

Do You Know?

Fatal accidents in U. S. National Parks during 1946 numbered 29.

A *bullet* will ricochet off the surface of water as it does from a solid surface.

Much of the world's fertile *farm lands* of today were sea bottoms in very ancient times.

Wood *gutters* on houses have become common recently due to shortages of metals.

Seashell collecting, a summer sport to many, is to scientists a help in unravelling a geological structure in a quest for oil, metals, or deposits of building materials.

Visitors to an *electronic* exhibition in New York can see themselves televised and at the same time see the television picture of themselves on a screen.

American *tung-oil* industry, although still young, is reaching \$10,000,000 proportions; tung tree orchards are now located in all the states touching the Gulf of Mexico.

ASTRONOMY

1947 Record Comet Year

➤ THIS YEAR may set a new record for the discovery of comets, a Harvard College Observatory astronomer disclosed.

So far this year, astronomers have found eight new comets in the heavens. The all-time yearly record was set in 1932 when 13 comets were discovered.

"If we keep on at the present rate, 1947 may become the record year in the discovery of new comets," Dr. Fred L. Whipple explained.

Dr. Whipple, who discovered one of the most spectacular new comets of the past two decades, discussed comet-hunting as a guest of Watson Davis, director of Science Service, on Adventures in Science heard over the Columbia network.

Although astronomers have found a bumper crop of new comets this year, you would not have been able to see any of them without a powerful telescope. The only comet found this year which has been visible to the naked eye could be seen only in the Southern hemisphere.

Comet-finding is an international job, Dr. Whipple emphasized. Ten comets, including newly-discovered and previously-known ones, are now being observed by astronomers. These 10 discoveries were made in eight different countries, the astronomer reported.

Observations from almost all of the civilized countries of the world are used when astronomers calculate the paths of comets about the sun, Dr. Whipple added.

Comets appear as a hazy patch of sky, but actually they are millions of miles away, the astronomer pointed out.

These August nights, you can see the annual shower of the broken remains of a comet, Dr. Whipple said. The pieces of the comet are shooting stars, or meteors.

Each August, he explained, we can see the Perseid meteors, which seem to come from the constellation Perseus, the champion. Actually these shooting stars are the skeleton fragments of a comet discovered in 1862.

Dr. Whipple predicted that meteors will become a traffic hazard when man starts traveling out into space.

One might cruise around in space

for a lifetime without colliding with a meteor, but the driver of a space ship will have to avoid the paths of comet debris where meteors are most likely to be.

"He should try to avoid running through the orbits of the larger comets where much meteoric matter might exist," Dr. Whipple said, "in the same fashion as a bus driver should try to avoid driving over tacks, nails and rough roads that might ruin his tires."

Colliding with meteors would be a more serious matter, though. These so-called shooting stars move at high speeds, and the astronomer estimated that a pinhead meteorite, if made of steel, would penetrate a quarter-inch steel plate.

Science News Letter, August 16, 1947

ENTOMOLOGY

Beehive Air-Conditioning Pays Keeper in More Honey

➤ AIR CONDITIONING for bees pays, Leroy Bell of Orange, Calif., has found. He keeps his beehives—42 of them—inside a long chamber in which temperature and humidity can be controlled at levels the bees like best. They aren't what human beings would find comfortable, for optimum temperature from the bees' viewpoint is between 80 and 85 degrees Fahrenheit, with relative humidity from 60% to 65%.

Under these living conditions Mr. Bell's bees are so good-natured that he can work on the hives without head-net or gloves. He states that they produce more honey, rear better queens, and are less apt to raid neighbor-colonies to steal honey.

Science News Letter, August 16, 1947

CHEMISTRY

Coloring Ripe Oranges

➤ BECAUSE some varieties of oranges are not orange when they are fully ripe, it is considered legitimate to dye their skins to a more attractive hue. An improvement in this cosmetic treatment, consisting of a thin wash of a wax in which an oil-soluble pigment is dissolved, is protected by patent 2,425,073, granted to J. N. Sharma of West Los Angeles, Calif.

Science News Letter, August 16, 1947



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