

PSYCHOLOGY

Some People Like Having Accidents

➤ SOME PEOPLE seem to like to have accidents.

C. A. Oakley, lecturer in industrial psychology at Glasgow University in Glasgow, Scotland, in a report suggests others in accidents have troubled consciences and actually get involved in accidents as self-punishment.

People who seem to like attention, Mr. Oakley believes, may want to win sympathy or gain attention, even though they do not have the accidents deliberately.

Most factory accidents happen to comparatively few workers. About 80 per cent of the factory accidents can be attributed just to somebody having made a mistake.

Tidiness and slow work do not necessarily mean a good safety record, Mr. Oakley says. The exceptional worker is not usually noted for his orderliness. The able man who takes chances knowingly is not necessarily prone to accidents. Rather it is the less able man who has the accidents when he tries to copy the better worker. And slow, ponderous workers often have bad accident records.

Science News Letter, September 8, 1951

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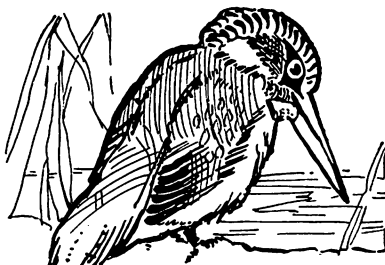
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Kingfisher

➤ LATE SUMMER brings a relative silence in avian musical circles, and we are apt to forget about the birds, or to think they have already gone away.

Nevertheless they are still here, only now like well-behaved children of a past generation they are to be seen (if you look sharp) and not heard. The summer bird observer still uses his ears, but his eyes have a larger proportion of the work to do than they had in April and May.

An easy object for this "birding by eye" is the kingfisher. He is no shy lurker in coverts, nor does he camouflage himself in mottled brown or gray to blend into a tree-top or dry pasture background. He shines boldly in enamel colors and sits out on a jutting stump over the water where anybody can look.

He's not there for the purpose of getting himself admired, of course. He is doing some looking himself—looking for his dinner. For the kingfisher is a fisher in fact as well as in name, and as patient and motionless while waiting for his quarry as St. Izaak Walton could wish the best of his featherless worshippers to be.

Silently he sits there for many minutes, until a fish of a size he thinks he can handle swims within range. Then, literally a blue flash, he dives. A white splash, and the kingfisher emerges, the captured fish in his strong beak. It is seldom that this living fish spear misses.

The kingfisher does not confine his diet entirely to fish. Crayfish, frogs, even large beetles and other insects, all find their place in his larder. One or two species of kingfisher even do considerable foraging in the woods, for the more usual insect prey of other birds.

Due to his occupation, the kingfisher must be a solitary. Fishing is not a gregarious occupation. And being solitary, the kingfisher is also jealous. He marks out a pretty well-defined preserve of his own and will fight any other kingfisher he catches trespassing.

The kingfisher species most common in this country is one of the most wide-ranging and adaptable of all birds. It is found over almost the whole of the North American continent and in northern South America as well. It breeds as far north as the McKenzie river basin, and in winter flies as far south as the Orinoco.

The kingfisher strikes one as a possible cousin to the woodpecker, what with his crest, his powerful bill and his stiff tail-feathers. It is not surprising, then, to learn that he really is a relative of our drummers on hollow trees, being put into the same zoological group by the scientists.

Like the woodpecker, the kingfisher builds his nest in a burrow, only he digs the burrow into the bank of a creek instead of into the wood of a dead tree.

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INVENTION

Plug-in Radio Fire Alarm Gives Low-Cost Protection

➤ NO COST for special wiring is involved in an improved radio-operated fire alarm system for factories, farm buildings and private residences which was recently awarded a patent. It uses equipment merely plugged into the electrical lighting system.

The system includes as many signal transmitter units as may be required for placement in places where fire may occur, and a receiver-alarm unit which is placed in a central position. Transmitters and the receiver are plugged into the ordinary lighting current and are activated by this current. The carrier signals created are transmitted over the wires of the electric light system.

The transmitter signal units are so constructed that they are made operative by an excessive rise in temperature such as from a blaze soon after it starts. They utilize a self-contained thermostat and a vacuum tube oscillator.

Inventor is Donald P. Decker, Belmont, Mass. His award is patent 2,566,121. He claims his system provides as good protection as the more expensive wired-in types of central station systems and is more reliable than local alarms operated by clock-work mechanism or batteries.

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