

# • New Machines and Gadgets •

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⚙️ **DIAPER CLIPS** hold diapers securely but cannot jab baby as safety pins might. To use, you push clip onto diaper and flip the clip closed. A spring holds it. The clips can be disassembled for cleaning.

• Science News Letter, 78:256 October 15, 1960

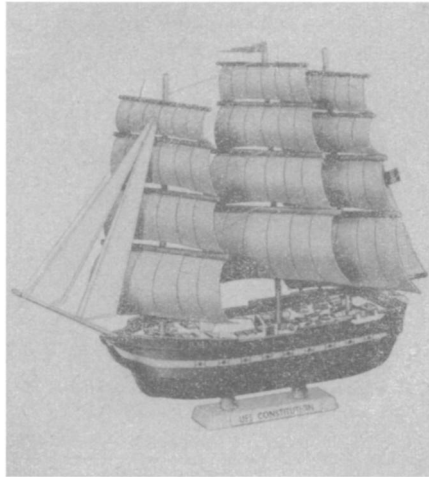
⚙️ **LADDER-TOP HAND RAIL** extends 20 inches above the ladder to provide extra support and safety. Made of aluminum, the rail attaches easily to the top of wood or metal ladders and may be readily removed.

• Science News Letter, 78:256 October 15, 1960

⚙️ **TELEPHONE SCRAMBLER**, held against a telephone handset, turns ordinary speech into gibberish for secret conversation. Only a second scrambler at the other end of the line can turn the gibberish into normal speech again. Special scrambler devices have been used before, but the manufacturer claims this portable, transistorized device is the first production model for business and law enforcement agencies.

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⚙️ **SHIP MODELS** of plastic, seen in the photograph, form a new hobby kit. The series of four includes the Constitution, Mayflower, Santa Maria, and a Barbary pirate ship. Front panel of each box is a 3½-inch by 5-inch pop-out picture of the



7-inch long ship for use as wall or desk decoration. Each kit contains plastic sails and a history of the ship.

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⚙️ **IMPROVED FOLDING RULE** is marked not only in inches but in feet and inches. At 16 inches, for instance, there is the notation "1F 4"—one foot, four inches. The six-foot wood rule has stud markings

on 16-inch centers. A name plate and set of initials will personalize each rule.

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⚙️ **BAR-TYPE SWINGING DOORS** are cut to look like a coffee pot, a cup of tea, a sugar bowl, a garden lamp or a Chinese lantern. Because they are not full doors, they provide some privacy without adding a "closed-in" feeling to a room. They are made of mahogany or birch veneer, ready for finishing.

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⚙️ **LEG SUPPORT** features an adjustable, vinyl cushion on a brass or wrought iron base. The support turns any chair into a legs-up lounger, but may be folded and stored when not in use. The cushion is detachable for use as a back rest or as a pad at outdoor events.

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⚙️ **POOL ENCLOSURE** for outdoor pools extends your swimming season by keeping breezes out but letting sun in. Shaped like a quonset hut, the enclosure has an aluminum frame, easily assembled and disassembled, with tension cables that firmly hold down a transparent plastic cover.

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## Nature Ramblings



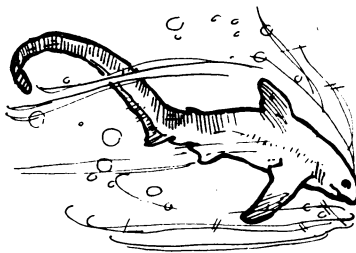
➤ THE SEA WAS CALM, and the boat scarcely rocked with the long, low swells. A few hundred feet away, though, the smoothness of the water was broken by a mass of silvery points glinting in the sunshine—a school of fish swimming near the surface. The fishermen jumped into their dory, ready to set a large net around the swarming fish.

But before the last line was cast off, the men heard a mighty splashing on the water. Looking up, they saw the sea literally churning where the school of fish had been. Water flew in all directions. Small fish leaped—or were hurled—in all directions.

In a few seconds this underwater commotion had ceased, and once again the surface was calm. But the school of small fish had gone. In their place were numerous dead fish floating on the water, and ominous fins projecting above the surface.

The fishermen had witnessed the attack of thresher sharks. While their day's fishing had been ruined by these monsters, they were glad the sharks had struck before they

### Thresher Shark



had set their net and not afterwards. A few blows from the sharks' tails would have reduced the seine to worthless ribbons.

All sharks characteristically have a tail in which the upper lobe is considerably more developed than the lower lobe. This is termed a "heterocercal" tail, in contrast with the "homocercal" tail with more or less equal lobes as in the true, bony fishes.

Supposedly, the enlarged upper tail lobe acts as a counterweight against the shark's heavy forebody. The bony fishes generally

have a more equal distribution of their weight throughout the body.

Whatever the reason behind the oversized upper tail lobe of a shark, it does act as an extremely effective oar with which the big fish sculls itself through the water.

The thresher shark, with its extreme heterocercal tail, may grow to 15 feet or so in length, more than half being tail! This outside appendage is used by the thresher shark to flail the water, stunning or killing its prey which it then devours at leisure.

Other sharks seem to run to extremes, too. There is a tendency among the tribe for the eyes to be placed far to the side of the head, as if to increase the lateral and backward field of vision. This trend almost reaches the point of absurdity in the hammerhead sharks, in which the eyes are found perched on the ends of a broad head. But it is not so absurd as it may seem, for the hammerheads—like the threshers—are effective killers.

—HORACE LOFTIN

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