

• New Machines and Gadgets •

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HOME VENTILATOR UNIT consists of a central ventilator, ducts, wiring, low-voltage switches, roof cap, back draft damper, ceiling registers and inlet grilles for bathrooms and kitchens. Air is pulled through the ducts and exhausted through the top of the central unit to the outside through the aluminum roof cap.

Science News Letter, November 14, 1959

SIREN FIRE ALARM for homes is no bigger than a flashlight. Powered by two standard flashlight batteries, it contains a screaming siren that carries for one-fifth mile. Made of aluminum, the alarm hangs by a nail on any wall and needs no wiring. It goes off when heat reaches 135 degrees Fahrenheit.

Science News Letter, November 14, 1959

LIGHTNING ARRESTER provides effective protection for electrical circuits in homes, farms, restaurants, motels and resorts against excessive voltages caused by lightning. The 120/240-volt arrester is small, compact and low-cost. It can be installed quickly and easily in any position and requires no maintenance.

Science News Letter, November 14, 1959

WINDOW CLEANING UNIT consists of a plastic spray bottle and two small



vials of crystallized cleaner. To wash glass, chrome, tile or porcelain, the bottle, shown in the photograph, is filled with water and a vial-capful of crystals. The cleaning solution is then sprayed on the surface to be washed.

Science News Letter, November 14, 1959

TWO-WAY TOOTHBRUSH has a small thin sponge mounted along the back part of the bristle base. The sponge is especially designed for massaging gums and polishing

enamel and is said to increase the amount of dentifrice foam.

Science News Letter, November 14, 1959

DRAWING DEVICE can be used to make more than a million different designs, including many geometric figures. Complete with special die-cut paper discs of assorted colors, pencil, and easy-to-follow instructions, the device is also an aid to learning mathematics.

Science News Letter, November 14, 1959

ELECTRONIC ORGAN KIT enables persons with no previous experience in music or electronics to assemble a full-sized organ in their spare time. Common hand tools are all that is needed to build the 38-inch instrument, which has two 61-note keyboards, 22 stops and 13 pedals.

Science News Letter, November 14, 1959

ADJUST DOG COLLAR of vinyl-encased kinkproof metal cable can be adjusted to any size neck from 11 to 23 inches, fitting all but the smallest breeds. Its telescoping features prevent dangling ends. Available in clear or transparent red, the collar is waterproof, odor-proof and washable. A thumb screw locks the collar at the adjusted size.

Science News Letter, November 14, 1959



Nature Ramblings



By HORACE LOFTIN

THE "WISE old owl" perched solemnly on an oak limb, twisting his head from side to side to gaze at the world disdainfully, has long been the symbol of intelligence. But we should take a note from his continual questioning—"who? who? who?"—to figure his true mental accomplishment.

No, the owl is a rather "dumb" bird among birds. This is saying a great deal for, in general, feathered creatures are not noted for their mental acumen. This is so true that when a genuine example of brain power is evidenced, the event often finds itself in the pages of an ornithological journal.

One of the most impressive cases of high avian I.Q. to reach the scientific press concerned a crow in one of the Scandinavian countries. During the winter months, fishermen there cut holes in the ice, drop in baited lines and attach a sort of flag which rises when a fish takes the bait. The crow in question made his living by robbing these ice fishermen of their catches. Here is how he did it:

Bird Brains



The crow waited around the ice holes until one of the flags rose, signifying that a fish was on the line. He would then fly to this line and grab it in his beak at some point near the edge of the ice. Tugging mightily, he would then walk backward with this line as far as he had slack.

From this position, he carefully walked down the line, keeping it under his feet so that it would not slip back into the water, until he reached the edge of the ice again. Another mouthful of line, another backward trip, another tightrope walk down the line to the water's edge again, and he had pulled in that many more inches of line.

The crow thus continued this maneuver until finally he had raised the hooked fish to the surface, whereupon he caught and devoured his prize!

While such an intriguing example of learned behavior can hardly be considered typical of members of the crow family, still the crows in general are popularly and properly credited with one of the highest I.Q.'s among the birds. So true is this that Henry Ward Beecher remarked once that "if men wore feathers and wings a very few of them would be clever enough to be Crows!"

It is often hard to state with certainty whether a given act of apparent intelligence is truly that, or whether it is simply a sort of new twist on some old instinct. For example, there are some birds in England which have "learned" to open the caps of milk bottles left on door stoops, from which they take their morning sip of milk. Did they come by this act by intelligent action or blind luck? Does one bird who has mastered the trick teach it to another? More than the "wisdom" of the old owl would be needed to answer such questions.

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