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NATURE NOTES FROM ACADIA

VOL. 1

NO. 3

SEPTEMBER, 1932



ACADIA NATIONAL PARK

BAR HARBOR, MAINE

Department of the Interior

National Park Service

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
ACADIA NATIONAL PARK
BAR HARBOR, MAINE

NATURE NOTES FROM ACADIA

Volume 1

September, 1932

Number 3

George B. Dorr, Superintendent
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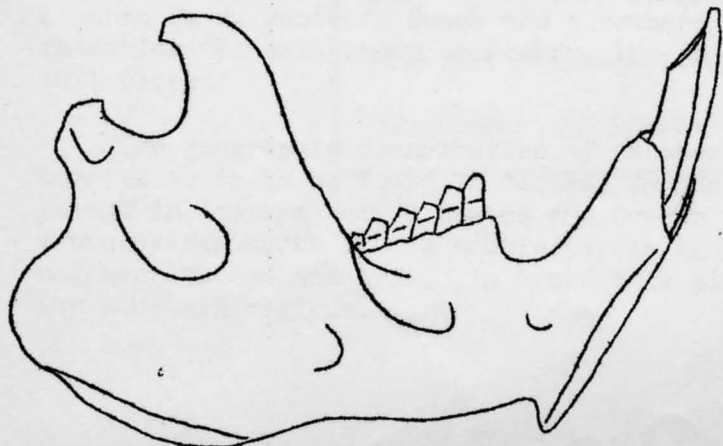
SOME FUR-BEARERS OF ACADIA

During the course of the summer a number of the wild mammals of Mount Desert Island have been seen, but the list is by no means complete. Of those fur-bearers most often observed by visitors to Acadia National Park, the Northeastern Chipmunk (*Tamias striatus lysteri*) and the Eastern Red Squirrel (*Sciurus hudsonicus*) head the list. These two squirrels are frequently seen running across the main highways on the island, where many are killed. The Flying Squirrel (*Glaucomys sabrinus macrotis*) is rarely observed. One lifeless specimen of this nocturnal species was found just off the main road south of Bar Harbor. The Gray Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*), the only other squirrel reported for the island, is rare.

Continuing with the rodents, the Beaver (*Castor canadensis*) is to be found at a number of places. Marshall Brook, Breakneck Pond, Little Harbor Brook, and New Mill Meadow have their beavers, and other places can be named where the animals have occurred. These animals were killed off a number of years ago but have been brought back by mankind. In certain areas the extent of the damage done by them has resulted in recent activity on the part of park authorities to reduce their numbers by means of live traps.

White-footed mice (*Peromyscus leucopus*) are inhabitants of the island, but so far little information has been gained regarding their population. A Jumping Mouse (probably *Zapus hudsonius*) has been seen but the animal could not be caught. Meadow Mice (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*) have also been seen in the open.

The Varying Hare (*Lepus americanus*) is the only member of that group of animals which occurs on Mount Desert Island and is uncommon. Muskrats (*Ondatra zibethica*) are also uncommon. Porcupines (*Erethizon dorsatum*) are either extremely rare or do not occur at all on the island. At one time, however, these animals must have been here in fair numbers. Other rodents, especially certain mice, occur but these have escaped our eyes during the past summer.



Lower jaw of Beaver

One shrew, the Short-tailed Shrew (*Blarina brevicauda*) was found dead along one of the highways in the park early in the summer. Other shrews probably occur also.

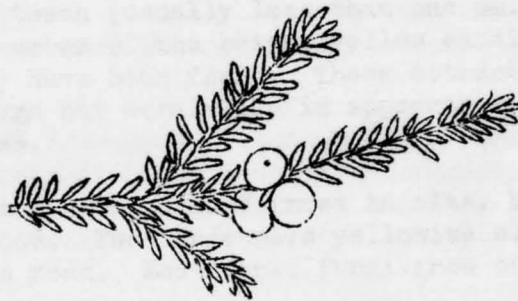
Unmistakable footprints of the Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*) have been seen in the mud along the banks of Little Harbor Brook, but the animals are rare in this region.

(continued on next page)

Small bats (genera and species unknown) have been seen on the wing. Their inverted forms have been sought in caves and other likely daylight retreats, but without success. Skunks (*Mephitis nigra?*), Red Foxes (*Vulpes fulva*), and Otters (*Lutra canadensis*), have been reported by reliable observers. Of this trio the Otters probably have suffered recent extermination, the last having been seen here by Park Ranger O. Y. Thompson a few years ago.

White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) are infrequently reported by tourists. A number live within the confines of Mount Desert Island, especially in the southeastern section. Occasionally one is seen on the new Cadillac Mountain Road. This is the lone representative of the deer family in Acadia National Park.

- Ranger-Naturalist



CROWBERRY

Of the many plants on Mount Desert Island which belong to the arctic flora, the Crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*) is one of the most interesting. Here it is to be found growing in dense mats both on mountain summits (Cadillac, Champlain, and others) and along the shore of the ocean (at Anemone Cave, Hunter's Beach and elsewhere). Superficially the plant resembles the well-known cranberry, but the berries of *Empetrum* are a dull black.

The geographic distribution of Crowberry is extensive. In North America it is to be found in Alaska, Canada, and as far south as Long Island in eastern United States and Oregon in western United States. It ventures far north of the Arctic Circle in Greenland and is frequent in northern Europe and Asia. In truth this plant encircles the globe in the northern regions.

- Margaret Stupka

THE CORAL MUSHROOMS

The Clavarias or Coral Mushrooms began to appear in our woods in late August and are now (September) to be found in fair numbers. Plants in this group are either simple club forms or branched forms which resemble coral growth. In their color there is a wide range - white, yellow, pink, brown, lavender, gray, and combinations of these and other colors. When young and tender all the species are said to be edible.

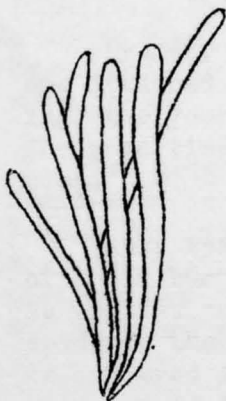
The most abundant of the coral fungi seems to be the beautiful creamy-tan *Clavaria formosa* - the species name coming from "formosus," meaning finely formed or beautiful. Some of its close clusters grow six inches in height and the clumps are fully as wide. Often many of these plants are to be found growing in a small area. It is this species which the farmers of Germany collect and sell in the markets.

The low-growing, snowy-white *Clavaria cristata* is not infrequently trampled down on the island trails. This species is easily identified by the crests of minute teeth (usually less than one mm. long) at the tips of the branches. A number of the bright yellow candle-like coral fungi (*Clavaria fusiformis*) have been found. These attractive cylindrical or flattened clubs, though not coral-like in appearance, are true, though less specialized, Clavarias.

Clavaria stricta resembles *C. formosa* in size, but the former grows only upon decaying wood. Two large pale yellowish clusters were discovered recently near a woods road. Most coral fungi grow on the ground.

The lateness of appearance of these beautiful mushrooms is compensated for by their abundance. In low damp woods one who has eyes that "see" could easily pick a bushel of them.

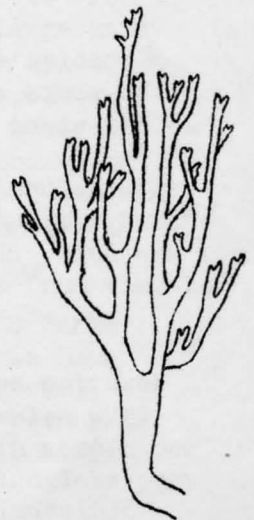
- Margaret Stupka



Clavaria fusiformis



Young plant of
Clavaria formosa



Branch of mature plant
of *Clavaria formosa*

LYCOSA, THE WOLF SPIDER

We were following a dirt road not far from the Kebo Valley Club when suddenly one of the party who had gone on ahead called my attention to a large dark-colored hairy spider in the road, by far the largest spider I had ever seen in Maine. Taking a cyanide bottle from my knapsack I opened it, held the open end immediately in front of our intended victim, and then coaxed the specimen into it. She came with such a rush that the impact against the bottom of the bottle dislodged fully a dozen spiderlings who had been riding on her back.

This animal proved to be *Lycosa carolinensis*, the so-called "Wolf Spider" - probably the largest species of spider which is to be found on Mount Desert Island. From the clawed tips of her forefeet to those of her hind feet she measured exactly three inches, while the distance from head to tip of abdomen was slightly over one inch. The entire upper hairy covering was a soft gray-brown without any distinct markings. The eyes, as in most spiders, were eight in number and were arranged in three rows, two in the upper and middle rows and four in the lower row. Those in the lower row were considerably smaller than the upper two pairs of eyes. Below, the hairy covering was for the most part a uniform velvety black. The chelicerae, erroneously known as "mandibles," were coated with amber-colored hairs and at their base, on the lateral face, was a conspicuous smooth, orange-colored articulating condyle. This condyle is especially noticeable when one is looking into the face of the spider. The sight of such a creature would give many people an unnecessary scare, but like all other spiders which are to be found in Maine, the large Wolf Spiders are harmless to mankind.

The generic name of this spider comes from *Lycosa*, which is from the Greek word for wolf. This name has been given to these large hairy spiders because they are hunters who chase their prey. Other spiders obtain their victims by lying in ambush, by building various kinds of nets or traps, or by living with other spiders and eating at their table.

Lycosa, like certain other spiders, carries her white globular egg sac attached close to her spinnerets by a bundle of threads. After hatching, the young climb onto the back of the mother and may remain with her for some time. They grow by moulting the outer layer of skin from time to time.

Wolf spiders often make turrets of grass and earth at the entrance of their burrows. These turrets serve as watch towers from which prey as well as enemies may be observed to better advantage. As in most other spiders, the sense of sight is poorly developed. After its luckless prey is captured it is sucked dry and the hard parts are left behind since only liquid food is taken into the mouth.

- Ranger-Naturalist

HERRING GULLS

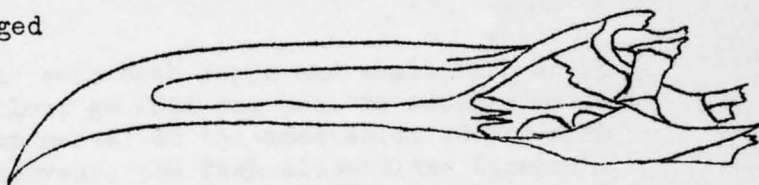
Easily the most conspicuous of the birds on Mount Desert Island, the Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*) has been chosen as a type of wild life symbolic of Acadia National Park (see cover page). Along the entire New England seaboard these large white and pearl-gray birds are familiar to everyone. Only infrequently do they nest south of the state of Maine, but before and after the nesting cares are over they wander for great distances.

Herring Gulls are valuable winged scavengers, garnering their food largely from the tide-areas of the sea. Now and then one can be seen dropping to pick up a clam or sea urchin which the waves have washed ashore. After the prey is seized the bird wings its

way to a point above the nearby rocky shore and let's go its hold upon the intended meal. Down it comes, the shell breaks upon the rocks, and the gull returns to its repast. Large numbers of the birds are sometimes seen following the fishing boats, for fish are a favorite article of diet with the Herring Gull. Occasionally, during the blueberry season, great gatherings of these birds alight upon the mountains of the island to feed upon the ripe, low-growing fruit. This, I have been told by some of the local fishermen, is a relatively new kind of food to the gulls. With their steady increase in numbers, especially during the past several years, a branching out in the range of their diet may be the result - a matter of necessity if the greater numbers are to survive.

On Duck Island, a few miles south of the island on which Acadia National Park is situated, the Herring Gulls nest by the hundreds and even thousands. It is a matter on record that a number of years ago these birds which normally nest on the ground took to nesting in the crowns of the evergreen trees as a result of the constant robbing of the nests by fishermen. We visited the island this year in late June, when a great many chicks were just emerging from the eggs, and in the course of a hasty survey found no nests above the ground. The birds there had returned to their usual mode of nesting.

Herring Gulls have very few enemies, the Bald Eagle preying upon them infrequently. In June, beneath the nest of the king of birds, a part of the bill of a Herring Gull and the skull of a crow were found.



Remains of a Herring Gull's bill found beneath the nest of a Bald Eagle.

- Ranger-Naturalist

FISH AND FISHING

Spawning Time

During late September and throughout the month of October trout come up the streams to spawn, and a visit to one's favorite trout stream at this time of year will more than repay the observer. He who measures up to the qualifications of a real sportsman will derive as much pleasure and enjoyment from an hour or more spent in watching the fish as he did during the open fishing season.

During the spawning season one sees both large and small fish ascend waterfalls and, when the water is low, go from one pool to another in water so shallow that one cannot help but marvel at the spectacle. Being much less shy than at other times of the year, the fish allow close approach. There is the urge to go upstream and spawn - not much else seems to matter. In Acadia National Park, the stream which flows from Bubble Pond to Eagle Lake is an exceptionally good place where one may observe this interesting performance.

- Louis Fowler
Temporary Ranger

Mackerel

During the latter part of August and into September, mackerel, one of New England's favorite salt-water fish, have been schooling in the waters of Frenchman's Bay and local fishermen have reported exceptionally large catches. So hungry are these schools that a pearl button or a piece of white cloth is seized as quickly as is a piece of fresh clam. A small party of fishermen may catch hundreds of these fine fish in a few hours' time when the "run" is on. These fish are of a very uniform size and average about a pound apiece in weight.

After the catch the mackerel are dressed and packed in jars - a teaspoonful of salt being added to each quart of the fish.

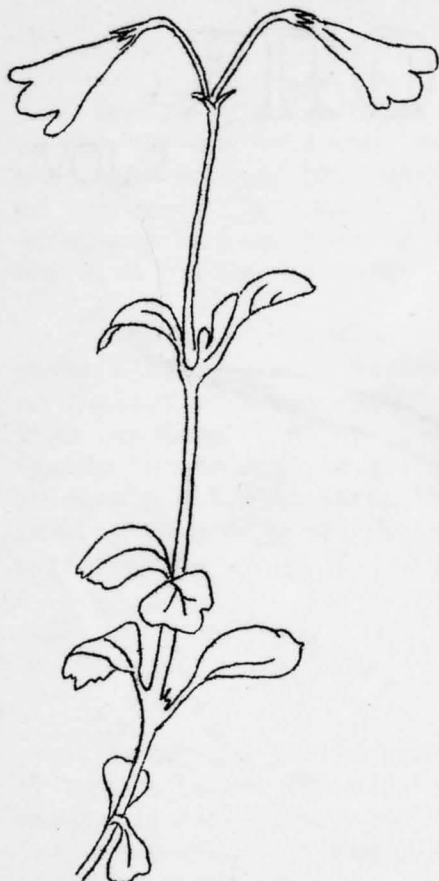
- Charles T. Gay
Temporary Ranger

Deep Sea Fishing

If we are to judge by the results of our ranger-guided deep-sea fishing trips, Cod is the most abundant of those marine fish which inhabit the deeper waters just east of Mount Desert Island. Haddock proved to be the second most abundant fish with Hake and Pollock relegated to third and fourth place respectively. Other finny prey landed included Dogfish, Catfish, Silver Hake, Cunner, Flounder, Skulpin, Skate, Mackerel, and Lamprey Eel.

- Ranger-Naturalist

TWINFLOWER AND HAIRBELL



Twinflower

On the seventh day of September, while watching the beavers at Marshall Brook, we came upon a number of fresh blossoms of the charming little Twinflower (*Linnaea americana*). In late spring and early summer we encountered its pretty pink fragrant blooms time and again, but to find it now, in a month which belongs partly to autumn, was a most delightful surprise.

The accompanying illustration, drawn one and one-half times life size, gives the reader some conception regarding the appearance of this flower. The paired and exceedingly fragrant corolla is dominantly pink in color with some white, and is borne on a slender stem. The leaves are opposite, roundish in outline, and sparingly crenate. In places along the margins of certain woodlands, several square feet of ground are covered by this trailing little evergreen. Asa Gray, in his new "Manual of Botany," writes that it is "dedicated to the immortal Linnaeus, who first pointed out its characters, and with whom the European type of this pretty little plant was a special favorite."

The lovely violet-blue Hairbell (*Campanula rotundifolia*) continues to bloom well into September. This dweller of cliffs and rock ledges grows close to the ocean as well as near the summits of the mountains on the island, but seems to be most abundant in the former situation. Lord Tennyson must have found a flower like our Hairbell, gracing the bold face of some otherwise barren mass of rock, to write -

"Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in
my hand,
Little flower - but if I could
understand
What you are, root and all, and
all in all,
I should know what God and
man is."