

BAPTIST FEATURES

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RACCOONS TAMED AND UNTAMED By Aylesa Forsee

People who have raccoons for pets claim they are smarter than dogs. Coons learn quickly to unlock cages, unbuckle collars or mimic their owners. One man taught his pet to sit up and salute whenever he heard a recording of the "Star Spangled Banner."

But raccoons can be pests in the house. Curious and fun-loving, they will snoop into everything from the flour bin to a jewel box. They like to climb. Unless carefully trained while very young they will climb over furniture, up curtains, or pull tablecloths to the floor. They chew shoes, lick sugar from the bowl and hide anything small enough for them to carry around.

Young raccoons tumble and box like little kittens. They like to be stroked and have their ears scratched.

The raccoon has a roly-poly body covered with thick hair ranging from light tan to a brown that is almost black. The hair is straight and soft. Mr. Coon has an almost pretty face, saucy whiskers, and perky ears.

His tail is ringed and bushy. Around his piercing eyes is a mask of darker fur that makes him look like a bandit.

Most raccoons live in the woods -- not in people's houses. Mr. Coon especially likes a nice warm southern woodland. Here he picks a tree that he can scurry up and down with ease, a tree close to a pond or stream.

Mr. Coon is always looking for something new to do. He explores constantly. Sometimes he gets himself wedged in a hollow log.

For the raccoon, daytime is bedtime. All day he snoozes in a tree -- a hollow one if he can find it. When night comes he pads around on black-soled feet, whooping and hollering, or looking for food. Mr. Coon has a huge appetite and eats a wide variety of things -- roots, birds, berries, fish, frogs, grain, nuts, insects. When he's in oyster country he cracks the shells with his strong teeth and eats the oysters. Should picnickers come his way he'll try anything from dog food to olives, macaroons, peanuts or candy.

Mr. Coon eats daintily holding his food in a skillful, hand-like paw. When there is water handy he washes every bite of food before eating. He will sit dipping morsels into the water over and over.

Some say Mr. Coon washes his food because he is cleaner than other animals. Others point out that he can't chew very well and that he moistens his food to make it easier.

Raccoons take good care of their young. Mother Coon carries babies in her teeth the way cats carry kittens. Patiently she teaches the little ones where to find food, how to hide from enemies, how to swim.

Raccoons lead a dangerous life. Large animals prey upon them. They are also at the mercy of men with guns who want their skins for fur coats or Davy Crockett caps. They also have a keen sense of smell that warns them away from their enemies.

Whether Mr. Coon is a household pet or a woodland rover he is fun to watch and he has a likeable, cute manner. Sometimes we learn something from our animal friends. Mr. Coon's neatness, his eagerness to learn are good habits for any of us to have.

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GOD'S WONDROUS WORLD
By Thelma C. Carter
(with illustration #2)

When we look at the green hills, russet earth, purple mountain peaks, blue-green lakes and clear streams, we forget that the face of the earth is terribly disfigured with wrinkles and blemishes. "Does God care?" we may ask.

Yes! He cares! Our Bible tells us, many times, of His great concern for the earth. "Great is our Lord,--" "Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains." Psalm 147:5,8.

Nature, God's masterpiece, is eternally at work removing the scars left by storms, floods, glaciers and volcanoes. Not overlooked are the deep wounds our highways cut into the land -- quarries, excavations, mines, atomic bombs, etc.

One day, take a long, thoughtful look at nature restoring her prairies, deserts, fields!

Mountains shift their position! Rivers change their beds! The earth's face is continually powdered with dust, carried by the winds and deposited in rock crevices, ravines, swamps, river and ocean beds.

Winds and waves batter rock cliffs and bluffs into sediment, which along with mud and vegetable debris, are deposited in the gaps of the earth's surface.

Isn't the miracle of nature at work restoring the earth's beauty a wonderful reminder of God's redeeming power working eternally in our hearts to rid us of the scars of sin, doubt and unbelief?

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(Is there something about God's Wondrous World you would like to see described in this column? If so please send your suggestions to Baptist Press Syndicate, 127 N. Ninth Ave., Nashville 3, Tenn.)