

Nature Note

Raccoon

At the beginning of the Miocene era, some 15 million or 20 million years ago, the world's first raccoon appeared upon the continent of North America. The primitive animal, named by scientists Phacocyon, had a pointed muzzle, large eyes, and probably a ringed tail. From this beginning, the creature evolved into various strange species. It crossed the Aleutian land bridge into northern Asia, where it developed into the short-tailed, black and white panda. It migrated south into warmer regions and became the long-nosed, ring-tailed coatimundi. Some stayed home and developed into that inquisitive, thick-furred creature—today's raccoon.

Member of the Carnivora order of mammals called Procyonidae, the species *Procyon lotor* (Latin for washer) is found through most of the United States, southern Canada and in parts of Central America. Another species inhabits Central America and northern parts of South America. Five other raccoon species are found on islands.

"Coons" are mainly gray and black furred, with five to ten black rings on their bushy tails, and a distinctive black mask across their shining, inquisitive

eyes. The head broadens out behind the pointed muzzle which is quite sensitive to smell and touch—as are also the long-fingered, agile forehands.

They are good climbers and swimmers and quite clever about invading camp food supplies or summer houses locked up for the winter. Facile, curious, they unlatch doors, knock tin cans, glasses and boxes off shelves and rummage through bins in search of food.

In spite of this untidy behavior, however, raccoons can become great favorites of human beings, amusing them as they drift with the evening shadows out of the edge of the woods; rattle doorknobs, garbage pails or tin pans to signal their hunger; and once given a handout, wash their food delicately in any nearby water. Raccoons are omnivorous; their favorite meals include fish and frogs, small animals and various nuts, seeds, fruits and corn.

Raccoons seldom make any vocal racket. Sometimes they snarl and yap at each other over a piece of food. Sometimes a mother raccoon utters a series of gentle throaty noises as she communicates to her young, who follow after her in ordered single file.

LETTERS

To the Editor

Rorschach Defended

Sir:

I read Patricia McBroom's article "The Rorschach Test" (SN:8/19) with considerable interest. It had that rare quality of writing that attracts both the professional and the lay reader.

Nevertheless, my own reaction was that it was a lopsided presentation so that the uninformed reader may now be a misinformed reader. For example, there are such references as the Rorschach has been relegated by some "to the junkpile" and the "Rorschach is a dead issue" and "seems to have wandered off to the bush."

Actually, Miss McBroom appears largely to have presented Jenkins' position and supported it with the opinions of psychologists like Cronbach, Buros, and Eysenck—all notably non-Rorschach workers and theoreticians noted for their jaundiced view of any depth interpretation of personality.

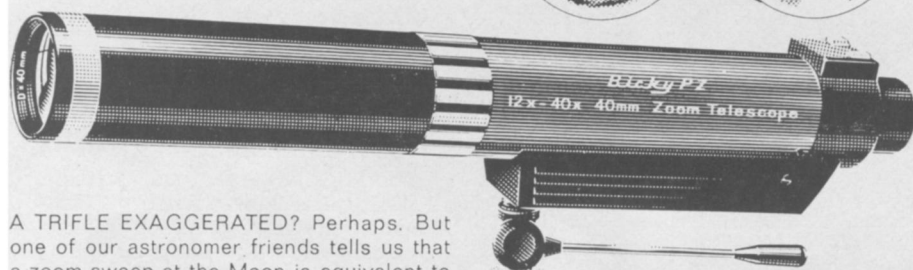
What was omitted from the article was, for example, the relatively recent comprehensive review of the Rorschach in the Hurly & Rabin article (Progress in Clinical Psychology, Vol. VI, 1964). Here, there were numerous citations of studies that apparently have demonstrated the effectiveness of the Rorschach. Thus, Silverman's results indicate that there is an association between aggressive imagery and thought disturbance in schizophrenic and medical patients; Protrowski and Bucklin report validation of the prognostic index for schizophrenia. Clemens claims to have demonstrated a positive relation between level of perceptual organization and psychosomatic disorder; Zamansky & Goldman indicate that a global assessment of Rorschach protocols is effective in assessing therapeutic change; and so forth.

One of the problems of evaluating the Rorschach is the use to which it is put. The most efficacious utilization of the Rorschach appears to be an over-all assessment of personality—in its adaptive as well as non-adaptive expressions—and not as a predictor of behavior specifics. Yet one of the most cogent critiques cited for Dr. Jenkins is his finding that Nobel Laureates have given few movement responses and that artists are not "creative" in their responses.

Most importantly this reader cannot see how the marshalled evidence points to the invalidity of the Rorschach. Miss McBroom quotes Eysenck as saying

(see p. 365)

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Haverhills

Letters (continued)

that the Holtzman Inkblot Test "demonstrates pretty conclusively that the underlying notion of the Rorschach is at fault." This is patently nonsense since all that ever could be "scientifically" demonstrated is that the Rorschach is found by one researcher to measure what another investigator claims for it. Otherwise, we are presented with the disagreement of two people or the misconception of at least one.

The Rorschach Test is without doubt an imperfect instrument but its limitations as well as its utility remains open for discussion and further investigation.

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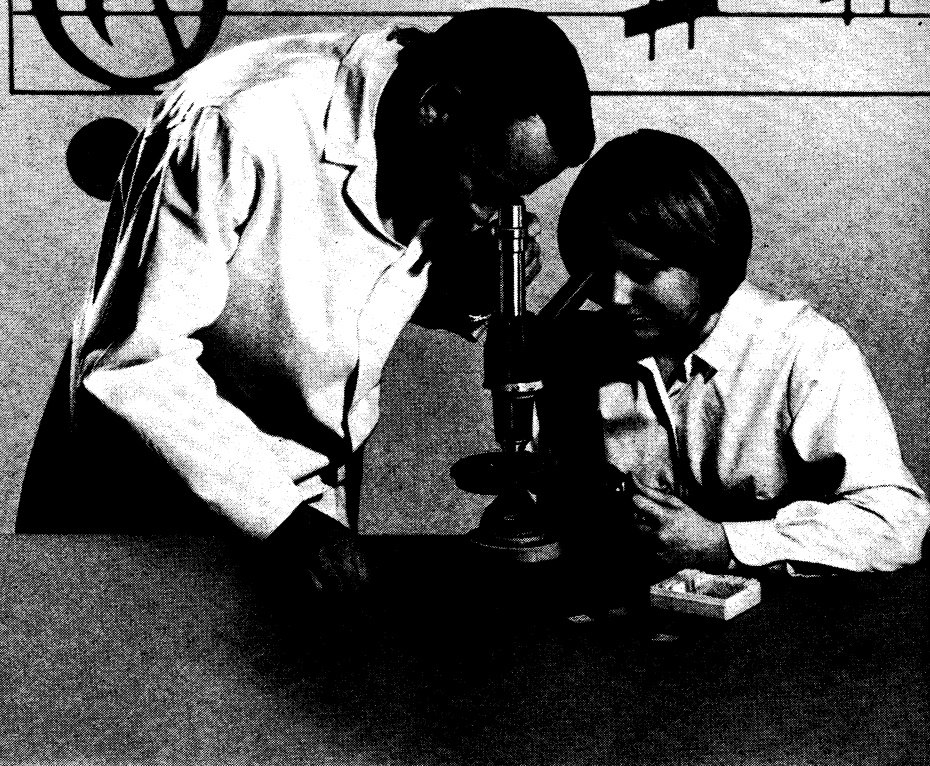
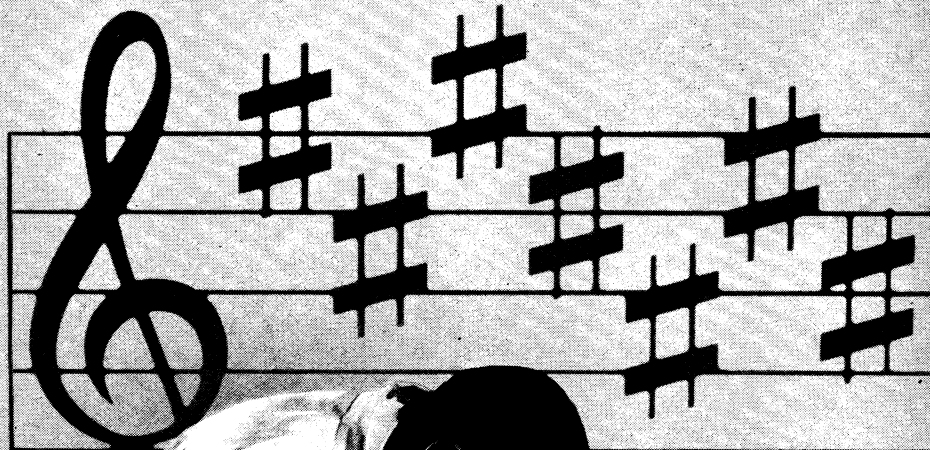
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