

THE NEW  
AMERICAN CYCLOPÆDIA:

A

Popular Dictionary

OF

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE.

EDITED BY

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derived from the public lands, and against the bill to give the widow of President Harrison \$25,000; in 1842 he voted against the increase of the navy, and in favor of refunding the fine paid by Gen. Jackson at New Orleans; in 1844 in favor of the treaty annexing Texas, in favor of the notice for ceasing the joint occupation with Great Britain of the territory of Oregon, and in favor of the admission of Texas by joint resolution of the two houses of congress. Mr. Woodbury continued a member of the senate till Sept. 1845, when President Polk appointed him a justice of the U. S. supreme court, in place of Judge Story, deceased. The office of minister to England, which the same president had desired him to accept soon after his inauguration a few months previous, he had declined. He remained upon the bench of the supreme court until his death. Throughout his public life he was an influential member and leader of the democratic party, and at the time of his death was looked upon as likely to be selected as its candidate for the presidency. He published a volume of law reports, in connection with Judge Richardson of New Hampshire, and a collection of his "Political, Judicial, and Literary Writings" appeared in 1852 (3 vols. 8vo., Boston). He received the degree of LL.D. from the Wesleyan university at Middletown, Conn., and from Dartmouth college.

WOODCHUCK, the common name of an American rodent (*arctomys monax*, Gmel.), the generic characters of which have been given under *Manxot*. It is 15 to 18 inches long, the color varying from blackish to grizzled above, and chestnut red below; the feet are always dark, and the tail blackish, sometimes with grayish rings. The form is thick and clumsy, neck hardly apparent, head broad and flat, legs short and thick, and tail short and bushy; the nose is wide, lips full and fleshy, eyes small, and ears short; feet large, and naked below; hair rather soft, and whiskers long and stout; there are rudimentary cheek pouches; stomach simple, and cæcum large; there are glands just within the rectum, which secrete a slightly offensive substance. It is found from Hudson's bay to South Carolina, and west to the neighborhood of the Rocky mountains. From its voracity and burrowing habits it is often called the ground hog; it digs deep holes in the fields, on sides of hills, or under rocks in the woods, in a slanting direction, at first upward to keep out the water, with several compartments, and usually with more than one entrance; it passes the winter in the burrow, in a lethargic state; the digging is effected by the powerful fore feet, assisted by the teeth, the dirt being thrown backward under the belly and then kicked out by the wide-spreading hind feet. The food consists of various plants, fruits, and vegetables; they are especially fond of red clover, often doing great mischief to this crop; they frequently make their incursions at midday, posting sentinels to warn them of danger by a shrill whistle; they are very vigilant, and their sense

of hearing is remarkably acute; they are very cleanly in habit. They are easily tamed and docile, eating bread, milk, and vegetables, and refusing animal food; they have 5 or 6 young at a birth; they fight boldly, and are more than a match for a dog of equal size; the flesh is rank, but is sometimes eaten.

WOODCOCK, a favorite game bird of the snipe family. The American woodcock (*philohela minor*, Gray) is 11 inches long and 17 in alar extent; the body is stout, and the head, bill, and eyes very large; the last are placed very far back, giving the bird a singularly stupid look; the tibiae are short and feathered to the joint, and the toes cleft to the base; wings short and rounded, with the first 3 primaries much attenuated, and the 4th and 5th equal and longest; tarsi stout, and nail of hind toe very short; bill  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches long, the upper mandible the longest; tail short. The upper parts are variegated with pale ashy, yellowish rufous of various shades, and black; on the hind head are 3 transverse black bands, alternating with 3 others of pale yellowish rufous; a brownish black line from the eyes to bill, and one below the eyes; lower parts pale rufous, brightest on the sides. It is found all over eastern North America; it is nocturnal in habit, as the large eyes would indicate, keeping quiet by day unless disturbed by sportsmen; it frequents fresh water marshes and the margins of streams, probing the mud and turning over the leaves in search of earth worms and larvæ with great skill and celerity. The sense of sight is very acute; from the rapidity and irregularity of its flight it is difficult for an inexperienced marksman to kill it; it is a great favorite with epicures, and is generally served with the entrails in. They pair in spring, making a nest of dried leaves and grasses, in the woods, at the foot of a bush or fallen tree; the eggs are 4 or 5,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  by  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches, dull yellowish clay-colored, with numerous patches of purplish brown; the young run as soon as hatched. They are gentle in captivity, and will eat moistened meal, bits of cheese, and similar food.—The European woodcock (*scolopax rusticola*, Linn.), *la bécasse* of the French, found all over Europe, in N. Asia, and in Japan, is about 14 inches long, with long wings, the first primary being the longest; the plumage is like the American, being variously mottled with yellowish and ruddy brownish black and gray, recalling that of the goatsucker; the head is grayish in front, yellowish brown with transverse darker brown streaks behind. It is found in dry and high ground in summer, and in the woods and swamps in the autumn, when it is generally seen singly or in pairs, especially in dull weather; the food and habits are the same as in the American species.

WOODFALL, WILLIAM, an English newspaper reporter, born in London about 1745, died there, Aug. 1, 1803. He was the younger brother of Henry Sampson Woodfall, by whom the "Public Advertiser" newspaper was conducted when the letters of Junius were pub-