



Beavers Turn Wild

By MIKE CLARK

Inquirer Environmental Writer

When Mrs. Hope Sawyer Buyukmihci talks about birds, animals and the beauties of nature she gets a far-away look in her eyes. Words fail her. And she ends up shrugging her shoulders resignedly, having once more failed to describe the indescribable.

But this doesn't stop her from trying. In fact, she never stops trying to make converts to her cause: The preservation of nature and, in particular, the beaver.

Mrs. Buyukmichi (pronounced buke-mucha) and her Turkish husband, Cavit, own about 250 acres of undeveloped land straddling the Gloucester and Atlantic County borders near Downstown, N. J.

PERPETUAL PRESERVE

The land, which will be held in perpetuity as a preserve, is called the Unexpected Wildlife Refuge. It's located about a mile off the main route on a road locally known as Unexpected rd., an unmarked, officially unnamed and thoroughly unexpected road.

Outside the low-slung frame house, evidence of beavers is everywhere. The author and self-taught naturalist is quick to point it out: A gnawed tree stump, a small dike in the lake outside the front door.

Inside, symbols of her love for the furry animals is also

evident: Pictures, drawings, and books about beavers coexist with the amenities of life itself.

INSPIRED BY SLOGANS

"Here's a drawing two nine-year-olds from Wisconsin sent me," she said holding up a large piece of paper. "Their slogan, 'Beavers Turn Wilderness into Happiness,' has inspired me. I intend to use it in my next illustration."

Mrs. Buyukmihci's love affair with nature and the beaver began about 10 years ago when she and her husband first started assembling the wildlife refuge. She found traces of the animals and after a long process, finally had them eating out of her hands.

One thing led to another and within a few years, she was publishing a monthly newsletter called, "The Beaver Defenders," which today is sent out to some 500 persons who pay \$3 per year.

LETTERS PUBLISHED

The publication consists of letters from loyal readers across the country who describe their efforts at lobbying for antitrapping laws, or cite individual victories won for the beaver against a hostile society. Included in the newsletter, are reprints from various nature magazines.

TWO BOOKS WRITTEN

Besides the monthly newsletter, Mrs. Buyukmihci has written two books. The first, "Unexpected Treasure,"

was published in 1968 while the second, "Hour of the Beaver," was published this summer.

As far as she has been concerned, owning the refuge has been a long, hard and often bitter fight against one segment of the population which doesn't often hit the headlines adversely: Hunters.

"We've been here for 10 years and every year the hunters have told us that we won't be here the next," she said with a sad shake of her head. "They've told us they are going to kill us and burn us out."

"But we've stuck it out and so far, nothing has happened to us," she said.

HARDER AND HARDER

But every year, it gets harder and harder to defend the refuge from encroachment by the hunters. "Last year it was the worst," she said. "Hunting lands must be shrinking."

Mrs. Buyukmihci thrives on showing visitors the refuge. The price of admission is nothing more than a helping hand at gathering poplar boughs for the beavers in the lake.

PATHS IN FOREST

Following Mrs. Buyukmihci through the narrow paths carefully cut through the pine forest is no easy task. Clad in an old blouse, corduroy slacks and high tennis shoes, she moves with a quick familiarity.

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ty derived from a decade of tramping the same area.

Most of the land away from the lake itself, is covered by water ranging from one to three feet. She explained that the beavers keep paths open under the water so they can get back and forth from their home to the lake.

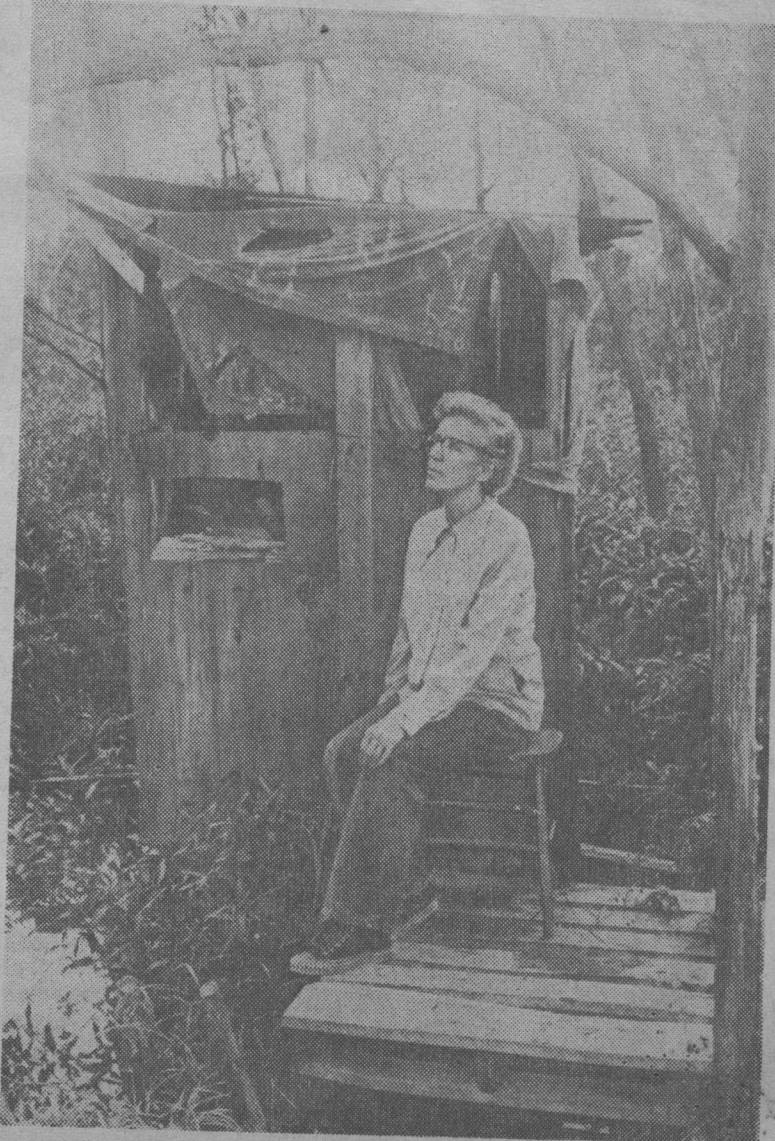
To keep her own feet dry and provide access to a special picture-taking "blind" a short distance from the beaver's home, Mrs. Buyukmihci has laid out a series of narrow boards from one tuft of grass to the next.

The refuge is not solely devoted to beavers. Deer, otters and any number of different birds have been sighted on the grounds. To insure plenty of wildlife cover and food, the family has planted various kinds of fruit trees and berry bushes.

The entire Buyukmihci family is devoted to animals. Their devotion reaches such heights that they are all vegetarians. "I love animals and I could not think of killing them for food," she said.

The eldest — a boy — intends to become a veterinarian and plans to practice in the area. The two girls are just as devoted to the animals as Mrs. Buyukmihci is.

How does she get along on the vegetarian diet? "Do I look sick? It didn't make me beautiful, but it kept me healthy."



Inquirer photo by CHARLES W. JAMES

Mrs. Hope Sawyer Buyukmihci at a blind in the Unexpected Wildlife Refuge near Downtown, N. J. Beavers, deer, otters and any number of different birds have been sighted at sanctuary.