

Nature Note

Sea Lilies

The wonders of the sea include animals that look much like lilies, with a crown of feather-like flexible "petals" radiating from the top of a stalk. These sea lilies have the same beautiful basic body plan of five radial arms or plates as the starfish, sea urchins, and sea cucumbers. They all belong to the same phylum, Echinodermata.

Each of the five arms of the sea lily is divided near the base so the animal appears to have 10 arms, each covered with delicate feather-like barbs. These animals are in the class Crinoidea, from the Greek word "kri-nos," meaning a lily, and the ending "oid" meaning similar to.

Until the late 19th century, sea lilies were believed to be extinct, because no one had found a living species. More than 5,000 kinds of well preserved fossilized lilies had been found, some of them dating back nearly 700 million years.

Then in 1873, scientists aboard the British ship HMS Challenger, the first ocean research vessel, dredged up several sea lilies that were still alive. About 80 species are now known to live in the oceans, many of them brilliant yellow, red, white, green or brown.

The animal feeds on microscopic plants and animals of the ocean by capturing them with its feathery arms and conveying them to its mouth in the center of the crown of its arms. The stalk, which grows about 20 inches long is often rooted to the ocean floor, although the lilies sometimes move from place to place by an awkward swimming of the arms. No animals are reported to feed regularly on crinoids, although some bore into the animal to feed on the softer parts.

• Science News Letter, 88:363 December 4, 1965

Do You Know?

Hepatitis can be transmitted by *shellfish*.

While not remotely a singer, the total number of call notes of the *ostrich* exceeds that of most songbirds.

The marriage code in Mali, a new African nation, permits a *choice* between monogamy and polygamy.

Oysters and clams can quickly rid themselves of *poliovirus* and bacteria when transplanted from polluted water into clean water.

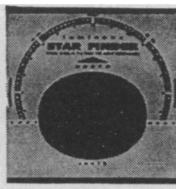
"Alice in Wonderland" has been translated into *Swahili*.

Silicone oil "baths" may be superior to the bed rest technique as a method of simulating the effects of prolonged *weightlessness*.

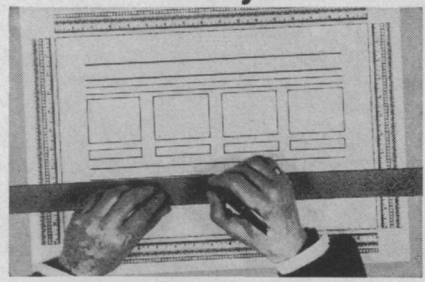
To guard against *famine*, native chiefs of the Pacific islands set family size by decree.

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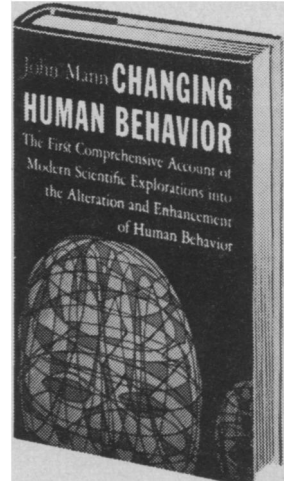
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