

# The Burgess Animal Book for Children

## JOHNNY CHUCK JOINS THE CLASS

PETER RABBIT delivered Mother Nature's message to Johnny Chuck. Johnny didn't seem at all pleased. He grumbled and growled to himself. He didn't want to go to school. He didn't want to learn anything about his relatives. He was perfectly satisfied with things as they were. The truth is, Johnny Chuck was already beginning to get fat with good living and he is naturally lazy. As a rule he can find plenty to eat very near his home, so he seldom goes far from his own doorstep. Peter left him grumbling and growling, and chuckled to himself all the way back to the dear Old Briar-patch. He knew that Johnny Chuck would not dare disobey Old Mother Nature.

Sure enough, the next morning Johnny Chuck came waddling through the Green Forest just as Old Mother Nature was about to open school. He didn't look at all happy, and he didn't reply at all to the greetings of the others. But when Old Mother Nature spoke to him he was very polite. "Good morning, Johnny Chuck," said she.

Johnny bobbed his head and said, "Good morning."

"I understand," continued Old Mother Nature, "that you are not at all interested in learning about your relatives. I am sorry for any one who doesn't want to learn. The more one knows the better fitted he is to take care of himself and do his part in the work of the Great World. However, it wasn't for your benefit that I sent word for you to be here this morning. It was for the benefit of your friends and neighbors. Now sit up so that all can get a good look at you."

Johnny Chuck obediently sat up, and of course all the others stared at him. It made him feel quite uncomfortable. "You remember," said Old Mother Nature, "how surprised you little folks were when I told you that Johnny Chuck is a member of the Squirrel family. Happy Jack, you go sit beside Johnny Chuck, and the rest of you look hard at Happy Jack and Johnny and see if you do not see a family resemblance."

Seeing Happy Jack and Johnny Chuck sitting up side by side, Peter Rabbit caught the resemblance at once. There was a sort of family look about them. "Why! Why-ee! Johnny Chuck does look like a Squirrel," he exclaimed.

"Of course he looks like a Squirrel, because he is one," said Old Mother Nature. "Johnny Chuck is very much bigger and so stout in the body that he has none of the gracefulness of the true Squirrels. But you will notice that the shape of his head is much the same as that of Happy Jack. He has a Squirrel face when you come to look at him closely. The Woodchucks, sometimes called Ground Hogs, though why any one should call them this is more than I can understand, belong to the Marmot branch of the Squirrel family, and wherever found they look much alike.

"As you will notice, Johnny Chuck's coat is brownish-yellow, his feet are very dark brown, almost black. His head is dark brown with light gray on his cheeks. Beneath he is reddish-orange, including his throat. His tail is short for a member of the Squirrel family, and although it is bushy, it is not very big. He has a number of whiskers and they are black. Some Woodchucks are quite gray, and occasionally there is one who is almost, or wholly black, just as there are black Gray Squirrels.



The familiar Woodchuck is a true Marmot.

"Johnny, here, is not fond of the Green Forest, but loves the Old Orchard and the Green Meadows. In some parts of the country there are members of his family who prefer to live just on the edge of

the Green Forest. You will notice that Johnny has stout claws. Those are to help him dig, for all the Marmot family are great diggers. What other use do you have for those claws, Johnny?"

"They help me to climb," replied Johnny promptly.

"Climb!" exclaimed Peter Rabbit. "Who ever heard of a Woodchuck climbing?"

"I can climb if I have to," retorted Johnny Chuck indignantly. "I've climbed up bushes and low trees lots of times, and if I can get a good run first, I can climb up the straight trunk of a tree with rough bark to the first branches—if they are not too far above ground. You ask Reddy Fox if I can't; he knows."

"That's quite true, Johnny," said Old Mother Nature. "You can climb a little, but as a real climber you are not much of a success. You are better as a digger."

"He certainly is all right as a digger," exclaimed Peter Rabbit. "My, how he can make the sand fly! Johnny Chuck certainly is right at home when it comes to digging."

"You ought to be thankful that he is," said Old Mother Nature, "for the holes he has dug have saved your life more than once. By the way, Peter, since you are so well acquainted with those holes, suppose you tell us what kind of a home Johnny Chuck has."

Peter was delighted to air his knowledge. "The last one I was in," said he, "was a long tunnel slanting down for quite a distance and then straightening out. The entrance was quite large with a big heap of sand out in front of it. Down a little way the tunnel grew smaller and then remained the same size all the rest of the way. Way down at the farther end was a nice little bedroom with some grass in it. There were one or two other little rooms, and there were two branch tunnels leading up to the surface of the ground, making side or back doorways. There was no sand around either of these, and they were quite hidden by the long grass hanging over them. I don't understand how Johnny made those doorways without leaving any sand on the doorsteps."

"Huh!" interrupted Johnny Chuck. "That was easy enough. I pushed all the sand out of the main doorway so that there would be nothing to attract the attention of any one passing near those back doorways. Those back doorways are very handy in time of danger."

"Do you always have three doorways?" asked Happy Jack.

"No," replied Johnny Chuck. "Sometimes I have only two and once in a while only one. But that isn't really safe, and I mean always to have at least two."

"Do you use the same house year after year?" piped up Striped Chipmunk.

Johnny shook his head. "No," said he. "I dig a new hole each spring. Mrs. Chuck and I like a change of scene. Usually my new home isn't very far from my old one, because I am not fond of traveling. Sometimes, however, if we cannot find a place that just suits us, we go quite a distance." "Are your babies born down in that little bedroom in the ground?" asked Jumper the Hare.

"Of course," replied Johnny Chuck. "Where else would they be born?"

"I didn't know but Mrs. Chuck might make a nest on the ground the way Mrs. Peter and Mrs. Jumper do," replied Jumper meekly.

"No, siree!" replied Johnny. "Our babies are born in that little underground bedroom, and they stay down in the ground until they are big enough to hunt for food for themselves."

"How many do you usually have?" inquired Chatterer the Red Squirrel.

"Six or eight," replied Johnny Chuck. "Mrs. Chuck and I believe in large families."

"Do you eat nuts like the rest of our family?" inquired Striped Chipmunk.

"No," replied Johnny Chuck. "Give me green food every time. There is nothing so good as tender sweet clover and young grass, unless it be some of those fine vegetables Farmer Brown grows in his garden."

Peter Rabbit nodded his head very emphatically as if he quite agreed.

"I suppose you are what is called a vegetarian, then," said Happy Jack, to which Johnny Chuck replied that he supposed he was. "And I suppose that is why you sleep all winter," added Happy Jack.

"If I didn't I would starve," responded Johnny Chuck promptly. "When it gets near time for Jack Frost to arrive, I stuff and stuff and stuff on the last of the good green things until I'm so fat I can hardly waddle. Then I go down to my bedroom, curl up and go to sleep. Cold weather, snow and ice don't worry me a bit."

"I know," spoke up Striped Chipmunk. "I sleep most of the winter myself. Of course I have a lot of food stored away down in my house, and once in a while I wake up and eat a little. Do you ever wake up in the winter, Johnny Chuck?"

"No," replied Johnny. "I sleep right through, thank goodness. Sometimes I wake up very early in the spring before the snow is all gone, earlier than I wish I did. That is where my fat comes in handy. It keeps me warm and keeps me alive until I can find the first green plants. Perhaps you have noticed that early in the spring I am as thin as I was fat in the fall. This is because I have used up the fat, waiting for the first green things to appear."

"Do you have many enemies?" asked Peter Rabbit, who has so many himself that he is constantly thinking of them.

"Not many, but enough," growled Johnny Chuck. "Reddy Fox, Old Man Coyote, men and Dogs are the worst. Of course, when I was small I always had to be watching out for Hawks, and of course, like all the rest of us little folks, I am afraid of Shadow the Weasel. Reddy Fox has tried to dig me out more than once, but I can dig faster than he can. If he ever gets me cornered, he'll find that I can fight. A small Dog surprised me once before I could get to my hole and I guess that Dog never will tackle another Woodchuck."

"Time is up," interrupted Old Mother Nature. "Johnny Chuck has a big cousin out in the mountains of the Great West named Whistler, and on the prairies of the Great West he has a smaller cousin named Yap Yap. They are quite important members of the Marmot family, and to-morrow I'll tell

you about them if you want me to. You need not come tomorrow, Johnny Chuck, unless you want to," she added.

Johnny Chuck hung his head, for he was a little ashamed that he had been so unwilling to come that morning.

"If you please, Mother Nature," said he, "I think I'll come. I didn't know I had any close relatives, and I want to know about them."

So it was agreed that all would be on hand at sun-up the next morning, and then everybody started for home to think over the things they had learned.

## WHISTLER AND YAP YAP

JOHNNY CHUCK was the first one on hand the next morning. The fact is, Johnny was quite excited over the discovery that he had some near relatives. He always had supposed that the Woodchucks were a family by themselves. Now that he knew that he had some close relatives, he was filled with quite as much curiosity as ever Peter Rabbit possessed. Just as soon as Old Mother Nature was ready to begin, Johnny Chuck was ready with a question. "If you please," said he, "who are my nearest relatives?"

"The Marmots of the Far West," replied Old Mother Nature. "You know, you are a Marmot, and these cousins of yours out there are a great deal like you in a general way. The biggest and handsomest of all is Whistler, who lives in the mountains of the Northwest. The fact is, he is the biggest of all the Marmot family."

"Is he much bigger than Johnny Chuck?" asked Peter Rabbit.

"Considerably bigger," replied Old Mother Nature, nodding her head. "Considerably bigger. I should think he would weigh twice as much as Johnny."

Johnny's eyes opened very wide. "My!" he exclaimed, "I should like to see him. Does he look like me?"

"In his shape he does," said Old Mother Nature, "but he has a very much handsomer coat. His coat is a mixture of dark brown and white hairs which give him a grayish color. The upper part of his head, his feet and nails are black, and so are his ears. A black band runs from behind each ear down to his neck. His chin is pure white and there is white on his nose. Underneath he is a light, rusty color. His fur is thicker and softer than yours, Johnny; this is because he lives where it is colder. His tail is larger, somewhat bushier, and is a blackish-brown."

"If you please, why is he called Whistler?" asked Johnny Chuck eagerly.

"Because he has a sharp, clear whistle which can be heard a very long distance," replied Old Mother Nature. "He sits up just as you do. If he sees danger approaching he whistles, as a warning to all his relatives within hearing."

"I suppose it is foolish to ask if he lives in a hole in the ground as Johnny Chuck does," spoke up Peter Rabbit.

"He does," replied Old Mother Nature. "All Marmots live in holes in the ground, but Whistler lives in entirely different country. He lives up on the sides of the mountains, often so high that no trees grow there and the ground is rocky. He digs his hole down in between the rocks."

"It must be a nice, safe hole," said Peter. "I guess he doesn't have to worry about being dug out by Reddy Fox."

"You guessed quite right," laughed Old Mother Nature. "Nevertheless, he has reason to fear being dug out. You see, out where he lives, Grizzly, the big cousin of Buster Bear, also lives, and Grizzly is very fond of a Marmot dinner when he can get one. He is so big and strong and has such great claws that he can pull the rocks apart and dig Whistler out. By the way, I forgot to tell you that Whistler is also called the Gray Marmot and the Hoary Marmot. He lives on grass and other green things and, like Johnny Chuck, gets very fat in the fall and then sleeps all winter. There are one or two other Marmots in the Far West who live farther south than does Whistler, but their habits are much the same as those of Whistler and Johnny Chuck. None of them are social. I mean by that you never find two Marmot homes very close together. In this they differ from Johnny's smaller cousin, Yap Yap the Prairie Dog. Yap Yap wouldn't be happy if he didn't have close neighbors of his own kind. He has one of the most social natures of all my little people."

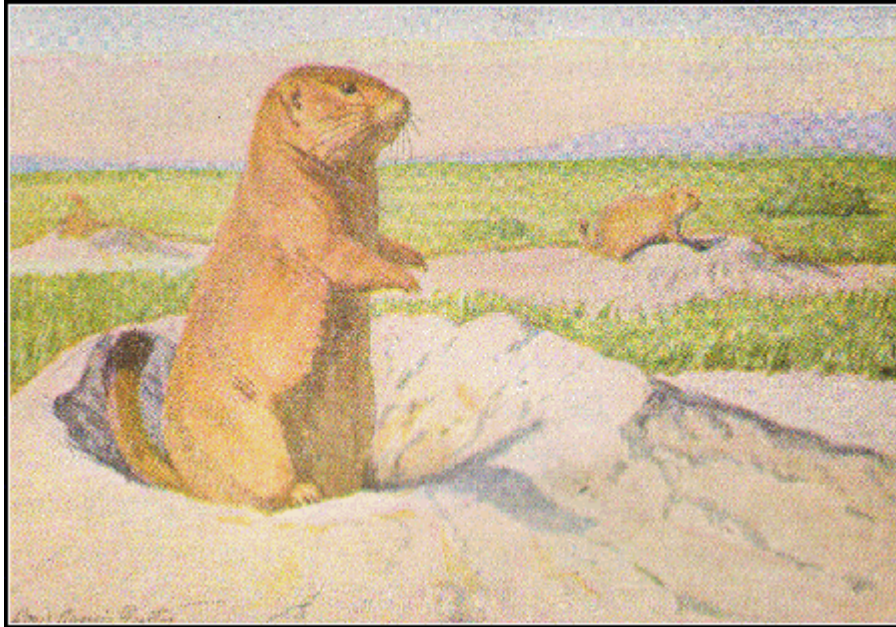




The largest of the Marmots. He lives high up on the mountains of the West.

"Tell us about him," begged Happy Jack Squirrel before Johnny Chuck, who is naturally slow, could ask for the same thing.

"Yap Yap is the smallest of the Marmot family," said Old Mother Nature. "In a way he is about as closely related to the Ground Squirrels as he is to the Marmots. Johnny Chuck has only four claws on each front foot, but Yap Yap has five, just as the Ground Squirrels have. He looks very much like a small Chuck dressed in light yellow-brown. His tail for the most part is the same color as his coat, but the end is black, though there is one member of the family whose tail has a white tip. In each cheek is a small pouch, that is, a small pocket, and this is one of the things that shows how closely related to the Spermophiles he is.



A social little Marmot who lives on the prairies of the West.

"As I said before, Yap Yap is very social by nature. He lives on the great open plains of the West and Southwest, frequently where it is very dry and rain seldom falls. When you find his home you are sure to find the homes of many more Prairie Dogs very close at hand. Sometimes there are hundreds and hundreds of homes, making a regular town. This is because the Prairie Dogs dearly love the company of their own kind."

"Does Yap Yap dig the same kind of a hole that I do?" asked Johnny Chuck.

"In a way it is like yours," replied Old Mother Nature, "but at the same time it is different. In the first place, it goes almost straight down for a long distance. In the second place there is no mound of sand in front of Yap Yap's doorway. Instead of that the doorway is right in the very middle of the mound of sand. One reason for this is that when it does rain out where Yap Yap lives it rains very hard indeed, so that the water stands on the ground for a short time. The ground being flat, a lot of water would run down into Yap Yap's home and make him most uncomfortable if he did not do something to keep it out. So he brings the sand out and piles it all the way around his doorway and presses it down with his nose. In that way he builds up a firm mound which he uses for two purposes; one is to keep the water from running down the hole, and the other is as a sort of watch tower. He sits on the top of his mound to watch for his enemies. His cousin with the white tail digs a hole more like yours.

"Yap Yap loves to visit his neighbors and to have them visit him. They are lively little people and do a great deal of talking among themselves. The instant one of them sees an enemy he gives a signal. Then every Prairie Dog scampers for his own hole and dives in head first. Almost at once he pops his head out again to see what the danger may be."

"How can he do that without going clear to the bottom to turn around?" demanded Peter.

"I wondered if any of you would think of that question," chuckled Old Mother Nature. "Just a little way down from the entrance Yap Yap digs a little room at one side of his tunnel. All he has to do is to scramble into that, turn around and then pop his head out. As I said before, his tunnel goes down very deep; then it turns and goes almost equally far underground. Down there he has a nice little bedroom. Sometimes he has more than one."

"If it is so dry out where he lives, how does he get water to drink?" asked Happy Jack.

"He doesn't have to drink," replied Old Mother Nature. "Some folks think that he digs down until he finds water way down underneath, but this isn't so. He doesn't have to have water. He gets all the moisture he needs from the green things he eats."

"I suppose, like the rest of us, he has lots of enemies?" said Peter.

Old Mother Nature nodded. "Of course," said she. "Old Man Coyote and Reddy Fox are very fond of Prairie Dog. So are members of the Hawk family. Then in some places there is a cousin of Shadow the Weasel called the Black-footed Ferret. He is to be feared most of all because he can follow Yap Yap down into his hole. There is a cousin of Hooty the Owl called the Burrowing Owl because it builds its home in a hole in the ground. You are likely to find many Burrowing Owls living in Prairie Dog villages. Also you are apt to find Buzztail the Rattlesnake there.

"A lot of people believe that Yap Yap, Buzztail and the little Burrowing Owl are the best of friends and often live together in the same hole. This isn't so at all. Buzztail is very fond of young Prairie Dog and so is the Burrowing Owl. Rather than dig a hole for himself the Owl will sometimes take possession of one of Yap Yap's deserted holes. If he should make a mistake and enter a hole in which Yap Yap was at home, the chances are that Yap Yap would kill the Owl for he knows that the Owl is an enemy. Buzztail the Rattlesnake also makes use of Prairie Dog holes, but it is safe to

say that if there are any Prairie Dog babies down there they never live to see what the outside world is like. So Buzztail and the Burrowing Owl are really enemies instead of friends of Yap Yap, the Prairie Dog."

"Why is he called a Dog?" asked Peter.

Old Mother Nature laughed right out. "Goodness knows," said she. "He doesn't look like a Dog and he doesn't act like a Dog, so why people should call him a Dog I don't know, unless it is because of his habit of barking, and even his bark isn't at all like a Dog's—not nearly so much so as the bark of Reddy Fox. Now I guess this will do for to-day. Haven't you little folks had enough of school?"

"No," cried Peter Rabbit and Jumper the Hare and Happy Jack and Chatterer the Red Squirrel and Striped Chipmunk and Johnny Chuck. "We want to know about the rest of the members of the order of Rodents or Gnawers," added Peter. "Of course in a way they are sort of related to us and we want to know about them."

Old Mother Nature laughed good-naturedly. "All right," said she, "come again to-morrow morning and we'll see what more we can learn."