

Nature Note

English Sparrow

► THE ENGLISH sparrow or house sparrow, *Passer domesticus*, recognized by the black bib and white cheeks in the male of the species, is not really a sparrow but a member of the weaver-bird family.

Called "English sparrow" because most of the birds were imported to North America from England, its native haunts are Eurasia and North Africa.

It is an aggressive bird and very successful at adapting to new environments.

It thrives well and spreads rapidly when introduced to a new locality.

Man has transported it to all continents of the world with alarming success.

The English sparrow's nest may be located most anywhere, but is most frequently found in trees, old fence hollows, drain pipes, and under building rafters.

It is constructed of grass and twigs if the bird is a rural resident; paper and trash if it dwells in the city. In this nest the female lays five or six eggs several times each year.

Rapid population increases have given the English sparrow relative freedom from its natural enemies.

Wherever the English sparrow has gone, it has been considered a pest by many people.

However, it was brought to so many places in the United States, from Maine to San Francisco, it is no wonder it soon seemed to overrun the country.

Farmers fear the loss of grain and fruit eaten by this lively bird.

Bird watchers shudder because it drives away many local martins, bluebirds and attractive song birds with its noisy squabbling over nesting sites.

City residents get up in arms because the unsightly nests and numerous droppings deface public buildings and houses.

Although the country sparrows may have attractive and clean plumage, the city sparrows can sometimes become so begrimed with dirt and soot that they are hard to identify.

MEDICINE

U.S. Service Cuts British Research Time

► BRITISH medical research workers can now gain rapid access to the results of international research by making use of a new computer-operated information-retrieval service.

An index of approximately 300,000 research papers from the world's medical literature is stored on magnetic tape which can be searched on an electronic computer.

The index is updated monthly using magnetic tapes flown from the United States and provided by the U.S. National Library of Medicine.

Based on the American MEDLARS system, the service is being operated jointly by the National Lending Library for Science and Technology, Boston Spa, Yorkshire, and the Computing Laboratory of Newcastle University.

The service will make very significant cuts in the time taken to complete complex searches such as that involved in "finding all the papers relating to the adverse effects of any antibiotic on the function of the middle ear."

The National Lending Library has started courses for training personnel in the use of the system and it is planned that eventually each major biological and medical research establishment will carry at least one such trained person on its staff.

During the initial experimental period of operation no charge is being made for the service.

Users will be expected to help in assessing the value of the service to medical science.

SPACE

UCLA to Build Satellite For Plasma Study

► TO STUDY magnetized plasma in space, the University of California at Los Angeles is planning to build its own satellite that will orbit 90,000 miles up at its farthest point from earth.

As a first step, contracts were let for three independent design and feasibility studies, financed by a \$55,000 grant from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

The studies, to be completed by Christmas, are being done by Hughes Aircraft Space Systems Division at El Segundo, Convair in San Diego, and the

Philco Division of Ford Motor, Palo Alto.

Project director Paul J. Coleman Jr. of the UCLA institute of geophysics and planetary physics said that the satellite will take plasma measurements in the magnetosphere, in interplanetary space, and in the transition area between the two regions.

If all goes according to plan, the scientific satellite will ride into space with a roughly 80- to 90-pound instrumented payload atop a Scout rocket in late 1968 and operate for at least one year.

Dr. Coleman, project scientist Dr. Thomas Farley and project engineer Robert Snare will be backed by a team of 30 to 40 engineers, technicians and students, and Dr. Coleman sees a special value in the project for his students.

"It will give them a chance to see a program through from beginning to end and to cut their teeth on the fundamentals of scientific design as well as in telemetry, orbital dynamics, and data processing," he said.

Only one crucial part of the project has baffled the keenest scientific minds so far—what to name UCLA's first satellite?

Suggestions, the University said, are welcome.

Why Are You A Poor Talker?

A noted publisher in Chicago reports a simple technique of everyday conversation which can pay you real dividends in social and business advancement and works like magic to give you poise, self-confidence and greater popularity.

According to this publisher, many people do not realize how much they could influence others simply by what they say and how they say it. Whether in business, at social functions, or even in casual conversations with new acquaintances there are ways to make a good impression every time you talk.

To acquaint the readers of this publication with the easy-to-follow rules for developing skill in everyday conversation, the publishers have printed full details of their interesting self-training method in a new book, "Adventures in Conversation," which will be mailed free to anyone who requests it. No obligation. Send your name, address, and zip code to: Conversation, 835 Diversey Parkway, Dept. 2647, Chicago, Ill. 60614. A postcard will do. (Adv.)



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