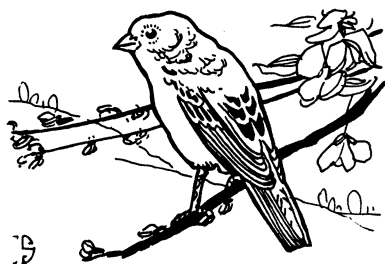


NATURE RAMBLINGS

By Frank Thone



Indigo Bunting

IF you are walking along the edge of the woods or across a brushy pasture and see a flash of blue winging through the air, look twice before you decide that it is a bluebird. It may be that somewhat less abundant but equally beautiful bird, the indigo bunting.

There is no danger of confusing the two birds, if you can get a fair look at him. The indigo bunting has no red underneath, as the bluebird has, but is blue on both breast and back. The only feathers he has that are not blue are the large dark ones of his wings and tail, and even these are blue-edged. This is his summer garb; in winter he has a general sparrow-like appearance. His mate keeps her sleek but inconspicuous brown dress the year round.

The song of the indigo bunting is a beautiful sustained trill, not unlike that of a canary. He is very fond of singing, too, and will frequently stage a recital in midsummer, long after most other birds have become silent.

Indigo buntings are not as well known, perhaps, as bluebirds, because they are rather more shy of human-kind, and prefer to live in the tangled thickets and broken woodlands, remote from habitations. But for the nature-lover they are worth patient seeking, for they have few peers and no superiors in beauty among our native birds. There is a jewel-like brightness about their deep blue feathers that surpasses the blue of the bluebird. It is more like the flash of the scarlet tanager than it is like any other blue to be found on birds with which we are familiar.

Science News-Letter, May 24, 1930

Mice Detect Monoxide

Queer little Japanese waltzing mice have been put to good use by scientists who have found the mice even better than canary birds for detecting deadly carbon monoxide gas in the air, the U. S. Bureau of Mines has just reported.

Carbon monoxide is a highly fatal gas that has neither color nor odor, so that it can creep on a man unaware and overcome him almost before he knows what has happened to him. Small animals are affected more quickly than man by the same concentration of this death gas. Therefore they have been used to detect the presence of the gas in the atmosphere of mines and other places where it is a menace.

The difference between the time when the animal is overcome and that when man will be overcome is sufficient to allow a man to return to fresh air, put on a mask, or protect himself in some other way. However, the margin of time between effects in the animals and in men is not very wide and experience with canaries has shown that an occasional specimen may be tolerant enough to fail to exhibit symptoms before serious effects are incurred in men.

Because the effects of carbon monoxide poisoning are increased by physical activity, the waltzing mice, with their almost continuous and violent movements, show the effects of exposure to the gas much more quickly than any other animals and are therefore especially suitable for detecting the presence of the gas.

Science News-Letter, May 24, 1930

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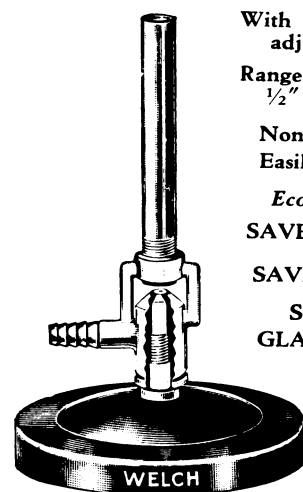


YEARS ago Dr. Ludwig Prandtl, professor at the University of Göttingen, Germany, studied how air rushes around moving planes. His work was so far ahead of his time and so accurate that it forms the basis of much present aerodynamic theory. Now Dr. Prandtl is awarded the second Guggenheim gold medal for notable achievement in aeronautics. Orville Wright, who with his brother made the first successful flight, was presented the first medal last month.

Aviation

Science News-Letter, May 24, 1930

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