

Winter Reveals Life Habits of Red Fox

By LYDIA KING FRESHSE
Special Writer for The Birmingham Eccentric

It was when we were coming down the hill from the old apple orchard that we first saw the tell-tale tracks of the red fox.

His paw mark is like that of a small dog except that there is more variation in the length of the individual steps. We followed the tracks a short distance over the snowy ravine to the side of a low hill protected by a fringe of sumac. Here a hole, some 18 inches in diameter, led underground.

This was the den or winter home of a fox family. Sometimes it is excavated by its immediate tenants. At other times they appropriate a ready-made hole, often adding a tunnel leading to a space where food can be stored. They may also make a home in a hollow log or a cavity among rocks.

FOXES belong to the family Canidae from the Latin word Canis meaning dog. Wolves, coyotes and jackals are other representatives of this group found in North America. All are in a sense "wild" dogs. They are running animals as is attested by their long legs, lithe bodies and compact heads. They are further characterized by their sharp claws, teeth for seizing and cutting up

Mrs. Freshse mates during late February or early March. It is during the preceding rutting period when the animals are much abroad in the fields and woods, that many are trapped or shot, for in the snow their tracks can be easily followed. It is now that their voices echo over the wintry hills; the male gives a short yapping bark and the female answers with a high piercing call.

FOXES live in a closely-knit family group. Most authorities agree that they mate for life. More responsible than most, the father stays around home and helps to feed and train his family. The young are usually born during April after a short gestation period of 51 days. Four to nine kitten-like cubs comprise a litter. They are blind until the eighth or ninth day and are given the best of care by mother fox who nurses them and keeps them snug within the protection of the den until they are three or four weeks old. This period of dependence lasts until August or September when they are nearly full grown and ready to scatter for the winter.

THE EDUCATION which the kits receive is almost human in its progressive steps toward self-sufficiency. As they are gradually

running evasion. One of these is to break the scent by entering a stream and swimming for a distance. Another is to make a wide jump and circle back on the trail. Another, reported by Ernest Thompson Seton, is to ride a distance on an animal's back (such as a sheep) until the scent is lost by the pursuer.

The red fox eats a varied diet of animals smaller than himself. He is very prone to rob the hen house and he relishes partridge and other ground birds. Sometimes he extends his foraging to a nearby stream where he makes a dinner of fish, crabs and frogs. Sometimes he will eat insects and grass. He compensates the farmer for his loss of an occasional chicken by his fondness for destructive rodents.

THE RED fox is increasing in Michigan. Last year an estimated 30,784 were hunted and trapped with Oakland county leading the list. He is distributed throughout the state but is partial to areas in which there are low hills and ravines and where he is not too far from cover.

In late years many areas of our sub-marginal hills have been converted into hunt clubs, leading to an increased interest in an old sport.

The cross, black and silver fox are not separate species, but are



THE ENGAGEMENT of Mary Van Fleterson to Henry C. Morris is announced by her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Van Fleterson of East Frank street. Henry is the son of Mrs. Gertrude Morris of Machias, Maine, and G. F. Morris of Franklin.

Have You Met The Alvin R. Butters, former resident of Huntington Woods, who now reside at 617 Tottenham road? Their children are Jack, age 14, and Barbara, age 10. Butters is manager of the Marine department of the Detroit Insurance Agency.

Junior Prom Guest Nancy Maxwell, was escorted by Stuart Baker to Western Reserve Academy, Hudson, Ohio, last week for the Junior Prom. Dates were invited to the afternoon's athletic contests and an evening dinner dance. Nancy is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Robert A. Maxwell, 897 Mohegan drive.

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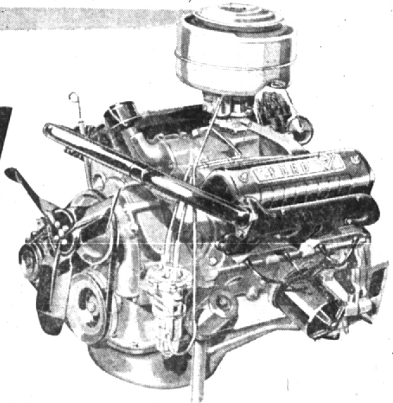
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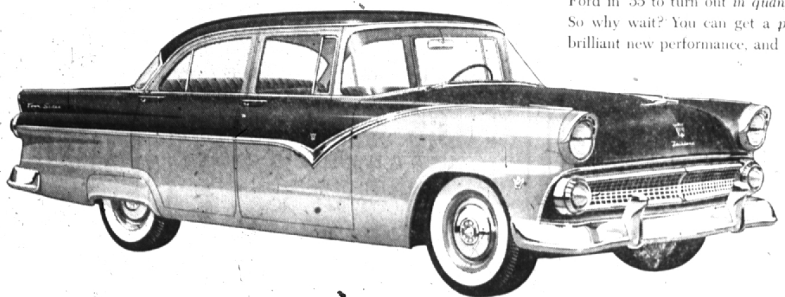
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