· New Machines and Gadgets ·

For sources of more information on new things described, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to SCIENCE NEWS LETTER, 1719 N St., N.W., Washington 6 D. C., and ask for Gadget Bulletin 958. To receive this Gadget Bulletin without special request each week, remit $1.50 for one year's subscription.

LIFE RAFT holding 25 people inflates in nine seconds. The inflating air is drawn from two 200-cubic-inch steel bottles. Made of rubberized nylon, the 130-pound raft is equipped with fishing gear, flares, first aid devices, signalling mirrors, dye markers, flashlight, knife, sea anchor, rations and fresh water, and other equipment for survival at sea.

Science News Letter, October 25, 1958

NURSERY PLAYTHINGS may be hung from a hoop attached to a metal crib or playpen support. The playthings come in four separate groups: fish, birds, butterflies and fairy figures. The figures are made of plastic and are colored. The whole set-up resembles a mobile. The figures rotate in air currents with the exception of the fairy group which can be wound up so it will turn for 15 minutes and give off musical tones.

Science News Letter, October 25, 1958

TINY MERCURY SWITCH weighs 1.8 grams with the leads attached. It is designed for use in computers, scales, electronic organs and other devices with a minimum of available operating energy and limited space. Mounted in any position through 360 degrees around its longitudinal axis, the switch may be actuated by slow, fast or snap-tilting action.

Science News Letter, October 25, 1958

SATELLITE POSITION CALCULATOR enables amateur watchers to predict times and apparent positions of satellites so they can pre-aim their cameras. The calculator, shown in the photograph, consists of a gridwork of latitude and longitude of the Northern Hemisphere. Three transparent overlays indicate limit of visibility, whether the satellite will be illuminated by the sun, and the satellite's true position.

Science News Letter, October 25, 1958

FOLDING TABLE opens up at the push of a button to seat 12 people. Folded, it is three inches thick and can fit into a closet or car trunk. The table has aluminum legs, a plastic top bonded to lightweight steel, and supports more than 20 times its own weight. It is available in one length, 72 inches, and two widths, 30 inches and 36 inches.

Science News Letter, October 25, 1958

LIGHTWEIGHT MICROPHONE encased in synthetic resin weighs about half as much as standard die-cast metal microphone. It is resistant to chipping or cracking in normal use and is impervious to grease, acids and salt spray. The on-off switch is tested for a million cycles.

Science News Letter, October 25, 1958

PORTABLE ROOM HUMIDIFIER returns moisture to the air of heated areas. Using water and electricity, the six-pound appliance sucks in dry air and adds water vapor to it. The unit is the size of a table radio and comes in turquoise or ivory.

Science News Letter, October 25, 1958

TELEPHOTO LENS has a preset diaphragm which stops down to F2.2 and focuses from nine feet to infinity. The 200 mm F5.5 lens is fully color-corrected and fits reflex cameras with interchangeable adapters for the specific cameras. It comes with a removable sunshade.

Science News Letter, October 25, 1958

Nature Ramblings

By HORACE LOFTIN

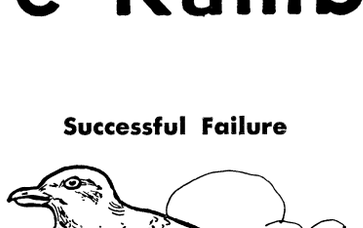
THINGS OFTEN do not go the way you plan in advance when you work with nature. But you cannot even fail at what you are trying to do without coming out ahead in fun and knowledge when nature is your subject.

Take the amusing case of one naturalist when he tried to turn from watching birds with field glasses to trapping and banding them. He had reached that stage when it no longer seemed enough to study birds in flight. He wanted to have them in hand and perhaps learn that his banded birds turned up in some faraway spot in South America.

He studied the techniques of bird trapping. His special interest was the shore birds, and these required a special kind of trap. This he made, and one fine afternoon set it out on a vast mud flat on which scores of shore birds were feeding.

By the time he arranged the trap and had extended the lines of chicken wire that

Successful Failure



theoretically should lead the hapless birds into the cage, there was about an inch of water over the flats. Soon the tide had chased him to the shore and as night settled over the Gulf only the very top of the trap was visible above the water.

Next morning he visited his bird trap. His catch: six flounders and 15 hard crabs!

Undaunted, he moved the trap to an area where he thought the tide would not affect the trapping, in an area behind a marsh.

It was already high tide on the beach when he set up the trap, without water on the marsh flats. Certainly this was a safe spot. Yet, in a little while the water had crept up to and past his trap. He had forgotten that it takes the tide longer to travel through the marshes and that therefore the effects of high tide are felt on the marsh flats some time after they are on the open beach.

There were flocks of desirable shore birds sitting on the dry mud beyond the submerged trap.

In the ensuing weeks, he made new traps, moved old ones, tried new spots and in general attempted unsuccessfully to trap his birds. The naturalist was certainly frustrated.

But in the process of trying to understand the tides, the bird's feeding habits, their resting periods and favorite spots, and their sudden appearances and departures, in order to trap them, he learned much about shore birds.

Science News Letter, October 25, 1958