

NATURE RAMBLINGS

By FRANK THONE



Badger

The very ideal of solitary, stolid, surly truculence is embodied in the squat frame of the badger. His flat shape and short, bandy legs have earned for him the nickname of "door-mat". But let no one presume upon superficial similarities to treat him as such. His hole is his donjon keep, and woe to the dog or man who would molest him. He looks out upon the world and loves it not, nor does he care a broken bone—another animal's broken bone, of course—that it loves him just as little.

Yet when he is young the badger seems to be not a bad fellow at all. A few years ago, E. J. Sawyer, government naturalist at Yellowstone National Park, captured two young badgers and raised them by hand. They took very well to the bottle, and seemed to imbibe a good deal of the milk of human kindness as well, for they became quite tame, and would come ambling up to play with their strange nurse whenever he crawled into their cage and whistled for them to come out of their shelter. The badger cage came to be one of the great attractions at the park headquarters.

Mr. Sawyer reported also on his observations of the adult badger's method of hunting. It would seem that a heavy animal with such short legs would not have much luck pursuing such agile prey as the picket-pin gopher, and would have to lie in wait until chance brought one of them within reach of a sudden pounce. Yet the ones that the naturalist watched captured their prey simply by doggedly, persistently running the rodents down, rushing after one and then another, until a victim was finally seized.

Science News-Letter, June 29, 1929

The bald eagle is so called because the white plumage on its head and neck suggests baldness.

First Glances at New Books

ANTS, BEES AND WASPS—Sir John Lubbock—*Dutton* (\$3.75). The social insects have been fortunate in their writers. There is more real literature in this field than in almost any branch of science. Such writers as Lubbock, Fabre, Wheeler, Forel, Maeterlinck, and the Peckhams have attracted a large audience of readers outside the strictly scientific circle, and the study of these insects remains one of the very few fields of research still open to the amateur observer. Lord Avebury, better known as Sir John Lubbock, was one of the first to explore this rich territory, and the record of his observations on ants, bees and wasps remains a model of scientific investigation as well as of interesting writing. But since its publication in 1887 a vast amount of more thorough research work has been done upon the question of the senses, intelligence and power of communication of insects, and therefore this new and annotated edition containing one hundred pages on recent researches is just what is needed both by the general reader and the professional entomologist.

Entomology
Science News-Letter, June 29, 1929

FIRST REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON SOIL EROSION—A. G. McCall and others—*U. S. Dept. of Agriculture*. A program for soil erosion, moisture conservation and stream regulation research. Considering the rapidity with which the topsoil birthright of this nation is slipping into the rivers and thence to the sea, the committee behind this pamphlet is to be commended for rapidity in getting into action.

Agronomy
Science News-Letter, June 29, 1929

THE FAUNAL AREAS OF SOUTHERN ARIZONA: A STUDY IN ANIMAL DISTRIBUTION—H. S. Swarth—*Proc. Calif. Acad. Sciences*, Vol. XVIII, No. 12. Of interest to students of animal ecology and taxonomy.

Zoology
Science News-Letter, June 29, 1929

NOTES ON SOME ORIENTAL SAPROMYZID FLIES (DIPTERA), WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE PHILIPPINE SPECIES—J. R. Malloch—*Govt. Printing Office*. Of interest to dipterologists.

Entomology
Science News-Letter, June 29, 1929

YEARBOOK OF AGRICULTURE, 1928—*U. S. Govt. Printing Office* (\$1.50). The U. S. Department of Agriculture has undertaken to "sell" itself to the average reader. This is the third of a series of yearly handbooks showing that there's something besides dry-as-dust formulæ and statistics produced in the bureaus of that department.

Agriculture
Science News-Letter, June 29, 1929

A REVISION OF THE WOOD-WARBLER GENUS *BESILEUTERUS* AND ITS ALLIES—W. E. Clyde Todd—*Govt. Printing Office*. Of interest to systematic ornithologists.

Ornithology
Science News-Letter, June 29, 1929

A TRAVELOG OF BIRDS—*Cornell Rural School Leaflet* (free). An exceptionally good number of a series published for free distribution to teachers in New York State.

Ornithology
Science News-Letter, June 29, 1929

LAND SNAILS FROM HAWAII, CHRISTMAS ISLAND, AND SAMOA—H. A. Pilsbry and others—*Bernice P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu*. For many years the land snails of the Pacific islands have been classic material in the study of the evolutionist. This pamphlet adds its significant bit to the data.

Conchology
Science News-Letter, June 29, 1929

BIOLOGY EXPERIMENT SHEETS—S. R. Safir—*World Book Co.* (75c). A well-gotten-up laboratory notebook for use in elementary biology courses.

Biology
Science News-Letter, June 29, 1929

LIFE HISTORY OF THE LAKE HERING OF LAKE HURON AS REVEALED BY ITS SCALES, WITH A CRITIQUE OF THE SCALE METHOD—John Van Oosten—*Govt. Printing Office* (65c). A close study of the life history of an important freshwater fish. Of interest chiefly to fisheries men.

Ichthyology
Science News-Letter, June 29, 1929

MIGRATORY-BIRD TREATY-ACT REGULATIONS AND TEXT OF FEDERAL LAWS RELATING TO GAME AND BIRDS—*U. S. Govt. Printing Office*. Of interest to all persons interested in the welfare and conservation of American game and song birds.

Ornithology—Government
Science News-Letter, June 29, 1929

First Glances at New Books—Continued

DER ZUECHTER—Edited by Edwin Baur—*Julius Springer, Berlin* (RM 7.50 yearly; single number RM 3). The first issue of a new German journal, devoted to theoretical and applied genetics, contains articles on breeding and cytology, the possibilities of producing new varieties through artificially induced mutations, recessive mutations in a breed of swine, xenia in barley, the breeding of gall-proof potatoes, etc. The journal is evidently intended for an audience in Germany comparable to that reached by the *Journal of Heredity* in this country; it is well worth a place on the reference table of any American biology department that has an adequate library fund.

Genetics

Science News-Letter, June 29, 1929

ORGANIZATION UND GESTALT IM BEREICH DER BLUETE—Wilhelm Troll—*Julius Springer, Berlin* (RM 39). Since the war, German scholars have applied themselves with renewed vigor to the painstaking and thoroughgoing researches that made the classic development of German science in the nineteenth century the wonder of the world. The present work, devoted to a more exhaustive organographic and morphological description of floral organs than has hitherto been available in one volume, is an excellent example of the new day in German botany. It will be welcomed by American botanists.

Botany

Science News-Letter, June 29, 1929

KEY-CATALOGUE OF INSECTS OF IMPORTANCE IN PUBLIC HEALTH—C. W. Stiles and Albert Hassall—*Govt. Printing Office* (20c). With medical entomology assuming an ever-increasing importance, public hygienists and workers in related fields will find this pamphlet a useful addition to their reference shelves.

Entomology—Hygiene

Science News-Letter, June 29, 1929

EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT OF PROBLEM CHILDREN—Richard H. Paynter and Phyllis Blanchard—*Commonwealth Fund*. A study of more than 300 children in Los Angeles and Philadelphia, accompanied by a statistical analysis of their physical, mental, and behavior traits and their home background, as well as their school achievement.

Education—Psychology

Science News-Letter, June 29, 1929

THE CHILD OF CIRCUMSTANCE—Albert Wilson—*William Wood and Co., N. Y.* (\$6). The author, who was a well known British physician and a specialist in problems of crime, sets forth the theory that the criminal has a child's brain in a grown-up body. This statement does not, however, give an idea of the scope and interest of the book, which is intended for the general public, rather than for sociologists. A great mass of facts on crime is presented and as the material is of European origin the point of view and the illustrations are often different from the standard material used in American works. One section of the book is devoted to penology in various countries of the world. Other sections describe types of criminal and types of mentality that produce crime.

Sociology—Psychiatry

Science News-Letter, June 29, 1929

ANCIENT TAHITI—Teuira Henry—*Bernice P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu*. A comprehensive, almost encyclopedic work on the old native customs, legends, and religious beliefs of this famous Polynesian island. The material was collected by the Rev. J. M. Orsmond, who lived in the Society Islands from 1817 to 1856 and recorded with great interest the information that the natives related. His granddaughter, Miss Henry, took over the task of preparing for publication the voluminous manuscript which Orsmond never put into print, and the greater part of her life was devoted to this work.

Ethnology

Science News-Letter, June 29, 1929

INVESTIGATION OF THE PHYSICAL CONDITIONS CONTROLLING SPAWNING OF OYSTERS AND THE OCCURRENCE, DISTRIBUTION, AND SETTING OF OYSTER LARVAE IN MILFORD HARBOR, CONNECTICUT—H. F. Prytherch—*U. S. Govt. Printing Office* (25c). A report of a special study on the life of the oyster in a typical North Atlantic coast bay.

Science News-Letter, June 29, 1929

A. C. RADIO GUIDE—Kenneth A. Hathaway—*American Technical Society (Chicago)* (\$1.50). Full details of operation of radio receivers and speakers on alternating current are contained in this useful little book.

Radio

Science News-Letter, June 29, 1929

THE PYROLYSIS OF CARBON COMPOUNDS—Charles Dewitt Hurd—*Chemical Catalog Co.* (\$12.50). This is one of the largest and most important of the Monograph Series of the American Chemical Society, since it covers the entire theory of the breaking up of wood, coal and petroleum by the action of heat. Upon the product of such destructive distillation our modern civilization is based, yet it has only been in recent years that the study of the reactions that occur inside the sealed retort have been systematically and scientifically studied. Already the effect of this research has made itself felt in our most sensitive spot, our pocket-book, in the production of gasoline for the feeding of automobiles and the lacquers for the varnishing of them, and in other innumerable applications of which the chemistry is discussed in the 800 pages of this volume.

Chemistry

Science News-Letter, June 29, 1929

PSYCHOLOGY AND PROFITS—Donald A. Laird—*B. C. Forbes* (\$3.50). Dr. Laird is a college professor who believes that as fast as psychologists discover new ways of meeting everyday problems the facts should be put to work. In this readable book he sets forth very simply some of the ways in which an individual can make use of psychological facts and findings in order to make work and home life less fatiguing, happier, and more effective.

Psychology

Science News-Letter, June 29, 1929

ATTILA THE SCOURGE OF GOD—Marcel Brion—*McBride* (\$3.50). A straight-forward, detailed account of the confused strategies, diplomacies, and wild attacks of the Huns in their conquest of the civilized world. The author has refrained from much use of imaginative details or interpretations of Attila's behavior. The biography is neither impressionistic nor psychoanalytic; it sets forth the facts for the enlightenment of the reader on an unusual character who played a dramatic role in history.

History

Science News-Letter, June 29, 1929

FORESTRY ALMANAC—*American Tree Association* (\$1). The 1929 edition of a very useful and informative forest handbook.

Forestry

Science News-Letter, June 29, 1929