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GRASSHOPPER MICE HAVE
BENEFICIAL FOOD HABITS

Grasshopper mice, rodents ranging over the Western States and parts of Canada and Mexico, are so largely insectivorous and carnivorous in their food habits as to make them of considerable value in checking the natural increase of injurious insects of a number of kinds, and in keeping a wholesome balance among many groups of small animal life, says a technical bulletin just issued by the Bureau of Biological Survey, U. S. Department of Agriculture, on the life history and habits of grasshopper mice.

Injury to crops occasioned by grasshopper mice is so slight as to be negligible, it is stated, and as so many of our native rodents have habits conflicting with human interests, making it necessary to control their abundance, a group that is useful to man and beneficial to agriculture is of special interest and importance.

The first part of the bulletin, by Vernon Bailey, a field naturalist of the Bureau of Biological Survey, Department of Agriculture, gives a general account of the habits and life history of the grasshopper mice, with notes on their food, as observed in live specimens kept in captivity and in the examination of large numbers in the field. The second part, by Charles C. Sperry, an economic biologist of the Biological Survey, is a detailed report

on the food of the genus as determined from laboratory examination of the contents of 96 stomachs of the mice collected in 13 States in every month of the year.

More than half of the food of these mice was found to consist of grasshoppers, crickets, caterpillars, and moths, and about a fifth was beetles. Insect food was about four-fifths of the total. Cultivated grains were less than a twentieth of the food, and, "as it consisted mostly of wheat eaten in July, it was probably waste," says the bulletin. The conclusion from this evidence is that grasshopper mice should certainly be regarded as economically beneficial.

This conclusion substantiates the observations of Mr. Bailey, who says: "So far as is known, grasshopper mice are practically harmless in the usual ways in which many others of the small rodents destroy crops, forage, trees, fruit, or man's personal property. They consume great numbers of many destructive insects and of small animals that are not ordinarily reached or held in check by birds or other animals. Their destruction of other small rodents, especially the young, undoubtedly tends to serve as a check on overabundance of many harmful species."

The bulletin, No. 145-T, "Life History and Habits of Grasshopper Mice, Genus *Onychomys*," may be obtained from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., at 10 cents per copy.