Moose on Increase in Sweden

Zoology

The moose, usually called "elk" in Europe, is rapidly increasing in Sweden, under the protection of strict game laws. This year's brief open season of four days has just drawn to a close, and the preliminary reports indicate that approximately 3,500 animals were killed, as compared with 3,700 in 1928.

This protective legislation has, however, not proved wholly popular with farmers and foresters in certain parts of Sweden, because the moose is causing some damage to the crops and the young trees. Moreover, the moose, which was formerly a shy and elusive animal, has recently become extremely bold and in some cases ferocious. They are not easy to drive away from fields and gardens and in some instances they have attacked the farmers who tried to protect their crops.

The influence of civilization has also been harmful to them, as in the case of "Jeppe," a young moose that became so domesticated that it lived for years around a little village in northern Sweden. It went from house to house begging food, like a dog, and when it at last was turned back to the forest to join its wild brethren, it was unable to cope with the life in the open and was discovered shortly afterwards dead from starvation.

That even the monarch of the Swedish forests can at times bring forth abnormal specimens, is shown by the fact that a hermaphrodite moose was killed this year in Vaester Faernebo in the province of Vestmanland. It had the shovel-shaped horns of a bull, but other characteristics were those of a female animal. Last year another strange moose, a pure albino with pink eyes, was killed in Sweden, the first in more than twenty-five years. It was later mounted and is now exhibited at the Museum of Natural History in Stockholm.

Science News-Letter, November 30, 1929

Plants Show Nerve-Like Currents

Biology

New evidence for the physiological unity of plant and animal protoplasm was laid before the meeting of the National Academy of Sciences by Dr. W. J. V. Osterhout of the Rockefeller Institute. Dr. Osterhout has detected, by means of exceedingly delicate electrical apparatus, electrical variations in the comparatively enormous cells of the water plant *Nitella*. These variations resemble the action currents of animal nerve and muscle in form and magnitude.

The cells of *Nitella* are peculiarly adapted for experiments of this kind. They are very slender, but are often as much as six inches long. Their protoplasmic content is continuous, with many nuclei scattered throughout, instead of being divided up into numerous tiny cells each with a single nucleus, as is the case with most plants.

Science News-Letter, November 30, 1929

Quantum Theory Wins

Physics

Quantum mechanics, one of the latest developments in physics, won another victory over the older ideas of physics when Dr. Philip M. Morse of Princeton and the Bell Telephone Laboratories reported to the National Academy of Sciences that the quantum mechanical theory of the electron, the particle of matter and electricity, explains not only the general effect of scattering of electrons when they are shot at crystals, but also small peculiarities in the experimental results that appear when electrons are considered to be just like X-ray beams in their action.

Science News-Letter, November 30, 1929

Have More Nerves

Neurology

Negroes have larger nerve trunks and more numerous nerve-bundles within them than have white men. This is indicated by a recently completed study of Dr. H. Ide, as reported by Dr. Henry H. Donaldson of the Wistar Institute, Philadelphia, speaking before the meeting of the National Academy of Sciences. The study was conducted on nerve material supplied by Western Reserve University. Dr. Donaldson stressed, however, that thus far the research has been wholly anatomical, and that whether there is any physiological correlation is yet to be investigated.

Science News-Letter, November 30, 1929

Nature Ramblings

By Frank Thone

Lichens

On stumps and fallen logs, on rock, on old walls and tombstones one finds them, strange growths that seem not to belong to this planet at all, but rather to a dead world, like the moon. Grays and browns are their commonest colors, though they are sometimes corpse-white and sometimes night-black, and certain kinds achieve more positive colors, like orange-red and olive-green, though never the bright, healthy green of leaves.

Their forms are as alien as their colors: sometimes mere warty or powdery patches on the rock, sometimes a curled and crumpled scale, or a host of thickset little fingers or cups. Sometimes they trail in long witch-locks from the branches of trees:

"The murmuring pines and the
hemlocks
Bearded with moss",

of which Longfellow tells, are really bearded with lichens.

Alien in shape and eerie in color, the lichens are also of a most fantastic origin. They are not single plants, but masses of two kinds of plants: a literal duality, a two-in-one and one-in-two, in the natural world. The lichen consists of a fungus growing as a parasite on one of the lowlier orders of green plants, called an alga. The alga can, and sometimes does, live without the fungus, but the fungus cannot live without the alga; and it takes the two of them together to form the lichen.

Science News-Letter, November 30, 1929

The earliest known medicinal use of cinchona bark, from which quinine comes, was in 1638, when the Countess of Chinchon, wife of the Governor of Peru, was cured of fever by its administration.