to be killed off entirely if they could be, as it is better to have the young stock to breed from both of cocks and hens."

THE WARDS OF THE GOVERNMENT

Those of our sportsmen who are apt at times to complain bitterly of the license allowed to our friend the Siwash in the matter of killing game and fish may take some small comfort in knowing that in other colonies they have their troubles of this sort also. A correspondent of the leading English sporting paper, The Field, writing of Godwit shooting in New Zealand says:

"The godwit is perhaps the only game in New Zealand not entirely at the mercy of the Maori—that is, the semi-civilized, predatory Maori, armed with a cheap Belgian gun and cartridges begged from wandering Europeans. With this 'outfit' he slaughters, sitting, in season and out of season, wild pigeons (royal game to the colonists), California quail, and imported pheasants. He is, I understand, above the game laws, and I have seen him stalking a running hen pheasant in the brooding season. The godwit cannot be stalked, and the Maori does not shoot flying. Wherefore there will still be godwits



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MOUNTAIN GOAT AT HOME

in New Zealand long after the ground game exterminated by Maoris—weasels and other indigenous and native pests—have vanished off the face of this, so far as shooting is concerned, misnamed "sportsmen's paradise."

THE BUTTON OF MERIT

When are our doughty fishermen going to form a club and give away buttons of various sorts for the capture of monster salmon on light tackle? I have just been shown a photo of an English sportsman with the record yellow tail of over sixty pounds captured by him at Avalon. The picture is to say the least of it impressive, but what is also impressive is the imposing list of prizes which the combination of skill and luck entitled the angler to. If some one will only be so kind as to offer a diamond button and a fine new split-can rod and any other trophies that may occur to their generous instinct, I will try my persuasive powers on an exacting editor to allow me the opportunity to hie me to Campbell river and try my luck for a seventy pound salmon.

DUCK SHOOTING IN BRITISH GUIANA

For a long time a planter friend of mine and I had contemplated a shooting trip to the great game district of the colony up one of the little-used creeks. At last the opportunity came; my friend, whom I will call A.,

having seen his wife off to England, at last decided to go. After having seen to the necessary details connected with the excursion, we accordingly, one fine Saturday morning early in May, took tickets by train, having arranged for a boat to meet us at the railway bridge over the creek, where, by kind permission of the railway manager, we were to have the train stopped. After two hours' slow traveling the train pulled up at the bridge and we got out with our impedimenta, which consisted of a change of clothing, a hammock and mosquito net, and two boxes of provisions; guns and cartridges, of course, but I regret to say, no dog, so a great many winged birds escaped owing to the dense foliage growing down to the water's edge. A dog in this country is very much needed, but the only ones which would answer this purpose, namely, a spaniel or a retriever, would be very short lived if they went into the creeks here, which swarm with a voracious fish called "perai," which have tremendous jaws, and will take off a finger, or the leg of a dog, as clean as a surgeon's knife.

Having embarked, in due course we pulled up the creek for some miles, with just an occasional shot at a pigeon as it flashed by. Most of the way up, sitting on the bushes, we saw the hoatzin Canje, or stinking pheasant (Opisthocomus cristatus) a bird which is only found on the Canje Creek (where it was discovered), the Berbice river, and the creek about which this story is written. It is a pretty red barnyard fowl, but owing to its objectionable odor it is not eaten or molested in any way.

After several hours' hard pulling against a two-knot current we espied a flock of ducks on the topmost branches of a dead tree several hundred yards ahead. A suggested leaving me on the bank of a creek among some sedges, while he went on in the boat and tried to get a shot at them by keeping close in to the bank among the heavy growth of weeds and bushes. This I agreed to, so I was put ashore and took up a position behind a thick bush, while A. went on. Shortly after he left, and in the very place where the boat had gone over, I beheld a commotion in the water, and carefully watching the place, was fascinated by the wonderful sight of a manatee (Manatus americanus) rolling about on top of the water. Every few minutes up he would come, shake his huge flippers, and sink again. Judging from his size and the waves he made, I should think he was a monster, and was sorely tempted to give him the benefit of my choke barrel; but having only B.B. and No. 6 refrained, thinking it would only wound him, or more likely still, hardly do more than tickle him. Suddenly the sound of a right and left reminded me of A. stalking the ducks. Slipping a No. 6 in my right barrel and a B. B. in my left, I peeped cautiously out from my hiding place, to see a dozen ducks coming down wind towards me. Nearing my shelter they rose as if they scented danger. Stepping back, I fired a little in front of the leader of the well known V formation, and was, chagrined at not seeing him double up. However, I let off my choke at a bird on the right, and—well, the least said the better, as I had not the satisfaction of picking him up. Shortly after A. appeared with one duck, a fine, fat specimen of the tree duck (Dendrocygna discolor), and the good news that the reports had put up several huge flocks higher up the creek.

Again entering the boat, we pushed on, and at about five o'clock reached the feeding ground, miles and miles of flooded savannah as far as the eye could see, this wonderful tract of country flush with the level of the water in the creek, and covered with about a foot or 15 in. of rank grass, and 8 in. or 10 in. of water and swarming with ducks. There were thousands of them; indeed, it is impossible to describe their number, as flock after flock of several hundreds at a time rose and flew on for several yards, only to settle down for a few minutes and rise again. We did not quite know what our plan of campaign was to be, but after a consultation decided it would be useless to try and walk them up, so we decided to stay in the boat and wait for fresh flocks to fly over the trees on the water's edge for their evening feed and their roosting place for the night, as these ducks differ from the Muscovy and green wing teal, the latter roosting in trees, while the former sleep on the ground. This was the best policy, as from the time we arrived until dusk, at 6.15 p. m., we bagged about twenty, and one or two pigeons. Our boat captain telling us there was a house further up the creek, now that it was nearly dark, we passed on. All around us and above us was the whistling of innumerable wings, and the peculiar call of the tree duck promised us splendid sport at dawn on the following morning. It was now quite dark, and as yet no sign of a house, so, questioning the boys, we were told it was a little bit further on. Rather indefinite, we thought, but as we were now twenty miles from the nearest habitation down the creek, thought it best to grin and bear it; so, tying our veils over our hats, and putting on our gauntlets, for by this time the mosquitoes were as ravenous as we were, we sat and talked of the morrow and the execution we would do. Ten o'clock came and no sight of the house, and the boys were tired. No words, kind or otherwise, would induce them to pull any harder, and at last they confessed themselves beaten and practically refused to go on.

What was to be done? Here we were, twenty miles from a house down the creek, and the Lord only knows how many miles from one up the creek. To get out of the boat meant standing half way up your legs in water, and, to make matters worse, it began to rain, and we were already wet to the skin with wading in the savannah after winged ducks. We tried kindness, then persuasion, and finally strong language, yet the boys refused to budge. "When a nigger or a nule in this country refuse to move, it requires a 20 h.p. traction engine to start them." Finally,

making the best of a bad job, we paddled under a tree, and made the boys rig up an awning with a large tarpaulin we had in the boat. In a few minutes they were curled up in the stern like dogs, and snoring like so many pigs. A. and I, hungry, wet, tired and miserable, lay down in the bottom of the boat, which by this time was several inches deep in water. Vainly we tried to sleep, so smoked a cigarette and bewailed our lot. Finally we curled up, I sitting on a pile of plates, for now the boat had six inches of water in her, while A. rested his head on a kerosene tin in lieu of a pillow. Snatches of sleep came at intervals until 4.30 a.m. When I got up I found A. sleeping as if he was in a feather bed. After a cigarette I woke him, and then the boys, for by this time the ducks were on the wing. Although it was still quite dark, the whistle of their wings sounded plainly in the still morning air. Pulling over to the opposite side of the creek, I landed, and, standing in a clump of rushes, waited the coming of the ducks, while A. went back to the other side, and with the boat hid among the bushes. At last they came, first in pairs and dozens, then in flocks of a hundred, and for over an hour I had the finest shooting it has ever been my good fortune to get. At the end of an hour's hard shooting A. joined me, and together we picked up the slain. We both shot badly, myself especially, so only picked up about half what we had down, winged birds escaping into the savannah, probably to be seized by an alligator (Cayman mississippiensis), which in this neighborhood attains a size of from 10 ft. to 20 ft.

By this time the ducks were thoroughly alarmed, and, flying far out into the savannah, settled in the long grass, no more flying over. A. and I decided to breakfast, so paddled over again, and, finding a few feet of dry land, lit a fire, and soon had some coffee and eggs spread out on a seat in the boat, to which we did ample justice. After a short stay we started homeward, vowing not to have another night in the boat. Going down with the current, a good deal better progress was made, and we neared the place where the ducks were feeding. A stalk was then decided upon, and I volunteered to put them up, leaving A. on the creek side. Forward I went, every now and then having to stoop as a flock of several thousand got up, only to settle again farther on. At last, getting within a hundred yards, they rose in a body, and the air was full of ducks—impossible to describe the number. I will leave the reader to imagine the thousands of whistling wings as they broke up into small packs and wheeled above me preparatory to flying and settling some miles farther on. Some got up a great height and circled round, while others ventured to come close enough to allow me to give them the benefit of my choke bore, and a charge of B. B. brought a couple down with that grand thud so dear to the heart of a wildfowler.

Returning to the boat, I found A. had not been fortunate enough to get a shot, so we went on down the creek, occasionally getting a shot at a few straggling flocks as they rose up from a clump of bushes or from the sedges at the side of the water. Going some miles down, we saw among a herd of cattle two jabou (Mycteria americana), immense species of stork. These birds stand fully 5 ft. high, and are quite white, except for their black legs and a brilliant red streak under the bill. Their head is black, and from this they derive their name negro-coop, meaning negro-head. We tried to stalk these birds, and, slipping in an S.S.G. cartridge containing just twelve pellets, we got fairly close, when a herd of cattle, sighting us, made off at a gallop, being semi-wild, and these put the birds up. As by this time it was raining heavily we went on our way. Lower down we chased an otter (Lutra sandbachii), called "water dog" in this country. These differ from the English animal only in weight and color. British Guiana otters weigh up to 50 lbs., and the majority are of a beautiful light-colored grey, although I have seen others with a fine brown coat similar to the north country animal. He was too smart for us, and, aided by the powerful current, succeeded in placing several hundred yards between us before he again came up to vent, and finally disappeared into some thick undergrowth on the side of the creek.

It was now six o'clock, and as we were close to the railway bridge, our starting point, we began to make preparation for leaving the boat. In another few minutes the bridge came in sight as we rounded a bend in the creek, and shortly after we were on terra firma once more. Here we had a disappointment. The platelayer's house, where we were to have stopped for the night, was full of "Cushie" ants, which, owing to the rain, had left their own wet home to find a dry one, and, the platelayer's house being the first dry place they had come upon, they invaded and took possession of it. They are about three-quarters of an inch long, and have terrible jaws, biting a piece clean out of anything they grip. Some years ago these ants used to be welcomed, as wherever they were nothing else remained—rats, mice, cockroaches, wood ants, all clearing out as the army of millions of "Cushies" marched upon them. Not staying long, they take care to get what they can in the short time they do stay, and do not expect to find a sack of rice or a bag of sugar again if they elect to pay you a visit! Enlisting the services of the platelayer, we got him to lend us a trolley used for measuring the gauge of the line and carrying supplies from store to station, and vice versa. Packing our goods and chattels on board, we worked our way to the first station on the line, about a mile and a half away, and, arriving there about 6.30 p.m., we sought the stationmaster, who kindly lent us the booking office for a bedroom, and after a hearty supper we slung our hammocks, and were soon sleeping, after our thirty-six hours in the open air. Catching the 7.30 a.m. train on the following morning, we arrived in Georgetown with nearly a dozen ducks, which were soon distributed among our friends.—J. G. H. in The Field



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