

Nature Ramblings

By FRANK THONE

ZOOLOGY



Kangaroo Rats

IT IS rather a pity that the Norway rat has made himself such an impudent nuisance, and even such a menace to health and life. For he has brought into disrepute a whole host of respectable and even attractive rodents who share the name he has made a byword and a reproach.

There are, for example, the kangaroo rats. We ordinarily think of the method of locomotion by leaping on the hind legs as a device invented and monopolized by certain groups of the marsupials of Australia. But as a matter of fact, there are many animals of other families elsewhere in the world that have found out for themselves that when danger threatens one good way to escape is to jump—jump far and quick.

And that is what the kangaroo rat does. He does not ordinarily go leaping about in hops many times his own body length, but when he doesn't like the sound or smell of his neighborhood, he is off—and no dog or snake can prophesy in which direction or how far. He is like his big Australian namesake, too, in that he uses his long tail as a third member of the supporting tripod. His tail, unlike that of the kangaroo, ends in a bushy tuft of hairs.

There are several species of kangaroo rats in America, all of them outdoor dwellers, and there are a number of smaller rodents as well, which are usually classified as "kangaroo mice." And on the other side of the equation, there are in Australia certain kangaroo-like creatures so small that they are usually called "mouse-kangaroos."

Science News Letter, October 4, 1930

Recent tests indicate that taking narcotics affects the body very much like a blow on the head; in both cases nerve cells become thick and white and cease to function.

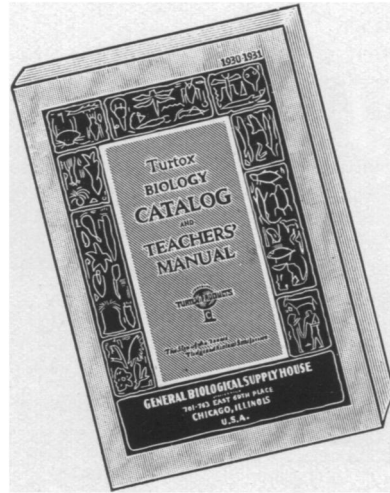
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