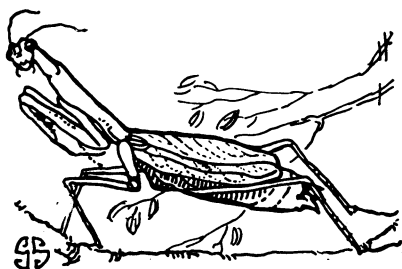

NATURE RAMBLINGS

By FRANK THONE

*Praying Mantis*

The coming of frost always brings migrations of praying mantises. All summer through they abide in the woods, seldom seen because of their leaf-and-stick camouflage; but when chill weather makes their cupboard bare of insects to eat they become restless and fly about, many of them falling in city streets where startled citizens see them. Sometimes newspaper reporters, with the columns of their Monday morning editions hungry for copy, will play them up as something extraordinary and rare. But mantises are likely to happen in numbers on any frosty fall morning.

These insects, which are distributed all over the world in a whole series of species, are unfailing objects of interest when their fascinating though sanguinary lives are related by naturalists. They are the tigers of the insect world, stealing upon their prey, snatching it up in their hypocritically pious forelegs, and eating it alive. Henri Fabre has made a shuddery masterpiece of the story of the mantis' courtship, at the culmination of which the luckless male becomes his Amazon spouse's bridal feast. She begins to eat her mate even while he still clasps her in the marital embrace!

The hunger of these insects must be simply insatiable. A captured mantis will resent handling as any insect will; but hold her carefully by the wings and present some other insect—even another mantis—to her beak and she will promptly begin to gnaw, forgetting all about her captivity. All round, the mantis, though interesting and probably of benefit as a destroyer of pests, is really not the kind of insect one would characterize as "nice".

Science News-Letter, October 19, 1929

Carp Eat Other Fish Out

Carp get the better of other fish whose waters they invade, literally by eating them out of house and home. This has been disclosed by the drainage of a small, carp-infested lake in southern Wisconsin, which was studied by Dr. Alvin R. Cahn of the University of Illinois. His results are reported in *Ecology*.

As the waters went down in the lake, all the fish were captured and counted. Out of a total of 6,006 fish, 5,891 were carp. More desirable species, like perch, black bass and pike, were notable for their absence or scarcity. By way of contrast, a similar total taken from a lake containing no carp had a good representation of several desirable game and food species.

The most notable difference between the two lakes, Dr. Cahn states,

Red Clover Evolves

The definite strains of short headed red clover blossoms which are becoming established are the result of the gradual disappearance of bumble bees in sections of the country which have become intensely agricultural and the taking over of their task by the shorter-tongued honey bees, according to Harry F. Dietz.

The long nectar tube of the red clover has heretofore made it practically dependent on the bumble bee for fertilization. Bee keepers have looked with longing at the amount of potential honey available in the red clover, but it was impossible to breed a type of honey bee which had a tongue long enough to reach the treasure.

However, as the yield of clover seed lessened each year, a greater per cent of this smaller amount came from the occasional shorter tubed red clover blooms which short-tongued insects had been able to fertilize. As seed from these short-corolla flowers generally produced plants in their turn having the same kind of blossoms, the tendency was to produce a type of blossom which the honey bee can work. Though slow at first, the change has been hastened and the increasing yields of clover seen in the vicinity of prairies seems to indicate that the red clover will eventually turn all its mating problems over to the honey bee.

Science News-Letter, October 19, 1929

was to be seen in the plant population, which of course forms the ultimate food of all fishes. In the carpless lake there was an abundant growth of many kinds of plant life, in the carp-filled water there wasn't a weed. The restless, avid, all-eating mouths of the carp had destroyed every green thing.

The muddy bottom of the lake was entirely covered with little semi-round depressions about a quarter of an inch deep. These had been made by the carp, "mouthing" the mud to get the last traces of anything fit even for a carp to eat. Incidentally, of course, this constant stirring of the bottom effectually prevented the germination of any seed of a water plant that might have fallen into the lake, and also kept the water constantly roiled and muddy.

Science News-Letter, October 19, 1929

Quake Broke Seismograph

The earthquake felt on the island of Hawaii on Sunday, October 6, was so severe that it dismantled the seismograph at the University of Hawaii at Honolulu, according to reports from the earthquake observers there to the U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey. The epicenter, or point of greatest activity of the quake, was about 250 miles southeast of Honolulu, as shown by data received by Science Service and interpreted by the Coast and Geodetic Survey. The stations sending reports were those of Georgetown University, Washington, D. C.; the University of Virginia; the University of Hawaii, Honolulu, T. H.; the Weather Bureau, Manila, P. I.; the U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, Tucson, Ariz.; and the Dominion Observatory, Ottawa, Canada.

Science News-Letter, October 19, 1929

It costs the government four times as much to train a military air pilot as to train a man at West Point or Annapolis.

Confusion resulting from the great variety of traffic signs and signals in use was the cause of more than 2,000 deaths last year, a report indicates.

California's mining history began in January, 1848, when James Marshall discovered gold in a ditch being dug near a sawmill.