

In other localities I noticed that where the nests were placed on the banks of streams, they were made secure against the floods by being built amid a small clump of bushes. When the fall of 1879 came, the muskrats were very tardy about beginning their house, laying the corner-stone—or the corner-sod—about the 1st of December, and continuing the work slowly and indifferently. On the 15th of the month the nest was not yet finished. This, I said, indicates a mild winter; and, sure enough, the season was one of the mildest known for many years. The rats had little use for their house.

Again, in the fall of 1880, while the weather-wise were wagging their heads, some forecasting a mild, some a severe winter, I watched with interest for a sign from my muskrats. About November 1st, a month earlier than the previous year, they began their nest, and worked at it with a will. They appeared to have just got tidings of what was coming. If I had taken the hint so palpably given, my celery would not have been frozen in the ground, and my apples caught in unprotected places. When the cold wave struck us, about November 20th, my four-legged "I told-you-so's" had nearly completed their dwelling; it lacked only the ridge-board, so to speak; it needed a little "topping out," to give it a finished look. But this it never got. The winter had come to stay, and it waxed more and more severe, till the unprecedented cold of the last days of December must have astonished even the wise muskrats in their snug retreat. I approached their nest at this time, a white mound upon the white, deeply frozen surface of the pond, and wondered if there was any life in that apparent sepulchre. I thrust my walking-stick sharply into it, when there was a rustle and a splash into the water, as the occupant made his escape. What a damp basement that house has, I thought, and what a pity to