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ASTRONOMY

Mystery Object Moving Twice as Fast as Sun

➤ A MYSTERY OBJECT that may be an asteroid is now roaming the southern skies at twice the speed of the sun.

The object looks like an ordinary star without any tail as found in a comet. It is ninth magnitude, too faint to be seen with the naked eye although visible with binoculars. Its discovery by Dr. Henry L. Giclas of Lowell Observatory, Flagstaff, Ariz., was reported to Harvard College Observatory.

Alfred H. Mikesell of the U.S. Naval Observatory in Washington, D. C., said the object is moving in the same direction as known asteroids, with a speed nearly equal that of the fastest asteroids, or close to two degrees a day.

When spotted on Oct. 22, the mysterious object was in the constellation of Pisces, the fishes, visible in the southern sky.

Harvard College Observatory also reported that a comet has been spotted. Comet Malsch was located in the constellation of Cetus, the whale, the same sky area where the mystery object was found. This comet was of magnitude 8 and was reported to have a short tail.

• Science News Letter, 78:302 November 5, 1960

DENTISTRY

Grinding Teeth Seen Harmful

➤ HABITUAL GRINDING, clenching or clicking of the teeth, called bruxism, may be the cause of periodontal (gum) disease. Dr. Samuel C. Nadler of Forest Hills, N. Y., reported in the Journal of the American Dental Association, 61:470, 1960, that it is the dentist's responsibility to recognize and treat bruxism.

Although bruxism is almost a universal habit, many persons indulge in it unconsciously. It can occur either day or night.

Dr. Nadler suggests that dentists give their patients a questionnaire to aid in detecting symptoms.

In making the initial examination he says a dentist should watch for: abnormal wear of certain teeth or the entire set of teeth; recession, bleeding of the gums and inflammation of gum tissues as an indication of diseased gums; or abnormal swallowing habits.

• Science News Letter, 78:302 November 5, 1960

MEDICINE

Pediatricians Warned On Overuse of Drugs

➤ CHILDREN CAN BE easily poisoned with overdoses of aspirin or tranquilizers, the American Academy of Pediatrics meeting was told in Chicago.

Dr. A. Lawrence Chute, chief of pediatrics, Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto, Canada, warned doctors against mistakes commonly made in treatments ranging from blood transfusions to oxygen therapy.

One of the most common forms of drug

disease caused by over-prescription by physicians for children, he said, is poisoning by acetylsalicylic acid, or aspirin.

Dr. Chute warned against indiscriminate use of antibiotics. He said that, next to the antibiotics, few drugs have been given to patients by physician with the same abandon as the steroids, among which is cortisone.

Steroids over a prolonged period can inhibit growth in children and cause severe osteoporosis (bone disease). When used during pregnancy in the form of testosterone or progesterone to prevent habitual abortion, steroids can produce sexual changes in the offspring of women so treated, Dr. Chute cautioned.

Blood transfusion can overload the circulation or be dangerous because of incompatibility, and in the case of the Rh factor and the possible transmission of infection, the potential danger is great.

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ARCHAEOLOGY

Ancient People Made No Progress for 2,000 Years

➤ EVIDENCE HAS BEEN unearthed of a people who lived in Arizona on one of the important trade routes of their day but who nevertheless clung to their primitive ways of living for 2,000 years, surrounded by more progressive people.

They lived on game and plants gathered from the wild, while only 70 miles away their neighbors grew corn. They ate without dishes while their neighbors made pottery.

An expedition from the Chicago Natural History Museum, sponsored by the National Science Foundation, excavated the site of this people, which was inhabited as late as 300 A.D.

Drs. Paul S. Martin, chief curator of anthropology of the Museum, and John B. Rinaldo, assistant curator of archaeology, directed the excavations. They reported that this primitive tribe lived by hunting and gathering wild plants.

Except for the addition of permanent houses, these people lived as their nomadic ancestors had done 2,000 years before. Tools seemed to be limited to grinding stones and stone-tipped spears. No evidence of agriculture and no pottery was found.

• Science News Letter, 78:302 November 5, 1960

Questions

AERONAUTICS—What is the most serious hazard to manned space travel? p. 295.

GENETICS—Why is the chicken-turkey hybrid unable to reproduce? p. 291.

GEOPHYSICS—What are some of the sources of infrasonic waves? p. 293.

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