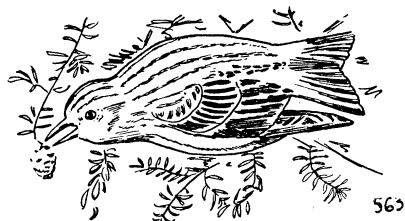


NATURE RAMBLINGS

By FRANK THONE

Two Winter Neighbors



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To see a pine siskin is a very good test of one's persistence as a bird lover and of one's ability as a bird observer. For the siskin is a most fickle fowl in the matter of its choice of a winter range, or even of a summer breeding ground, often deserting a region altogether for four or five years on end, and then suddenly re-appearing in considerable numbers. And at best it is never so numerous that you can catch a half-dozen with a sweep of your hat. Siskins stick pretty faithfully to places where there are plenty of evergreen woods, and if you want to see them you will have to go into such places to find them.

They are very attractive little birds, marked over head and throat and back with close longitudinal stripes of light and dark brown, as shown in the illustration, with deep chocolate or black wing and tail feathers touched up at the bases with bits of canary yellow. That color bears the tale of their kinship, for they are closely allied to the finches, and like all of their tribe they are fond of indulging in two things; long stretches of trilling melodious song, even in winter, and a heavy diet of seeds. Their little beaks are sharp and strong, and are well adapted to digging and tearing into the tough cones of the evergreens to get at the meaty seeds among the scales.

"Bark-inspector-extraordinary-with-powers-of-extradition." That is the nuthatch. He is one of the cheerfulness, sauciest, topsy-turviest of our winter birds, and withal one of the most useful. "Frllip!" he alights against the side of a tree trunk, and he sticks in whatever posture he alights, whether rightside up or upside down or sideways. Immediately he begins inspecting for hidden cocoons or hibernating insects or their eggs, and what he finds he pulls out and devours. His strong little toes are fitted for the wide variety of grips they must take, better than those of the

(Just turn the page)

Parents Lend Immunity

Will the solution of the measles and whooping cough problems be found right in the home?

When either of these diseases make their appearance in a German family it is the current practice to prevent those diseases or to forestall serious complications by inoculating the exposed children with blood from their parents, according to Prof. Rudolf Degkwitz, European authority on measles. Prof. Degkwitz is director of the children's clinic at the University of Greifswald in Germany and is engaged at present in measles research at the U. S. Public Health Service.

In the densely populated countries of Europe, he explained, the chances of reaching full-grown manhood or womanhood without contracting measles or whooping cough are very small. It has been established, he said, that the periodic subsequent exposures to both diseases resulting from the contacts of every day life stimulates during the whole life production of antibodies in the blood. Consequently the blood of most of the adult population of Europe or of any big city in any country is a convenient immunizing agent that can be used to prevent those diseases or to mitigate their severity in children.

"When a German child 'comes down' with either whooping cough or measles," said Prof. Degkwitz, "the physician uses the blood of the father or mother to inoculate the other children in the family. When this is done early enough in 50 per cent of the cases treated the diseases are prevented and an immunity for several months is established. In the other 50 per cent very mild forms of the disease ensue that confer as lasting an immunity on the young patient as a severe case. Measles and whooping cough in such cases are so mild, that as a rule the children do not feel ill at all and cannot be kept in bed. Since the efficacy of this method depends on its early use, German health authorities are endeavoring to teach this vital point to parents through propaganda distributed to school children." The health section of the League of Nations likewise advocates this mode of treatment, he added.

Prof. Degkwitz has been working with an animal serum to be used as a measles preventive and curative which is made from the blood of

(Just turn the page)

Helium Shortage Exists

America faces a helium shortage. And helium is the unburnable gas that, although undiscovered on earth before 1895, is used to inflate dirigibles and thus keep them from exploding as those filled with hydrogen are likely to do.

The natural gas from the Petrolia, Tex., field which has provided helium up until now is playing out. Since Congress has authorized the construction of two giant dirigibles, each 6,000,000 cubic feet capacity, to cost \$8,000,000, lack of helium is worrying government officials. The Navy and the U. S. Bureau of Mines are asking Congress to appropriate money to pipe to the Fort Worth, Tex., helium extraction plant, built during the war, the helium-bearing natural gas of Nocona, only 25 miles from Petrolia.

The appropriation desired is \$500,000 which is needed to construct the necessary pipeline and pressure plant. The bill is now awaiting action by the Senate. Once the money is appropriated it will be a matter of only six or seven months before the helium supply can be increased.

The Nocona field was discovered in 1922 but natural gas, although burned in the field, has never been drawn away. The life of the Nocona supply is about 15 years and it will probably produce from 10 to 12 million cubic feet of helium a year during that time.

More helium is essential with the construction of two giant dirigibles in view. There was never enough helium to float the Los Angeles and the Shenandoah simultaneously. With the destruction of the Shenandoah the world's largest single store of pure helium was lost. Each of the projected giant dirigibles will need three times the helium now being used by the dirigible Los Angeles.

Science News-Letter, February 19, 1927

GEOLOGY

Kilauea Growing Uneasy

Kilauea volcano, the largest of known active peaks, is showing signs of uneasiness, according to Director T. A. Jaggar of the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory. The seismographs at Volcano House are recording frequent earthquakes, there has been a marked increase of avalanches into Halemaumau Pit, and there are yellow sulphurous patches on the slopes which are increasing in area.

Science News-Letter, February 19, 1927

THEY SAY—

Letters must be short, interesting and signed.

Straight Science, Uncolored

J. J. Arnaud, patent attorney, South Milwaukee, Wis., writes:

As soon as Science News-Letter was brought to my attention I subscribed immediately; and am extremely pleased with the excellent quality of your weekly.

I have for some time been turning over my copies, as I finish them, to the instructor in physics and chemistry in the high school of this town, a most estimable gentleman of culture and refinement.

Very recently he told me that he has been reading to his classes such parts as they can understand, and finds that, with your very simple presentations of scientific progress, he succeeds in holding their attention and stimulating their interest. "You know," he added, "most of the so-called 'Popular Science' is a sad mixture of a modicum of truth with a lot of nonsense, all presented in the most sensational way. I find the students very soon tire of such magazines; especially as, to be strictly correct, I have to modify or negative many of their statements. It does not do to read them something, and then discount half of it. They lose faith in all the rest. But I find they look forward to Science News-Letter with eager interest. They like it because it's straight science, uncolored, and told in way they can readily grasp. It flatters them that they can understand science that is not 'written down' to the general public." A shrewd remark, that last!

Developed

L. L. Dickerson of the American Library Association:

This News-Letter has developed into one of the most interesting little magazines I have ever run across.

Enormous Value

W. L. Spencer, director of secondary education, Alabama Department of Education, in a letter to his principals:

The Science News-Letter will be of enormous value to science classes and teachers. I recommend it most highly.

Science News-Letter, February 19, 1927

Health measures are held mainly responsible for the decline in diphtheria deaths in New York State, from 6,500 in 1888 to 700 in 1926.

Pieces of suet tied to trees in cold weather are appreciated as heat producing food by woodpeckers, chickadees, brown creepers, and other birds.

Order gladioli early

GLORIOUS colors and big flowers delight everyone who plants Kunderd Gladioli. This year my catalog lists many new varieties as well as my famous Ruffled, Lacinated and Primulinus Hybrids. Write for my free catalog now and order early. The book is full of interesting garden lore, is illustrated in colors and contains full cultural directions.

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Parents Land Immunity

(Continued from page 119)

immunized sheep. To obtain the best results it should be administered the first day of the disease, when the temperature begins to rise. He claims that the serum administered at this time prevents measles and finishes the fever after 24 to 36 hours or else modifies the disease to a very mild form. In both cases a lasting immunity follows. The serum is on the market in Germany and is being tried out experimentally in England and other countries.

Science News-Letter, February 19, 1927

Water lilies are favorite food of wild ducks.

An automobile that can be run sideways has been invented to make parking easier.

During a recent storm in France the rain contained sand that had blown from Africa.

Doctors of the late Stone Age practised surgery with considerable skill and success.

A new steel which is hard on the surface and soft inside is said to be cheaper than alloys in use.

It is estimated that 500 million tons of helium are going to waste in this country every year.

A case of eruption strikingly like smallpox was discovered in an Egyptian mummy of about 1200 B. C.

Explorers from the British Museum found two bronze water pumps buried on the site of an ancient Etruscan city.

White ants of the tropics work in such armies that they sometimes destroy an entire building in a day.

A Nuremberg man who invented a ticking clock, in 1840, was accused of witchcraft by his wife and his neighbors.

One of New York's newest skyscrapers burns enough coal in a day to heat four average sized homes all winter.

The oriental peach moth, which probably came to this country from Japan about 1913, is becoming a serious fruit tree pest.

The U. S. Department of Agriculture is studying the cost of snow removal in different states, to find the best and cheapest methods.

Nature Ramblings

(Continued from page 119)

woodpecker, which are one-purpose toes; and his stiff little beak, though no chisel like that of his bigger neighbor, is plenty good enough to act as a pair of tweezers for dragging his prey out to where he can devour it in comfort.

The nuthatch is a pretty little fellow, too: black on head and shoulders, blue on back and wings, white underneath except well aft, where he is ruddy-tinged. He's not a singer, though; his conversation is confined to a nasal "h'runk-h'runk!" and even his spring song sounds, as one observer has said, "strangely like mirthless laughter." But though his voice is not musical, his flights from trunk to trunk are short lyrics for those who can appreciate poetry in motion. They are a series of swift, dipping little rushes, staves of staccato wingbeats, a winter scherzo of the woods.

Science News-Letter, February 19, 1927

Fishes sometimes get sea-sick from train travel.

The population of the United States will be 118,628,000 by July 1, 1927, according to census estimates.

Men immigrants outnumbered women coming to this country in every year from 1820 to 1923, except in 1922.

New train equipment to make fish comfortable when traveling is expected to reduce mortality among adult fishes on long distance journeys.

Scientific Poetry Contest

Dust off your riming dictionaries, rumple up the pages of your favorite physics, chemistry or biology, set your poetry mill to working. For the Science News-Letter invites you to feed its omnivorous appetite with tidbits in which poetry and science are pleasingly combined. The scientific poetry contest is on!

Conditions: Poems, verses, rimes, jingles or what-have-you must be original and unpublished. They must express accurately some scientific fact or situation. Address: Poetry Editor, Science Service, 21st and B Sts., Washington, D. C. Keep a copy, as unavailable contributions can not be returned.

Prizes: One poem will be published each week beginning with the issue of March 5. A prize of \$5.00 will be paid for each poem published.