

# natural sciences notes

## BOTANY

### World Seed Bank Planned

A world bank of plant seeds—from asters and burdocks to zenobias—may be set up by the United Nations to prevent the extinction of plant varieties.

The bank would help promote the exchange of plants between nations and help countries develop new industries around foreign plants sometimes considered useless in their native environment. The bank would also finance expeditions to collect all varieties of seed known to man.

The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization is planning the bank, which would take two years to organize, Australian biologist Sir Otto Frankl reports on his return from the FAO international biological conference in Rome.

## RECREATION

### New Trails for Hikers

The growing desire of Americans to walk, hike, bicycle or ride horseback in the great outdoors is finding support in Congress.

A new national system of trails would be strengthened by proposed legislation providing for expansion of the Appalachian Trail that runs along the eastern ridges from Maine to Georgia, and the Pacific Crest Trail that stretches through Washington, Oregon and California. Two new trails might be created—a Continental Divide Trail from Canada to Mexico, and a 825-mile Potomac Heritage Trail along the Potomac River.

## DISEASE

### Long Island Ducklings Endangered

The Dutch duck plague, which has been known for many years in Europe and the Far East, has been found in domestic flocks on Long Island.

Last November, 65 wild black ducks were found dead from the disease. The chief fear is that it may spread to wild flocks of ducks, swans, geese, gulls and other water birds. An experimental vaccine is to be tried this month, says John S. Gottschalk, director of the Department of Interior's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife.

## ENTOMOLOGY

### Moth Uses Insect Repellent

The female pink bollworm moth attracts her mate with repellent.

Workers at the Agriculture Department's Beltsville Research Station ground up thousands of bollworm moths several years ago, and, with intensive chemistry, extracted from them a fluid that they decided was the moth's sex attractant. This substance (10-propyl-trans-

5, 9 tridecadienyl acetate) certainly made gentlemen moths hot-and-bothered in the laboratory.

But in the fields their perfume didn't work.

So, the scientists decided, something else was needed to turn on the male moths. After near-endless drudgery they found out the second chemical, with a slightly shorter name: N, N diethyl-m-toluamide.

When what to their wondering eyes should appear but the strange fact that N, N-etc. is available at the nearest drugstore, under the trade name deet.

And deet, as it says on the label, repels insects, male, female and young. You rub it on your nose to keep the critters away.

"Its function in the moth," say William A. Jones and Martin Jacobson in the Jan. 5 SCIENCE, "is not yet understood."

## METEOROLOGY

### Lightning Strikes, 1967

Flashes of lightning destroyed 4,200 buildings in the United States last year, and severely damaged 10,500 more, at a cost of \$272 million—highest in history for any country, according to the Lightning Protection Institute, Chicago, Ill. During the year, bolts destroyed or badly damaged 9,004 homes, 983 institutional structures such as churches, schools and hospitals, and 1,615 industrial and commercial buildings. These figures include major losses only—not uncounted "nuisance strikes" that inflict minor damage to roofs, walls and other parts of a building.

## MULTIPLE USE

### Stricter Rules to Conserve Forests

Dogs, cats and other pets must now be kept caged or on leashes in certain national forests, and motor vehicles are restricted to special areas. These are a few of the new stricter rules set out by the U.S. Forest Service for this year's visitors to National Forest recreation areas, in an effort to protect forests from increasing damage. Other cautionary laws will lower the speed limit of motor boats and set regulations for better sanitation, public conduct and fire control.

## FISHING

### World Catch Up; U.S. Catch Down

While the total fish catch of the world went up in 1966, that of the United States was the lowest in 20 years, according to the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization and the U.S. Bureau of Commercial Fisheries.

The 1966 world catch of fish and shellfish weighed 125.2 billion pounds—six percent more than that of 1965. Peru, Japan, Communist China and the Soviet Union accounted for most of the increase, while the United States dropped from fifth to sixth place, nosed out by Norway. Less fish were caught also by the Federal Republic of Germany and the Netherlands.

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