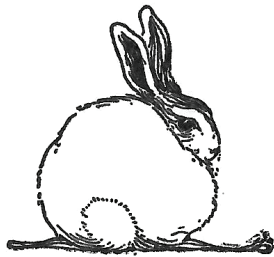


BUN
a wild rabbit

by
Joseph Wharton Lippincott



Illustrated by the author

No Fear Schoolhouse Press 2022

INTRODUCTION

IF WE had eyes able to pierce the darkness of night—the feeding time of the timid little furry creatures—we could see an astonishing number of interesting wild folk in places where their presence had never before even been suspected. Who, for example, would guess that in summer many flower gardens in the very heart of large cities are nightly the playground of mice which come for seeds, of screech owls which come for the mice, and of bats which fly there to catch insects?

Of course, the nearer we live to woods and to open country, the more little animals we can find. The mole, in spite of the value of his wonderful fur, still lives to push tunnels about our otherwise neat lawns. His underground galleries serve as runways for lively little shrews and for the short-tailed meadow mice which delight in eating garden bulbs, and in allowing the blame for

BUN, A WILD RABBIT

this to rest on the good-natured old mole, who much prefers a diet of earthworms and grubs.

Red squirrels, gray squirrels, and chipmunks, which are nearly sure to appear if a wood of good size is nearby, give place at dusk to flying squirrels, and rabbits are likely to raise whole families in the strawberry beds or in the orchards, visiting the young ones only after nightfall.

If there is a brook, look for muskrats, brown weasels, and for an occasional 'coon. They, too, generally hide most carefully by day, but leave footprints in soft mud which show where they wander after dark.

A 'possum or even a skunk may pay friendly visits to the garbage cans to share the scraps with half-wild house cats, and beyond the stables a fox is just as likely as not to slink by on nightly rambles.

Sometimes there are many animals of one kind about. Then the revels become very merry; there are games of hide-and-

INTRODUCTION

seek, of catch-me-if-you-can, and many other kinds. How exciting some of these games are is shown by the racket flying squirrels can make in the ceilings or in the garret of an old house they have found some way to enter. They think they are safe there, and so romp over our heads at will.

The time to study the four-footed wood folk, as well as birds, is while they are still able to live at our very doors. It is fascinating work, for they are the shyest things in the world. Success in watching them, however, requires a knowledge of when to look, where to look, and what to look for. This is the reason for the present series of books describing some of them as actually seen in the wild state and when caught to serve as pets.

The cottontail rabbit is the natural choice as theme for volume one. Cottontails are so plentiful in nearly all parts of the country that they are probably seen more often than any others of the true

BUN, A WILD RABBIT

wood folk, with the exception, perhaps, of the gray squirrel. Their life stories are very closely linked with those of the other little creatures, and their clever tricks have never failed to interest boys and girls.

As no two animals are exactly alike, it occasionally happens that one with unusual size, speed, or cunning will be found. Such a one quickly becomes famous.

Occasionally, too, an animal that is caught and kept as a pet learns many things that help it if later it escapes. A pet that is free again is likely to grow wild very quickly, but equally likely to be a little different from his wild friends.

Writing a complete biography of any wild rabbit would prove a hopeless task. Too many things happen when no one is there to see. Therefore, to prepare a story really representative of the numerous and varied happenings in a rabbit's life, it has been found necessary to weave together incidents covered by years of observation

INTRODUCTION

of rabbits in general.

The many kinds of animals spoken of in this story of Bun still live in their wild state within the limits of the third largest city in the United States.¹ Dogs and cats and traps are always threatening them, but those that are left are wise and may escape their enemies as long as they have a few friends who understand them and allow woods and briar patches to stay uncut.

THE AUTHOR.

¹ *Philadelphia was the largest city in the U.S. in 1918.*

Contents

CHAPTER	PAGE
BUN FINDS FRIENDS AND ENEMIES	15
THE DASH FOR FREEDOM	24
RED SQUIRREL LOSES A RACE	33
BUN DESERTS THE BRIAR PATCH	43
QUEER NEIGHBORS	51
A NIGHT OF HARD RUNNING	62
BUN MEETS A RIVAL	72
BUN AND BROWNIE IN DANGER	91
BROWNIE'S TRAIL IN THE SNOW	105
ADVENTURES NEAR THE QUARRY	118

Illustrations

	PAGE
“From one pocket he hauled two balls of brown fur”	19
“He was about the size of a tennis ball”	23
“She found a comfortable place near him”	27
“It was so pleasant to... rest all day among masses of food and flowers”	41
“It was the swift Cooper’s Hawk”	53
“Around and around the board crawled the squirrel”	55
“One of the young ones... lit on a fence post”	59
““Possum... to escape trouble climbed a ‘No Trespassing Sign””	67
“He gave a snarling ‘possum the path”	77
“Brownie had settled herself comfortably”	81
“Ranger, an old hound of great fame as a hunter”	93
“There is only one way to hold a lively cottontail”	117

BUN a Wild Rabbit

CHAPTER I

BUN FINDS FRIENDS AND ENEMIES

“THERE he goes! Hurrah!” shouted a man seated near me in the train, and I looked out the window just in time to see a brown rabbit, wildly pursued by a black and white hound four times his size, dash out of the woods near the station, stop short when he found the train in his path, and then go skipping down the main street of the little Georgia town. In a wonderful way he dodged mule teams, boys and cur dogs, and in spite of all pursuers safely vanished in a hole

BUN, A WILD RABBIT

under the porch of an empty house. “Holed up!” enthusiastically cried the same outspoken person in my car. “Hand it to a cottontail for getting away every time!”

This evening incident on the journey south greatly pleased Jimmie, a lad who was traveling with me. “How did the rabbit know the hole was there?” he asked. I explained that a rabbit has so many enemies that he is ever on the lookout for just such places for refuge. Poor little animal, he has to run or hide nearly all the time. He cannot climb trees, he cannot burrow under ground to escape—but how he can run! Faster than a dog, faster than the woodland wind goes bunny; and how he can hide! The game of hide and seek is really his game, but he is

BUN FINDS FRIENDS AND ENEMIES

always the one who hides while the other animals seek.

Although Jimmie now talked about little except rabbits, it was not until the day we began the slow journey north that the real fun with them began. We were at the station waiting for the train when up the road came running breathlessly a boy from the plantation. He waved his big felt hat until he reached the platform, where he dropped panting beside Jimmie.

“Its rabbits,” he gasped as everyone clustered around, not knowing what calamity had made him follow in such haste. Then, after these magic words, out from one pocket he hauled two balls of brown fur with eyes like bright beads. These he deposited in his hat. Two more came out of the

BUN, A WILD RABBIT

same pocket and then four out of the corresponding pocket on the other side. Here were rabbits indeed. The rascal had discovered a nest and carried off all the little cottontails it contained with the expectation that Jimmie would wish to take them with him on the journey. Jimmie, of course, did wish to. He just ached to fill up his pockets with all eight.

At last we arranged the matter by allowing Jimmie to take one and getting the plantation boy's promise to put the other seven back in their nest for the mother rabbit to take care of. And so one little Georgia cottontail started, very much against his will, for Pennsylvania.

He was exceedingly small and looked ridiculous in his new home, a



“From one pocket he hauled two balls of brown fur”

BUN, A WILD RABBIT

dry goods box; in fact, he was about the size of a tennis ball, but his big eyes sparkled knowingly and the end of his little nose worked up and down in a lively manner whenever milk was put before him and carrots tossed into his box, so I began to think he really had a good chance to live in captivity.

And live he did, for he was a very extraordinary little rabbit, as his later exploits showed. His body grew and his ears grew, but nothing grew like his legs. Jimmie took good care of him and played with him a lot, because he did not scratch or bite; but Bun soon learned to run so fast that he could not easily be caught. He did not often show fear, but ran away just the same, because, after all, he was a little creature from the woods.

BUN FINDS FRIENDS AND ENEMIES

Perhaps it was the practice his legs got in jumping out of the dry goods box that started their unusual development. At any rate, nothing could keep him in that box, and when warm May came Bun, whose favorite place was the kitchen window-sill, where he could watch the people outside, one day found the window open and jumped out. It was only about three feet to the ground, so he was not hurt, but, as luck would have it, the gardener and his dog, Shep, just then came around the corner of the house, and with a howl of glee at seeing a rabbit drop from the sky like that, the dog started after him. Bun's long legs stretched out and he instinctively skipped for the woodpile. Shep came barking and snapping, and was not

BUN, A WILD RABBIT

more than two feet behind when the rabbit's white tail vanished between the logs. But poor Bun got such a fright that no one saw him come out all day. He had always been afraid of the gray cat, but in Shep he had encountered something new, a "cat" that barked loudly and could run too fast to suit him, although, happily, it could not follow him into holes.

And then began chapters in the little rabbits life that I set down only by carefully weaving together all the of the information I could gather from men on the farm, from tracks and other signs, and glimpses of rabbits during many trips through the woods and fields that spring and summer.



“He was about the size of a tennis ball”