

Having lived in Nebraska for 14 years before moving back to Minnesota, I still keep up with what's going on in the Cornhusker State. After all, I have 4 children and 3 grandchildren living there. There's a Facebook page I follow called Nebraska thru the Lens. Professional and amateur photographers alike post pictures of all things Nebraska. Last winter it was all the snow pictures and then this spring it was all the flooding pictures. And of course, there are a lot of pictures of nature and birds and animals. People forget how scenic Nebraska is once you get off I-80. North central and northwest Nebraska is very scenic. You can follow this page yourself on Facebook. You just can't post pictures unless they are taken in Nebraska.

One day a photographer, Karen Kader, had a picture of an animal that we here in Minnesota are very familiar with. Her opening description read as follows: A very rare Cobra/Snake/Squirrel hybrid thingy. I looked at the picture again and said to myself: Self, that's a striped gopher. Although Karen and many others in Nebraska call them a 13 lined ground squirrel. I never took the time to count the lines on the squirrel, ahh, I mean gopher. I suppose there are 13 lines on them. But I've never heard of a University of Minnesota athletic team called the Minnesota Ground Squirrels.



This also got me thinking that the mascot Goldy has never distinguished himself as a striped gopher or pocket gopher. He does have stripes on his tail but not on the body. I looked at the picture taken at Farmfest a few years ago when I and fellow farm broadcaster Jerry Groskreutz of KDHL were posing with Goldy. While Jerry posed politely, I was grabbing Goldy's tail. The tail would tell me he's a striped gopher while his body would suggest a pocket gopher. Maybe he's the hybrid, a very rare Cobra/Snake/Squirrel hybrid thingy.



All this gopher talk got me thinking back to my younger days when I would trap gophers. My brother Harv showed me how to set the traps and he told me I could make some money doing this. At the time, many townships including Concord Township had a bounty on gophers. My early recollection was that a striped gopher was worth 10¢ and a pocket gopher was worth 25¢. And at some point during my trapping days, the bounty was increased to 25¢ for striped and 50¢ for pockets. Now to prove to the town board that you indeed had caught the gopher or in the case of the striped gopher, shot it with a 22; you did not have to keep the whole gopher. You cut the tail off the striped gopher and cut the front feet of the pocket gopher. In my case, I would do that, stick the assorted tails and feet in a Hills Brothers coffee can and put it in the freezer until I could get them to the town board. The putting of the gopher parts in the freezer was a point of contention with my mom. I think at some point, my dad was threatened with gopher chow mein unless he got those things out of her freezer. There was also some loud disagreement when my dad mentioned that at least he didn't use the new Tupperware.

I called Darrel Faulkner the other day to confirm that indeed my recollection about the bounty was correct. He said it was. He would have a few kids bring the gopher parts to his farm. He would pay them and then get reimbursed from the township later. Evidently some other moms did not want animal parts in the family freezer and they didn't want to wait for the next town board meeting. I also remembered that there was a bounty on crows. Karen Faulkner confirmed that. She said she remembered that her grandfather said the crows would come and eat the corn. This was back in the day when farmers kept enough corn on hand to use as seed the next year. Now I'm not totally sure if they were eating the corn stored for the next year or if they were eating the seed after it was planted. Either way, the crows were a problem and hence a bounty was put on them. I recollect it was 50¢ per crow back somewhere around the early 1960's. And again you had to cut off the feet of the crow and get the Hill Brothers coffee can out again. Hey at least it wasn't Tupperware.

