WILDLIFE

Last La. Crane Abducted

➤ IT took two helicopters plus abduction over the state line in a burlap bag. But Mac, the last whooping crane in Louisiana, was headed for a wedding, whether he liked it or not.

With free frogs legs being served in the wildlife warden's kitchen, he soon began to like it, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service says.

If you think the government gave you a hard time about the middle of March, however, consider what happened to Mac.

On March 11, using two helicopters, Fish and Wildlife Service men and two representatives from the National Audubon Society chased Mac out of his swampy home near Vermilion, La., and forced him over a lake.

It was a little like a dogfight. The whooping crane is the country's tallest bird, standing more than six feet tall on tiptoe with whooper outstretched. It has a seven-foot wingspan.

But by using the downdraft blast from the helicopters' rotors the wildlife men forced Mac into a deadstick landing on the water, came down beside him and bundled him into a bag.

He was flown to a nearby airport and whisked over the state line in a car to the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge near Corpus Christi, Texas. At Aransas, the only other whooping cranes left in the world—all 36 of them—spend the winter every year.

The Wildlife Service's expressed goal was a marriage for Mac. They say every member of the dwindling family "should be in production" if the whooping crane is not to become extinct.

But to allow him time to get used to the idea, the refuge manager did not push him up the aisle—not quite. Instead, Mac got frog legs just by coming to the kitchen door, according to the progress report on the bird sent to Wildlife headquarters in Washington.

Mac is the last of 12 whoopers who wintered in Louisiana for the past 15 years. One by one the others died.

The Wildlife Service's kidnaping was just in time for the annual departure of the cranes for their unknown breeding ground in the Arctic. Mac, the Service hopes, will come back with a family.

Science News Letter, April 22, 1950

CHEMISTRY

Man to Outstrip Nature

➤ CHEMISTS will outdo nature in production of wonder drugs a decade hence. They will manufacture artificially better disease treatments than mold-produced penicillin and other antibiotics.

This prediction of a come-back for man-made drugs was given by Dr. Theodor Wagner-Jauregg, German chemist now with the medical division of the U. S. Army Chemical Center at Edgewood, Md., at a meeting at the U. S. National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Md.

Dr. Wagner-Jauregg is the son of Dr. Julius Wagner-Jauregg who in 1927 was awarded the Nobel Prize in medicine for his discovery that the fever of malaria could be used to cure syphilis of the brain and central nervous system (paresis).

"Nitramine," a chemical made in Germany during the war, Dr. Theodor Wagner-Jauregg said, is chemically related to chloromycetin, one of the Big Four mold remedies or antibiotics.

This suggests that other chemical relatives of chloromycetin should be synthesized in the search for better chemical remedies.

"Perhaps," he said, "the situation in this field is about the same as it was with quinine some decades ago. No other remedies for malaria were known in earlier times. Today we have several synthetic compounds not only equivalent to the natural drug but even better in some respects.

"Let us hope that, too, for the more complicated antibiotics, like penicillin or streptomycin, chemists will find synthetic substitutes, at least for some of their functions.

"Perhaps after 10 years, when nature has been exploited for a while of its antibiotics, classical therapeutic (curative) chemistry will have the opportunity to show that it is not quite dead, but that it has learned a lot of things from the elucidation of the structure of the natural miraculous drugs."

Science News Letter, April 22, 1950

FORESTRY

Squirrel, Frost Damage Mistaken for Oak Wilt

➤ EARLY spring cold snaps or hungry squirrels may trick you into thinking the deadly wilt disease has struck oak trees on your lawn or farm, the American Forestry Association warns.

Often only a qualified pathologist can tell whether a tree is really doomed. Young foliage may show symptoms similar to those caused by oak wilt, when the real trouble is frost damage, gnawing of branches by squirrels or mice, insect injury or other fungus blights which are not fatal.

The Association's journal, AMERICAN FORESTS (April), carries a request to all its members to report all suspected cases of oak wilt to the nearest state agricultural experiment station.

Caused by a deadly fungus, *Chalara quercina,* oak wilt was first identified in 1944. It has now spread mysteriously into six Midwestern states: Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri and Indiana.

Scientists do not think it is air-borne, as was the fast-moving blight which all but wiped out American chestnut trees. They can show oak wilt is spread when roots of adjoining trees grow together underground. But they do not know how it jumps to a new locality.

Whatever its manner of travel, oak wilt can kill a tree within weeks. It is causing pathologists grave concern, reports the Forestry Association.

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