

NATURAL HISTORY

Jungle Terrors Debunked

Poisonous snakes, tarantulas, crocodiles and man-eating tigers are seldom met in the jungle, according to the official service journal of the Army Air Forces.

► SNAKES, tarantulas, crocodiles, man-eating tigers and other terrors of the jungle are "strictly hokum," declares *Air Force* (July), official service journal of the Army Air Forces. And as for the dreadful heat of the tropics, "seasoned jungle travelers tell us that they have found Washington, D. C., in the summer much more oppressive than any jungle they've ever visited."

For the reassurance of young aviators about to go into the Southwest Pacific fighting area, and especially for their anxious kinsfolk and friends who will be left behind, *Air Force* has rounded up the best information available, from numerous persons who have known the tropics at first hand.

Here are some of their findings:

Poisonous snakes in the tropics are less numerous than they are right here in the safe old U. S. A. You may get to see about one snake a month, on the average—and it will probably be a harmless one. Pythons, boa-constrictors and other "crusher" snakes don't attack human beings.

Bites of the big tropical spiders (which by the way are not true tarantulas) rarely happen, and when they do they are not much worse than a wasp sting. The one spider known to be really dangerous

is our own Black Widow, found in practically all parts of this country.

Crocodiles look terrible, but they are too small-brained and sluggish to be really formidable. Since they swallow their prey whole, only a "croc" more than 15 feet long would be likely to consider a man as a candidate for a meal. A slap from a crocodile's tail is more to be feared than its toothy jaws.

If you see a big lizard, don't shun him; grab him! He's as good to eat as chicken. There are no poisonous lizards, in the tropics. The only known poisonous lizards, the gila monster and its next of kin, the beaded lizard, are natives of our own Southwest and adjacent parts of Mexico.

Carnivorous animals need not be feared. There are tigers in Asia, leopards and lions in Africa, but there aren't many of them and the few you are likely to run into will run away in one direction faster than you run in the other. The one exception is a female with cubs: females seem to be quite unreasonable in such matters.

Even the dreaded tropical leeches can be kept off with proper clothing. Or if they attach, they can be induced to loosen their grip with a little salt or alcohol, or the touch of the hot end of a cigarette.

The real perils of the jungle are the tiny things: insects and germs. Protect yourself against mosquitoes, see to it that your drinking water is either boiled or chemically sterilized, use an antiseptic on cuts, scratches and insect bites, and you'll ward off the real perils of the jungle.

Science News Letter, August 28, 1943

PUBLIC HEALTH

Number Cases of Anthrax Increasing With the War

► A WARNING that we may have a plague of anthrax on our hands as a result of the war appears in a report from the American Public Health Association's committee on industrial anthrax.

The report includes figures showing that the incidence of anthrax has "al-

most trebled since the beginning of the present war and that it is still increasing." In Philadelphia there were only 58 cases in the 10-year period 1929-1938. But during the three and two-thirds years 1939-Aug., 1942, there were 59 cases. The states of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New Hampshire have expressed concern over the situation.

There's "sufficient evidence from early times that it is not impossible for this malady to assume the proportions of a plague," the report states.

Anthrax spreads from the hair, hides, flesh or intestinal wastes of infected animals. The present increase is from infected wool. The war which delays shipments gives a chance for infection from the skin or wool from one animal to spread through a whole bale while materials are waiting on docks, it is explained. This greatly increases the chances of infection of those who finally handle the material. Tannery cases have decreased in relation to the total number probably because of reduced use of goat skins for fancy shoes and increased use of packer-killed cattle hides for more durable shoes.

Government controlled disinfection stations at ports of entry, such as England has successfully operated, are suggested as the best method of controlling the anthrax danger. Since the war may prevent establishment of these, disinfection at the mill is urged.

Neoarsphenamine is given as the treatment of choice for anthrax patients.

Science News Letter, August 28, 1943

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