

Frank Staroba, sophomore at DePauw university, has one of the supporting roles in this year's version of the annual Monon Revue on campus. The revue, a musical comedy called "The Caucus Race," will play Feb. 11, 12 and 13.

Staroba is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank J. Staroba of 32451 Wentworth avenue, Southfield township.

NATURE NOW

# Animal Life Stories Are Written in Snow

By LYDIA KING FRESH  
Special Writer for The Birmingham-Eccentric

In mid-February we reach a season which is often called the "dead of winter".

It is true that many of earth's creatures are hidden and silent. Life rests, but it does not die.

For the naturalist there is no off-season. He is equally at home in a winter woods or a summer meadow. Each brings its own moods and gifts to him who sees through the obvious sights, sounds and colors of any season to an understanding of that slow-moving cycle which holds all life in its protective grasp.

Last weekend driving "back-home" through the rolling hills of northern Ohio we had a few hours pause to observe the familiar landscape. Summer softens and clothes. Winter has a way of obliterating some objects and emphasizing others, thus revealing the true contours of the land.

AS WE sped along through the hours of early afternoon, the landscape became a fast-moving kaleidoscope of meadow and corn row, of winter wheat and corn stubble, of marsh and woodlot. The half-frozen streams follow the valleys folded in their own dark hills.

The bare trees rim the horizon. Some times a single maple or elm stands alone, its empty shape betraying its name and kind.

The deciduous trees make stark patterns of black and

white, the soft snow clinging to the windward side of their trunks and branches. But the evergreens embellish the landscape; their green branches hang heavy with their weight of snow. Their tall spires mark the empty lanes and they lend a warm and friendly air to the homelies along the road-way.

"The snow," says John Burroughs, "is a great tell-tale, across the field and if only a mouse has been in its neighbor, the event is chronicled."

AND SO IT is that the animals are more plentiful than we suppose. The winter travelers of nocturnal and their general wariness is greater when the natural protection of summer foliage is erased by frost. Now their safety must lie in their elusive habits and in the extreme leanness of their senses.

The common field or meadow mouse is the most lively tenant of our winter terrain. He is also the most abundant and prolific of our North American rodents.

The species vary greatly and are adaptable to a wide range of living conditions. In winter the mouse hides his movements under cover of the deep snows. When they do appear his trail can be traced as a network of tunnels in the dry grass, crossing and recrossing the grain fields, orchards, lawns and gardens where he leaves mute evidence of the injury he has caused by his voracious appetite.

IT IS estimated that each acre of meadow supports ten meadow mice, these, spread over 65 million acres, at an average of five million tons of hay per year.

Their grassy runways are kept free of snow and other obstructions so that their owners may swiftly seek the protection of their burrows.

Their summer nests, where they rear as many as six litters per season are made in meadows or marshes, in little hollows on the surface or in tussocks of grass.

The meadows slope to the water-logged marshes where broken cattails stand guard over the frozen shallows. We stayed the car to see the cozy winter nest a deer mouse had made in the ripe tuft of one of those which stands near the roadside.

This is also the summer home of the muskrat. His houses dot the marsh like inverted bowls, each with its own snow capped roof. They are built of mud, roots and stems with an oval chamber above the water-line and several safe entrances under water.

The wheat fields lie dormant under their protecting blanket of white. Wheat suffers from an open winter when the action of repeated thaws tends to loosen the roots and to lessen the protective insulation of the snow blanket.

Flocks of crows and pigeons find and fall in the corn fields, feeding in late afternoon before they find a safe roosting place for the night.

Along the roadside and open fields such hardy weeds as teasel, burdock, mullein and Queen Anne's lace defy the wind and weather. We saw a stand of the latter which resembled nothing so much as a ripe cotton patch, each dried seed

head holding a neatly rounded fluff of snow.

UNTENED fence rows mark the landscape into geometrical designs. These are a boon to wild life. Here such shrubs as sumac, elderberry and hawthorne give year round sanctuary to a host of ground and low nesting birds and to many small mammals such as rabbits and woodchucks.

As we near the city we skirt the shallows of Lake Erie where the fishermen are pulling up their lines and collecting their catch and their gear to leave the fishing shanties.

These are set out on the ice like miniature villages. Erie is the shallowest of our great lakes and even in an open winter much of it lies frozen and still, the snow piled up on the rough ice as far as the eye can see.

As the car speeds onward two large flocks of starling circle low, assembling and reassembling themselves against the winter sky. Twilight is grey and threatening. Soon night closes in bringing with it a blinding snow fall to further seal the land.

SO LATELY lost in the sky the snowflakes now converge on the windshield like a swiftly unfolding rosette, each leaving behind the illusion of a comet-like tail.

And so we pass by the silent meadows and fields and come to the hills and hollows which held the hopes and fears, the little triumphs and joys of all my growing-up years. But the mountain of my childhood is only a small hill and the mysterious road which led to "never-never" land is only a winding foot-path that goes safely across the little stream and into the woodlot beyond.

## Cadet Winner of Gold Medal Award

Initiated Shellbacks Aboard Destroyer At Equator Crossing

NROTC Cadet Robert G. Littleton has been named winner of the Chicago Tribune gold medal for military achievement, scholastic attainment, character development, and leadership qualities at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He received the award at a presentation ceremony Wednesday in North Hall on the university campus.

Littleton lives at 728 Emmerson street. He is midshipman battalion commander of the Michigan NROTC unit and head of the university branch of the National Society of Sea Scouts.



MRS. MAUD ROGERS (left), national director of field services for Planned Parenthood, confers with Mrs. Mark B. Duffield, president of the Oakland county chapter, and Mrs. Palmer E. Sutton, president of the Michigan League for Planned Parenthood. Followed by a board meeting at the Duffield home on Wimbledon road, Mrs. Rogers and Mrs. Duffield visited one of three clinics, Oakdale gardens, sponsored by the Oakland County chapter. Mrs. Rogers told board members that there are now 514 clinics operating in the country, placed in population centers.

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