



**Scarlet Tanager**

► FOR the benefit of any embattled man who finds himself losing ground in the face of wifely objections that his casual attitude towards clothes is in marked contrast to the dandified fastidiousness he displayed during courtship, the example of the scarlet tanager is cited for what it may be worth.

During the mating season, no creature in North America decks itself out in more resplendent finery than the male scarlet tanager. The color scheme is simple but dazzling. The whole body is a vivid red boldly set off by black wings and tail.

With this splendid haberdashery he does not long remain single. On arrival from the South American wintering grounds, around the beginning of April in the South and the beginning of May in the North and Canada, he joins forces with a female of the species and they set up housekeeping.

By August or September, after the couple have accomplished their mission and the fledglings are able to fend for themselves, the male's courting raiment undergoes a familiar post-marital change for the worse. The birds moult, and for the male the transformation is as startling as though a Royal Canadian Mountie were suddenly to exchange his dress uniform for olive drab fatigues.

Actually the bird has no cause for complaint, because when he emerges from moult he is still a comely bird. The new coat is a light yellowish green, similar to, but yellower than, the year 'round feathering of the female. The black wings take on a greenish edging. These are his traveling clothes, and it is in this sober garb that he spends the greater part of the year.

Scarlet tanagers are rather inept home-builders. Their nest woven of rootlets and weed stems, is placed on a horizontal limb without too much thought to the whimsies of the wind. Not infrequently a gusty wind-storm will pitch it to the ground. When this happens, the female, who seems fatalistic about it, sets right to work building a new one. Sometimes it takes four tries before the chirp of little ones crowns the couple's clumsy efforts.

While the yellowish olive-green female

sits inconspicuously on the eggs waiting for her posterity to hatch out, her sportily colored mate is making a crimson flash among the tree tops as he flits busily about, singing in the sunlight. It is the song, not the plumage, that gives him away. For despite the brilliant color, the scarlet tanager is not often observed. He usually manages

to keep dense foliage between ground observer and his perch high in the tree.

It is his song which betrays his presence to those who have learned to recognize it. The scarlet tanager's song has been likened to that of a robin with a cold.

Science News Letter, April 22, 1950

#### MINING

## More Critical Minerals

► LEGISLATION which its sponsors hope will stimulate the production of low grade deposits of critical minerals will shortly be introduced in the House of Representatives.

The legislation, to be introduced by several members, will amend the Reconstruction Finance Corporation act to make the terms of loans easier in the production and shipping of taconite iron ore, manganese, chromite, copper, lead, zinc, bauxite, aluminum, synthetic liquid fuel and fertilizer.

Many of the minerals affected by the proposed legislation would be needed in great quantities in case of a new war. At present it is not profitable to mine low-grade deposits of some of them.

By far the largest development expected if the amendment becomes law is in the extensive deposits of taconite, a low-grade, extremely tough iron ore. The high-grade, relatively easy-to-mine ore of the Mesabi range in Minnesota is beginning to run out. It is this range which has kept our industrial pot boiling for years, which provided the basic material for the vast muni-

tions output of the last war.

Plans for taconite production which would eventually reach a rate of 30,000,000 tons a year are on paper, but are not possible, the taconite proponents say, without some kind of government help. It is hoped that this amendment will provide an opportunity for the kind of long range financing which is believed necessary.

Taconite is extremely difficult to get out of the ground because it is extremely hard. Processing is almost as difficult. Persons interested in the process, however, believe they can construct a going processing plant with a capacity of 2,500,000 tons within six years after liberal financing is available. Other plants would follow much quicker.

The first bill will be introduced by Rep. John A. Blatnik, D., Minn., in whose district live many of the workers at the Mesabi range. He is interested because Mesabi range employment is steadily falling and it is seasonal work. Taconite, he says, would provide a new, steadier source of employment.

Science News Letter, April 22, 1950

## Books of the Week

TO SERVE YOU: To get books, send us a check or money order to cover retail price. Address Book Dept., SCIENCE NEWS LETTER, 1719 N St., N. W., Washington 6, D. C. Ask for free publication direct from issuing organizations.

ADVANCED CHEMICAL CALCULATIONS—Sylvanus J. Smith—*Macmillan*, 454 p., illus., \$2.75. An advanced text in numerical chemistry. Answers are included.

THE AMERICAN MIND: An Interpretation of American Thought and Character Since the 1880's—Henry Steele Commager—*Yale University Press*, 476 p., \$5.00. The author examines the work of great and small among our philosophers, clergymen, novelists, poets, and men of letters. He also considers the pioneer sociologists and economists.

CHEMICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THYROIDOLOGY—William T. Salter—*Thomas*, 87 p., illus., \$2.00. A monograph describing recent advances in this field.

A DICTIONARY OF ELECTRONIC TERMS—Harry L. Van Velzer, Ed.—*Allied Radio Corporation*, 63 p., illus., paper, 25 cents. Concise definitions of words used in radio, television and electronics.

EXPERIMENTAL DESIGNS—William G. Cochran and Gertrude M. Cox—*Wiley*, 454 p., illus., \$5.75. A study of experimental designs which have proved their value in actual research work.

FUNDAMENTALS OF ORGANIC CHEMISTRY: A Brief Course for Students Concerned with Bi-

ology, Medicine, Agriculture, and Industry—James Bryant Conant and Albert Harold Blatt—*Macmillan*, 413 p., illus., \$4.00. A rather full treatment of biochemistry is given.

FURTHER DIFFERENTIATION OF GENETIC FACTORS IN WHEAT FOR RESISTANCE TO THE HESSIAN FLY—C. A. Suneson and W. B. Noble—*Gov't. Printing Office*, U. S. Dept. of Ag., Tech. Bull. No. 1004, 8 p., illus., paper, five cents.

GEOLOGY AND MINERAL DEPOSITS OF AN AREA NORTH OF SAN FRANCISCO BAY, CALIFORNIA with BOX OF MAPS, PLATES I THROUGH 20—Charles E. Weaver—*Department of Natural Resources, California*, 135 p., Bull. 149, illus., \$4.00. The geography, systematic geology, structure, and economic deposits of an area of approximately 2,215 square miles are discussed in this report.

A GUIDE TO GENERAL MEDICAL PRACTICE—Martin G. Vorhaus—*Macmillan*, 244 p., \$3.50. An aid to the advanced medical student and new physician in facing the many problems which crop up at the inception of medical practice.

HIGHWAY RESEARCH BOARD INDEX TO PUBLICATIONS 1921-1949—Dorothy H. Bright, Com-