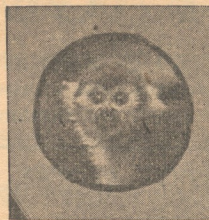


Odd Pets



THE TURTLE AS A PET

Small turtles may be purchased quite easily throughout the country and many are purchased as pets for children.

A small girl walked into a dime store seventeen years ago, put down ten cents and walked out with a baby turtle about the size of a fifty cent piece. Last year that same turtle, after attaining a length of over one foot and a shoulder breadth of comparative size, was killed by a truck. This turtle had endeared itself to the girl's family and it is missed as much as a favorite dog or cat. The turtle's name was Toby, and he was given free range of the house as well as the neighborhood.

As Toby grew he became addicted to taking long strolls through the busy streets. On several occasions Toby strolled away and after two weeks or so had passed, the owner began to fear for the pet (though his name and telephone number was painted on his back). But soon Toby would be seen waddling up the street, and walking right up the path way to his home.

Of the many varied devices that animals have for protection against their enemies, none is more odd than the shell of the turtle. It is said that the turtle never has to worry about a roof over his head, for he carries his house with him.

The body of the turtle is covered by the carapace above and by the plastron below, which are joined in such a way that the head, limbs, and tail project through openings. The carapace consists of a series of bony skin plates, attached to and covering the backbone and dorsal ribs. The lower part is built around the breastbone, and ventral ribs. The horny shields or plates of varying pattern and arrangement cover the bony shell and help to identify the different families.

Over two hundred species constitute the turtle tribe, which is an or-

der of legged reptiles. Some turtles live wholly in water, some only on land, and others are fitted to live in either environment.

The land dwelling turtles are slow and clumsy, and need special protection from their enemies. The bones of the shell are closely united, and the head, legs, and tail can be withdrawn inside the shell when danger threatens. Land turtles have short, club-shaped feet with blunt claws, suitable for terrestrial life and a peaceable existence. They feed mostly on berries and vegetation, and they are by nature docile.

Fresh-water turtles are more active than the land dwellers, and their feet are partially or completely webbed, depending on the amount of time they have spent in the water. Many of them cannot withdraw the head, legs, and tail within the shell, but their quicker movements make up for the lack of this adaptation.

New Pet for Coastguardman

After the death of his pigeon mascot, Boatswain Mate 2-c Robert G. Dunlap, U. S. Coast Guard, was without a feathered pet, but not for long. Soon Dunlap was aboard a troop transport, taking men and supplies to the South Pacific, and landing in the Philippines he saw a parrot—a tropical parrot.

Dunlap immediately purchased the parrot and named it Teco. The bird now is a constant companion of Dunlap and goes everywhere with him.

Dunlap is now in Washington after travelling 38,000 miles, taking men and supplies out, and bringing back casualties and men on furloughs. Teco went all this way, and probably is the most travelled parrot in the world.

The bird is getting lessons in cursing in Japanese so that when the time comes, Teco can tell Hirohito what he thinks of the son of heaven.

Meerkat—Looks Like a Cat, Barks Like a Dog

A popular pet kept by many people in Africa instead of the familiar house cat we have here is the meerkat. The name is a bit misleading and one would think that the meerkat is another variety of cat; however, this is not the case. The meerkat doesn't belong to the cat family at all but instead is related to the mongoose and civets.

The meerkat runs wild over most of central and southern Africa, but it is stated that there is no wild animal less suspicious of humans or more easily tamed. When teased to the point of annoyance, the meerkat will bark sharply like a young terrier but generally it is extremely good tempered and affectionate. Meerkats make interesting pets since they are comical and are the source of much amusement and pleasure.

With regard to size, the meerkat is somewhat smaller than the ordinary cat. Their slender furry bodies are only about fourteen inches long without the tail and four or five inches high. The meerkat has small eyes and ears and a sharp, pointed snout that projects beyond the mouth. Their color is mostly gray with dark and light bands. Their underparts are yellowish and so is the seven inch tail which has a black tip.

The meerkat is very fond of sunlight and warmth and for this reason the pet meerkat is often found in the hottest, sunniest corner of the garden and stays near the stove when in the house. This, too, accounts for its fondness for crawling into pockets or under coats and blankets looking for a warm spot to snuggle.

Greediness is the one fault of this animal. The wild meerkat eats many kinds of vegetables as well as grubs, insects, small snakes, eggs, small animals and birds or just about anything that comes along. A tame meerkat is always begging and will eat anything it gets whether it be good for it or not.

Watching the animals diet is the chief concern of the owner, and if this is done, the meerkat is very likely to live happily in captivity for years.

Outcrossing Mice

Outcrossing in some varieties is a necessity, but many agree that too many fanciers start by making a too direct and drastic outcross, thereby upsetting the general make-up of the initial stock. These two views seem to sum up all questions relating to outcrossing. In other words, there may be necessity, but there are dangers. The novice should be warned of the dangers, because for him these can easily outweigh the benefits

which may be gained through the outcrossing.

Outcrossing is carried out by experienced fanciers in order to improve color markings or type, or some of the smaller elements of make-up. In very few cases is the result obtained through the first outcross and this in itself is the reason why outcrossing may become dangerous for the novice. It is also found that quite often outcrossing will breed in faults just as readily as the good points desired, which means that too often a long run of selective breeding becomes necessary before the faults are eliminated, and by which time the good points once again tend to disappear. Outcrossing is not in any way a short cut to success. The novice should stick to selective breeding, always breeding from the best in every respect.

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The Topaz cross to Self Champagnes is a correct one, Champagne being recessive to Topaz. The difficulty is that practically all present-day Topaz are bred through Champagne Tans, the object being to improve belly color in Topaz breeding. If Topaz bred through Champagne Tan are used as an outcross for Self Champagne Tan vents will be sure to follow, and again much selective breeding in resultant Self Champagnes will be needed to eliminate the fault. Usually large ears on Topaz are seldom seen. Small ears are a fault usually seen in all mice in the yellow groups, and improvement can only be made by very careful selection and breeding operations.

The only other outcross for Self Champagnes which may be successful is the Self Silver, but here again they must not be Tan bred. The Silver mouse will have a dilution effect by reason of the fact that it contains blue in its make-up, but the resultant dilution will be a regular one, and will not produce the white extremities.

Snakes From London

Six grass snakes have just arrived at the Philadelphia Zoo after an ocean voyage from England. They were shipped from the Regent's Park Zoo in London and their coming marks the resumption of trading between the two institutions. Before the war a large number of animals were exchanged, species common to North America being shipped to England in return for specimens from various parts of the British Empire. A shipment of birds and mammals, now being readied at the Philadelphia Zoo, will soon be sent to help build up the stock in the London institution. A number of the latter's animals were killed as the result of enemy action and many others died of old age or from natural causes.

The grass snake resembles our own garter snakes, but it actually is a water snake although it differs from its American relatives by laying eggs instead of producing its young alive. Only three snakes live in England, the other two being the venomous adder and the tiny, harmless crowned snake. Three of the grass snakes just received from London were collected by Frederick A. Ulmer, Jr., a member of the staff of the Academy of Natural Sciences who is now on duty with the U. S. Army in England.

Monkey Gets Loose in Pet Shop; Love Birds Love It

Chico, the monkey, had the time of his life after escaping his cage in a pet shop, in Denver, Colorado. He liberated love birds and canaries, teased the puppies and kittens, and was bathing in the aquarium with the goldfish when the manager arrived.

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