

# • New Ideas 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 1073. To receive this Gadget Bulletin without special request each week, remit \$1.50 for one year's subscription.

⚙️ **POROUS SOAP DISH** for use in kitchen or bathroom hastens drying of soap, is easy to clean, and will not support the growth of mold, fungus or bacteria. Made of white foam plastic, it will float in the tub or washstand.

• Science News Letter, 79:16 January 7, 1961

⚙️ **RECHARGEABLE FLASHLIGHT BATTERY** gives 50% more continuous light than a standard flashlight battery and fits all two-cell "D" flashlights. Removable cap permits recharging in any AC 110 volt outlet. The nickel cadmium battery can be recharged to full strength overnight.

• Science News Letter, 79:16 January 7, 1961

⚙️ **TESTER AND SPOTLIGHT** comes in convenient carrying case for checking wiring, controls, fuses, circuits, grounds, shorts, switches and fills many other purposes. Case fits onto belt so that both hands are free. Tools are available without carrying case, which may be purchased separately.

• Science News Letter, 79:16 January 7, 1961

⚙️ **TUMBLER BALANCING GAME** any number of persons can play, is based on the Dr. Seuss "Yertle the Turtle" story. One object of the game, shown in the photograph, is to get all 21 high density poly-



ethylene Yertles balanced on a tumbler. Game directions allow different rules and point systems according to group playing.

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⚙️ **STEREO HEADSET** for personalized high-fidelity listening connects to any stereo hi-fi amplifier. The user can experience full range and volume of hi-fi

tapes and recordings without disturbing others. Chairside control unit is optional accessory.

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⚙️ **STAINLESS STEEL THRESHOLD** is pre-notched for speedy installation and does not require cutting for door jamb or stop. Vinyl seal has double dust caps and no open joints for dirt or moisture accumulation. Comes complete with screws and instructions.

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⚙️ **HOUSEHOLD SPONGE CLOTH**, reinforced with a web of strong fibers to prevent tearing, is highly absorbent and lint-free. The 7½-by-10-inch cellulose sponge cloth is bulky enough to provide absorbency but is pliable and easy to handle.

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⚙️ **FLEXIBLE MAGNETIC TAPE** has finely divided magnetized particles uniformly distributed. One side only is strongly magnetic, the non-magnetic side can be molded, hot-stamped or printed. The magnetic tape has varied consumer and industrial uses such as weather-stripping material, a seal for refrigerator doors and to stop auto hood and door rattles.

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## Nature Ramblings



► THE NAME "snowbird" has been applied rather indiscriminately to a large number of small winter birds of gray or brown, sparrow-like plumage.

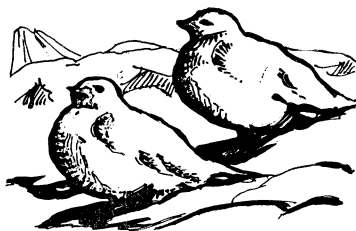
Junco, nuthatch, titmouse, chickadee and several of the native sparrows may be seen flying about or clinging to weed stalks that stick up through the snow. They do not seem to mind the winter weather and they stay with us from the time of red leaves until the first flowers appear.

The clue to the birds' presence is the weed stalks. Without these natural gardens in ditches and field corners, the birds could not survive the winter. Most of them are vegetarians, and consume vast quantities of weed seeds.

Some, to be sure, are meat hunters, and the astonishing acrobatics of the nuthatch and the chickadee are performed as part of their inchwise search over bark and twigs for eggs and pupae of insects.

Perhaps the greatest winter lover among the birds is the snow bunting. This cheer-

### Snowbirds



ful little fellow lives his entire life in snowy regions.

In summer, the snow buntings nest on the islands up at the top of the globe in Canada where the sun shines all night long. When winter comes, they migrate southward, away from the perpetual night of the Arctic.

But they come only as far south as the northern part of the United States, where

it is still cold and snowy, but where there is some sunshine. It is a rare straggler that reaches the frost-free land of Dixie.

When we see the buntings they are in winter plumage. The back, wings and tail are red-brown, streaked with black, but the underparts and head are white, washed with rust. Flocks of buntings flit over the snow to feed on the seeds of ragweed, pigweed, foxtail grass, beach grass, sedges, bulrush, bindweed and mustard.

These birds have been seen foraging comfortably at temperatures down to 35 degrees below zero Fahrenheit. That they are voracious eaters is attested by the fact that 1,500 pigweed seeds have been found in the stomachs of some.

Self-sufficient though they may be, all the snowbirds appreciate a human handout—a few crumbs, a piece of suet and a pan of heated water. They also like to enjoy their meal in peace. Remember to bell the cat.

• Science News Letter, 79:16 January 7, 1961