

Brookings, S. Dak.
August 25, 1931.

Dr. H. E. Anthony
Curator, American Museum of Natural History
New York City

Dear Mr. Anthony:

I am in receipt of a communication from Aldo Leopold to the effect that you wish a short resume of results of my Wisconsin fox stomach examinations. I am now on a field trip and I have not access to my data, but I think that I can give you off-hand the main essentials.

The past two winters, I was able to go through the contents of between 125 and 150 fox stomachs, both reds and grays. These foxes were killed mainly in my best quail observational areas in southern Wisconsin. Broadly speaking, both species of foxes lived largely on mice during the months when deep snow did not make that sort of prey unavailable. During periods of deep snow they turned more to cottontail, then again to mice when the snow melts towards spring.

In only one case was a game bird represented. The badly digested foot of a quail was found in the stomach of a gray fox. A number of stomachs showed traces of chicken, but in the majority of instances this may be looked upon as carrion, because chickens are not especially available to foxes during southern Wisconsin winters, and farmers in general have the habit of spreading dead chickens in the fields along with manure. The foxes have been noted eating of this material.

I regret to say that I have absolutely no data bearing upon the summer food habits of foxes. It is my suspicion that any damage done to game birds occurs probably during nesting season. It may be possible that foxes occasionally get a quail chick or the like. However, I have no evidence to substantiate this so please do not look upon this opinion as actual data.

Some time during the year I hope to write up my fox studies in the form of an article, possibly to be submitted to the Journal of Mammalogy. However, I have a number of articles which I must get out before that time, so I will be unable to work up any formal paper on fox food habits for some months.

Yours sincerely,

Paul L. Errington,
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U. S. Biology Survey and
University of Wisconsin.

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