

Lobster

➤ AN EARLIER generation once took great delight in a story about a Midwestern farmer who refused a lobster on the grounds that he "didn't eat bugs."

Modern refrigerated railroad cars and anywhere-any time air cargo service have made it possible for the innermost of inlanders to have lobster regularly now. Most of us "eat bugs" even if our grandparents could or would not have them in the house.

The farmer of the anecdote was not so far wrong at that.

The lobster and his relatives the crab, shrimp and inland "craw-dads" really are cousins of the insects. They form the marine division of the animal Phylum of Arthropoda, which means "jointed-leg animals," just as the insects form the infantry and airborne divisions.

The lobster and his relatives are known collectively as the Crustacea because of the

hard shell, or crust, in which they are encased.

Lobsters and insects are alike in having jointed bodies and legs, in having their skeletons on the outside rather than the inside of their bodies, in having compound eyes made up of a mosaic of little eyes, and in many other respects.

The lobster differs from the insect in the obvious matter of having no wings; he would have little use for them in the watery depths he inhabits. Neither does the lobster have a division between head and chest, such as an insect has; his chest begins right under his chin, without formality of a neck.

As if to make up for his lack of wings, the lobster has two pairs of antennae or feelers. The insect has but one pair. And finally, while the insect has only six legs, the lobster glories in ten. He has two of the most powerful sharp-ridged claws in the marine kingdom and no hesitancy in using them if a careless fisherman picks him up by the wrong handle. By reason of his legs and claws, the lobster and his nearer relatives are known to zoologists as "decapod crustaceans."

Recently scientists have begun to suspect that the lobster has a hidden talent which puts him in the company of such skilled navigators as the homing pigeon and the honey bee.

Experiments with lobsters off Bermuda showed they can return unerringly to their favorite feeding grounds even when taken far out into deep water or to the other side of large land masses.

The how and why of the remarkable homing instinct remains an unanswered and puzzling biological mystery.

Science News Letter, September 18, 1954

MEDICINE

Long-Lasting One-Shot Polio Vaccine Closer

➤ HARMLESS AND immunity-producing strains of each of the three types of polio virus have been discovered and their ability to produce immunity in human volunteers demonstrated, Dr. Albert B. Sabin of the University of Cincinnati announced at the Third International Poliomyelitis Conference meeting in Rome.

These live virus strains may become the polio vaccine of the future. They would, it is hoped, make it possible to give long-lasting resistance to the disease from a single injection.

The polio vaccine now on trial in the United States is made from killed viruses and must be given in two or three injected doses. How long its protection lasts is still unknown.

The polio virus strains Dr. Sabin has now announced have been injected into the gray matter of the spinal cord of chimpanzees. Neither paralysis nor nerve damage developed. Their ability to produce immunity to polio was shown in chimpanzees and monkeys as well as human volunteers. They were effective when given by mouth and by injection.

Science News Letter, September 18, 1954

ASTRONOMY

Nova Spotted In Southern Sky

➤ A NOVA, a star that suddenly explodes in a brilliant blaze of light, has been discovered in the constellation of Sagittarius, the archer, low in the southern sky.

News of its discovery on Aug. 30 by astrophysicist Paul Wild of the California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, has been sent to astronomers around the country by Harvard College Observatory.

The nova's magnitude was 10.5 when it was first spotted, but it was then already fading rapidly from its highest brilliancy. In the past six months, Mr. Wild has also discovered two supernova, according to Mt. Wilson and Palomar Observatories. (See SNL, June 12, p. 375.)

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MEDICINE — What percentage of polio patients can be successfully treated at home? p. 185.

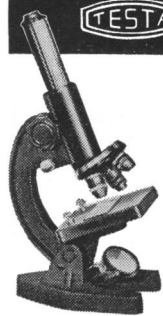
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