

wildlife, refuge, beaver, newspaper

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# Leave it to beavers!

By JOAN BABBAGE

Trees arch over the narrow, sandy road leading to the Unexpected Wildlife Refuge in the Atlantic County pine barrens, where Hope and Cavit Buyukmihci have created a haven for endangered species of birds and animals.

Their rustic cabin is surrounded by 350 acres of woodland, bosky swamp and meadows and overlooks a small lake. The combined fragrance of pine needles, wild roses and mountain laurel is pervasive in June, a heady aroma permeating the refuge's 10 miles of trails.

White-fringed and yellow-fringed orchids, and rattlesnake plantain, a plant bearing orchid-type flowers, will bloom later in the summer.

A rabbit and chipmunk scurry in the underbrush and a female raccoon munches on the cracked corn and sunflower seeds, which Hope Buyukmihci has set out on a feeding platform next to the house.

Although grouse, grey and red foxes, ducks, raptors, opossum, otters, muskrats, snakes and deer make their home in the refuge, its undisputed stars are the beavers.

The Buyukmihcis have spent 24 years studying the shy, intelligent but little known animals, which they believe have been sorely maligned.

"Beavers used to be numerous in this country and could be found during the day, sunning themselves near streams and lakes, but by the mid-19th century they had been hunted almost to extinction for their pelts and an oil called castoreum which was supposed to cure all human ailments," said Hope Buyukmihci, noting the animals have become reclusive and nocturnal.

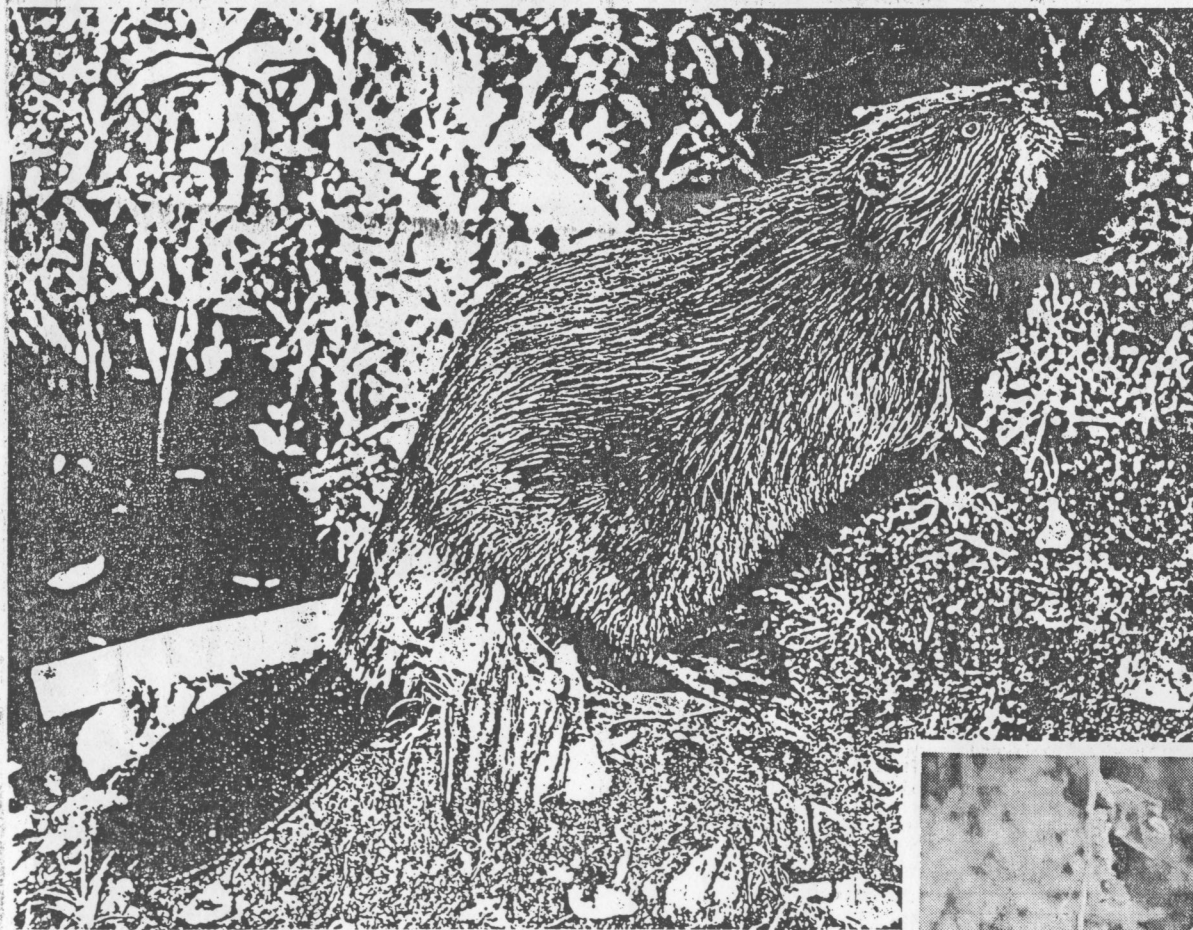
Initially, it was not beavers, however, but a desire to save the endangered bluebird, that was the inspiration for the refuge, recalls Mrs. Buyukmihci, who is a naturalist, author and artist.

She acknowledged, though, that her husband was less than enthusiastic about the project at first.

"He made it quite clear that an animal sanctuary wasn't his idea of a good real estate investment. 'You're crazy,' he grumbled. 'Animals don't pay rent.'"

But the naturalist was undaunted. She had survived living with her Turkish in-laws in Istanbul where she endured a culture which did not share, or even understand her love of animals.

The Buyukmihcis met at Cornell University. But Cavit, who was an engineering student had a commitment to return to his native land. He came home with his exotic bride and the young couple stayed for five years. They left soon after Mrs. Buyukmihci had risked what her husband's family considered to be a "public disgrace," by trying to rescue a donkey that was



Above, an adult female beaver comes out during the nighttime hours to feed in the Atlantic County refuge. At right, an early shot of Hope Sawyer Buyukmihci making friends with a wild beaver on its dam. Left, Mrs. Buyukmihci talks a walk



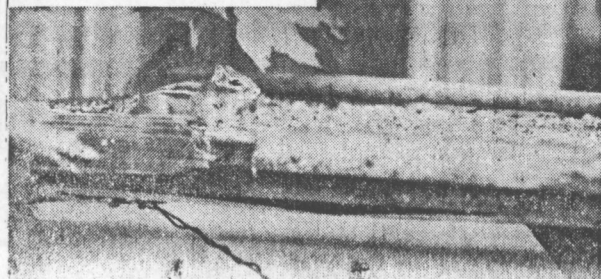
Above, an adult female beaver comes out during the night-time hours to feed in the Atlantic County refuge. At right, an early shot of Hope Sawyer Buyukmihci making friends with a wild beaver on its dam. Left, Mrs. Buyukmihci talks a walk on part of the 350 acres of refuge near Vineland



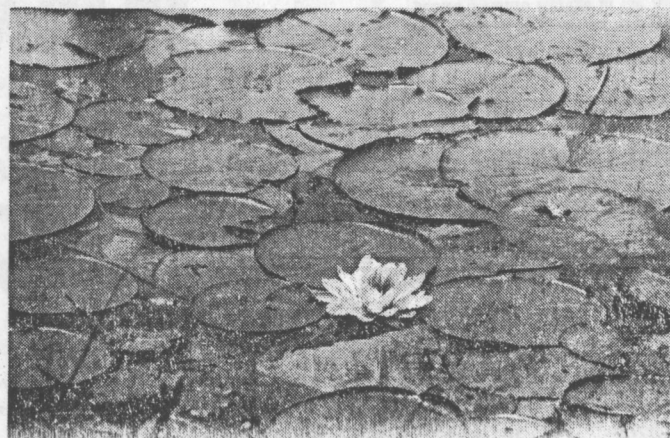
Photo by Richard Rosenberg



Photo by Richard Rosenberg



Above, a Canada goose comes in for a landing on the lake. At right, water lilies abound in their natural setting, undisturbed. Left, a chipmunk stops to investigate the meal in a feeder provided by Mrs. Buyukmihci



continued to buy up parcels of land to enlarge the sanctuary.

Their first project was installing blue bird houses in the remote, open places that the shy birds like. And they planted their favorite foods, dogwood and an orchard of apples and persimmons.

Bluebirds now nest at the Unexpected Refuge every spring, along with other endangered species, such as wood ducks and raptors.

The Buyukmihcis did not know about the beavers at first, the naturalist remembers.

"We found their lodge, a well-engineered abode of mud, sticks and logs, but we were not sure if any of the animals still lived there," she said, noting she saw the first beaver during the winter while the pond was frozen over.

"He was swimming beneath a thin sheet of ice. He was medium-sized, as beavers go, about four-feet long and weighing 50 pounds. His compact, chunky body conveyed an impression of great muscular strength beneath the soft, furry coat."

The naturalist deprecates the fact that much of the literature about beavers describes the value of their pelts, rather than their charm as friends, their intelligence, resourcefulness, and distinctive

personalities.

Their 24 years of study has been an enriching experience for the Buyukmihcis, who have rehabilitated injured beavers and even raised a young orphan, whom they named Chopper.

A decade ago, the baby beaver resided in their living room, where he had a glorious time chewing on furniture and door jambs. In the wild, the animals like to eat the bark of aspen, poplar and birch trees, as well as apples and blueberries.

To help return Chopper to the company of other

five years. They left soon after Mrs. Buyukmihci had risked what her husband's family considered to be a "public disgrace," by trying to rescue a donkey that was being beaten by its owner. She had to be restrained from hitting the man with a heavy cane.

"After the donkey incident, I began to regard my feelings about animals in a new light," she explained. "I knew the feeling was love, a willingness to take risks and responsibility."

Because of her love of wildlife and boundless determination, Mrs. Buyukmihci eventually convinced her husband that an animal sanctuary was, indeed, a good investment and a learning experience for their three children, who had never seen a bluebird.

The couple bought a tumbled down shack on 85 acres. They renovated their new home and during the past 20 years they have





'Look Daddy, they even let me sit on the table'

## A SNIP IN TIME

Seven-year-old Joseph has cystic fibrosis, but luckily, there are many who are willing to help. The Morris County Hairdressers, Affiliate 8, sponsored a "Help Little Joseph" haircut-a-thon in Boonton.

C. Margaret Falduto, former president of the New Jersey State Hairdressers, took charge of the event which ran from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thirty volunteers worked two-hour shifts to raise \$1,200 for Joe. Boonton Mayor Anthony Bucco served as Honorary Chairman of the event.

Entertainment was also provided. Magicians from the Society of American Magicians, Morris Assembly 168, delighted the crowd, while the Boonton Dance Team charmed them with their dancing.

*Kay Kato*



**ON LOCATION  
IN JERSEY**



'Where else can you find such flexible hairdressers?'

## Beavers flourish in some 'Unexpected' places

### Animals sheltered in Pine Barrens

Continued from Page One

beavers, the Buyukmihci constructed a 60-foot tunnel, extending from their living room to the lake.

Although the beaver kit eventually adapted to his wild habitat, he continued to be friendly to mankind, visiting a nearby Girl Scout Camp, where he delighted the campers with his aquatic skills and allowed them to pet and feed him.

But friendship with humans proved to be Chopper's undoing.

A terrified fisherman killed the tame beaver with an oar, when the animal tried to climb into his boat.

Chopper's demise has made the Buyukmihci more determined than ever to preserve the animals.

They have organized "The Beaver Defenders," a tax-exempt, charitable organization, which has 200 members around the nation.

Mrs. Buyukmihci gives lectures about wildlife in general and beavers in particular to children and adults.

She edits a quarterly newsletter and she has written "Unexpected Treasures," with Hans Fandel and co-authored "Beaversprite" with Dorothy Richards, who has an animal sanctuary near Little Falls, N. Y.

The books, which are a source of revenue for the sanctuary, can be obtained by writing to the Unexpected Wildlife Refuge, Inc., Newfield, 08344.

"It has not been easy to maintain the refuge," Mrs. Buyukmihci acknowledged.

The work is never ending. Cavit Buyukmihci has put his engineering skills to use by constructing a lengthy cement walk over the sanctuary's swampy areas. A slender, but sturdy

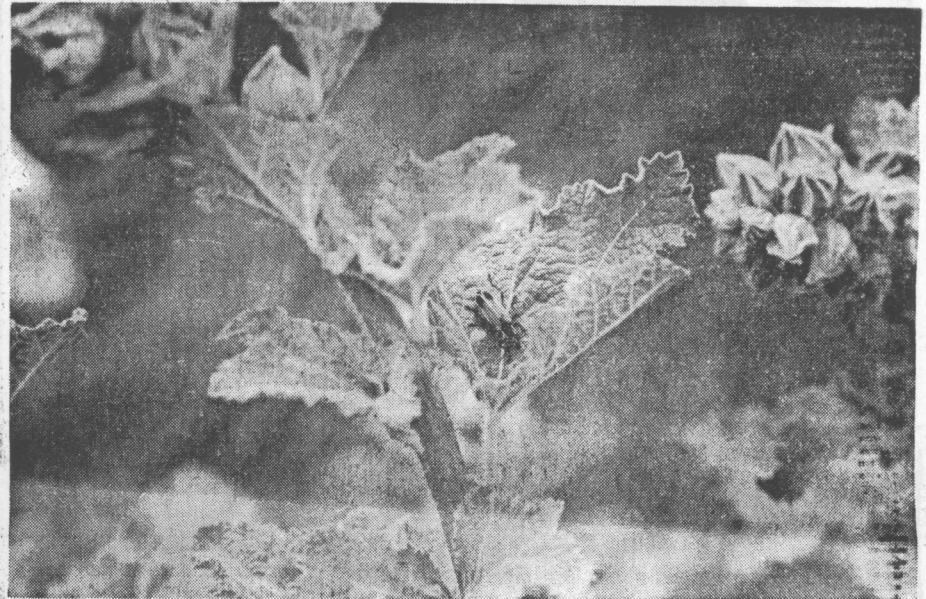
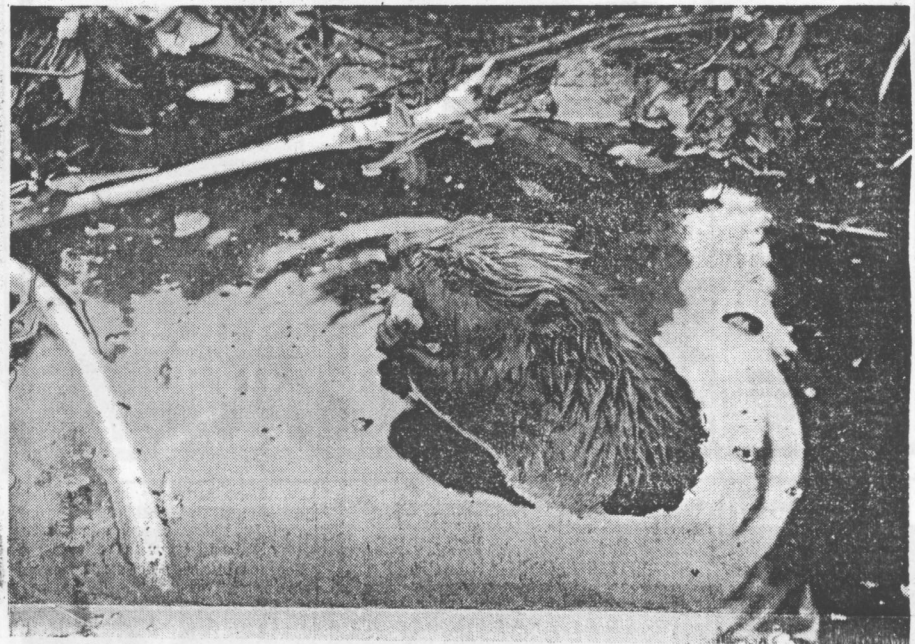


Photo by Richard Rosenberg

Insects are just part of the natural way of life in the refuge, where pesticides are not in use at all



This three-month-old beaver kitten surfaces long enough to have something to eat near his lodge





'Where else can you find such flexible hairdressers?'



'But I only wanted a little trim!'



'I have hotdogs growing where my hair used to be!'



Ray Kato



Photo by Richard Rosenberg

Mrs. Buyukimhci in the kitchen where she has just finished making bread.

figure, Mrs. Buyukimhci maintains the miles of trails, and she mows the meadows with a handdriven lawnmower.

But the couple's biggest challenge has been keeping out a horde of poachers, who try to enter the sanctuary every season.

They have been harrassed and threatened and frequently found they were on their own as far as the local police were concerned.

Unintimidated, the couple plan to buy more acreage to protect wildlife.

In her lectures and her publications, Mrs Buyukimhci gets the message across that beavers help mankind.

"The animals conserve water with their small dams, and prevent floods and drought," she said. "They control soil erosion, keep waterways open, control aquatic growth, and thin out trees."

"In addition, they prevent forest fires by making more water available, enhance the habitat for other wildlife, keep water tables high and provide us with an unparalleled opportunity for study and companionship."

The Buyukimhcis name most of the beavers in their refuge. Among the tamest of the animals are Harry and Maria, who bring their kittens to be hand-fed such delicacies as poplar twigs and apples.

Despite the work and problems involved with maintaining the refuge, Hope Buyukimhci is comforted by the fact that conservationist ideas are getting wider attention today than ever before.

"It is in my contact with children that I find the most encouraging sign of all," she commented. "Nearly without exception youngsters have a natural fondness and genuine sympathy for animals and an appreciation of their beauty and joy of living."

"But I will not be completely satisfied until there are beavers in every brook and lake," she stressed.

"And the animals are fully appreciated."

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This three-month-old beaver kitten surfaces long enough to have something to eat near his lodge

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