

# • New Machines and Gadgets •

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**BEDDING PLANT TRAYS** made of sturdy polystyrene are designed to hold 12 plants, each in its own peat moss pot. When ready to be transplanted, plant and pot are transplanted as a unit. This, it is claimed, will eliminate transplant shock, and the plants will bloom earlier.

Science News Letter, December 5, 1959

**BICYCLE PROPELLERS** for attachment to handlebars spin as soon as the bicycle starts to move. Made of molded plastic, they come in bright colors complete with adjustable mounting clamps. The propellers are 13 inches from tip to tip.

Science News Letter, December 5, 1959

**ROTARY CARD FILE** is claimed to provide access to any one of 200,000 cards in less than three seconds. Controlled by a keyboard with recessed selector keys, the unit is designed to hold any size card. It takes 84 $\frac{1}{8}$  inches by 39 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches of floor space and can be operated manually in the event of a power failure.

Science News Letter, December 5, 1959

**DOOR WEATHERSTRIPS**, shown in the photograph, of flexible, durable rubber are held in place by channels extruded from tough, transparent butyrate plastic. They offer a simple means of closing the chinks



between double-acting tempered glass doors. The plastic channels help protect door edges from being nicked or chipped.

Science News Letter, December 5, 1959

**FIRE-ESCAPE LADDER** of non-corrosive aluminum can be quickly and easily installed on any outside wall by shot-bolting. It will support nearly three tons. When closed, the ladder rungs nest com-

pactly into each other within the tough outer shell. The ladder is opened by a trigger latch that is operable only from the second floor and above.

Science News Letter, December 5, 1959

**BATTERY FILLER** of plastic has a positive self-closing valve that automatically fills car batteries to the proper level. Shaped like a pouring can, the filler has a two-quart capacity, a finger-grip handle and a closed filling neck that keeps the water free of dirt and prevents spilling.

Science News Letter, December 5, 1959

**PORTABLE RECORDER** can be carried in a briefcase and requires no wires, plugs or reels. It can pick up and record a speaking voice up to 60 feet away even if the briefcase is closed. Operating from self-contained standard dry cell batteries, it can record continuously up to four hours on each side of a non-flammable safety-film belt.

Science News Letter, December 5, 1959

**BACON GRILL** of perforated aluminum is inserted into a dry, level skillet. When bacon strips are placed on the grill, the grease drains into the skillet, leaving the bacon dry and crisp.

Science News Letter, December 5, 1959



## Nature Ramblings



By HORACE LOFTIN

TO THIS day, old-timers in the southwestern states will swear that there are wild camels roaming the American deserts!

Now, a paleontologist, expert in fossil animals, will agree that North America used to be a regular Garden of Eden for camels.

In fact, the group is supposed to have had its origin in North America. But the group was banished from the camel's Eden many thousands of years ago by some unknown change in the environment, leaving only the Old World and South American forms.

Camels made their comeback sometime after the Civil War, when a number of them were brought over from the African desert for transport duty on our own southwestern desert. The experiment was short-lived, however, and the project abandoned. Some camels either escaped or were released, and these prospered in the wilds for a while. Finally, they died out or were hunted out—although some persons say that camels can still be found.

Camels are far from being the only

### Animal Fair



such exotic beasts in the United States brought in by men from other parts. The wild mustangs of the West represent horses, many of Arabian blood, brought over by the Spaniards. Many of our game birds are imports from faraway lands, such as the Chukkar partridge from India. Tales about recent records of the long-extinct Carolina parakeet are becoming more numerous, as escaped cage parakeets become almost regular visitors to neighborhood telephone lines.

About twice a year, the alarm goes out

in metropolitan centers when somebody's pet ocelot breaks loose, scaring the humans and scarring the local dogs. Then there are the usual reports of huge snakes sighted in nearby swamps. Often these tales are true, representing escaped boas and pythons from traveling fairs. Some years ago there was a scare in the Louisiana area concerning a cobra or cobras reported to be loose.

Once in a long while, someone has an experience like this true incident: A wildlife officer in Florida was hunting raccoons at night, using a strong light, on a palmetto scrub not far from Tampa. The beam picked up a reflection unlike that from a coon's eyes and unlike anything the man had seen before. He moved closer, and a large semi-erect shape came into view. Stealing his nerve, he advanced even more—until he saw that he was confronted by a large baboon!

His friends and colleagues shook their heads knowingly when he reported his find. It took another trip to the area, in which the baboon was found again and taken, to convince them.

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