

Nature Trails

(Continued from page 399)

worth while with minerals as an objective. Minerals give a chance to make a collection which would be a real asset to the camp museum, the school, or the community house. Here also is a splendid opportunity to carry out in principle an individual patrol or even troop project. One of the most popular of such projects, as has again and again been demonstrated, is the collection and preparation of a mineral display.

For instance, the display that won the first prize among the collections at the Mohawk Indian Village at the Eastern States Exposition in 1926 was a mineral collection displayed by Troop 19, East Orange, N. J. This was not merely the group of miscellaneous classified minerals and rocks so often seen, but was a display arranged by the scouts to show how common minerals are related to our everyday life. Beside a piece of crude lead ore was a short length of finished lead pipe. Beside a chunk of silver ore glistened a sterling teaspoon and a few silver coins. Contrasted to the specimen of copper ore lay a coil of copper wire. Mercury made possible the thermometer; mineral talc, a can of talcum powder, etc.

Among the features of a recent annual banquet of Troop 8 of Elizabeth, N. J., was an exhibition of projects made by the eight different patrols. The display adjudged the best was the work of the "mineral patrol." These scouts made a model of a mining camp, complete in every detail showing various mining methods and equipment. Accompanying the model were labeled mineral speci-

mens such as would be produced in the layout they had displayed.

Mineral collectors have a broad field in which to exercise their ingenuity. Practical and educational exhibits may be prepared to show the interesting and mystifying properties of minerals. One type that always attracts attention and tells a story is a collection classified as "Minerals of Interest." Such a collection shows, for example, how Iceland spar reveals two long lines on a sheet of paper when held over a single line, due to its double refracting powers (on the same principle that a stick appears bent when dipped in water). It would show how lodestone violently attracts a compass needle and picks up iron fragments. Of course, the "Virginia Lucky Stone," the mineral which crystallizes in the form of crosses, often perfect St. George's and St. Andrew's, would be included. Mercury, the only liquid metal, which has such a high specific gravity that an iron bar will float in it, is always of interest.

Still other types of collections are those which show the variation in color or weight, or form, or hardness of minerals. Then too, the scout will find he can prepare collections that are based even more closely on the merit badge requirements for mining. These include samples of different ores, types of rock formations, groups of the rock-making minerals and many others.

Malcolm Douglas,
Boy Scouts of America.

Science News-Letter, June 25, 1927

One-fourth of all the bird population of South America is in Ecuador.

English air traffic rules require airplanes to give the right of way to airships and balloons.

The Crow Indians are among the tallest of people, the men averaging almost six feet in height.

A new device to suck rock dust out of mines makes the air more healthy for miners to breathe.

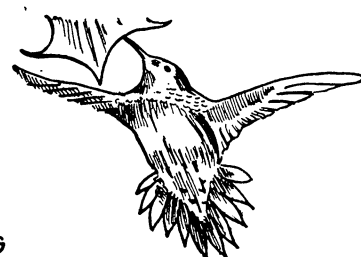
The 110 story skyscraper planned for New York City will have 60 elevators, none of which will make the entire 110 floor trip.

Automobiles have helped to kill off wild game animals, not by running the animals down, but by carrying hunters more quickly and easily to inaccessible places.

Say you saw it advertised in the SCIENCE NEWS-LETTER

NATURE RAMBLINGS

By FRANK THONE



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Humming-Birds

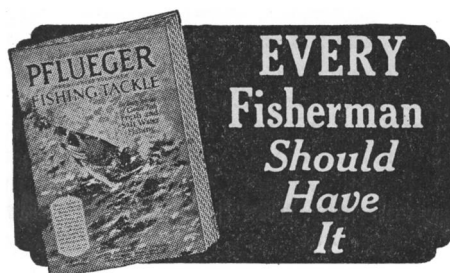
Humming-birds have been called flying jewels, living bits of flame, and similar fanciful and poetic names by such a variety of naturalists and literary folk that it is vain to seek a new descriptive term for them. Everybody knows them, and exclaims joyously when these little birds condescend to pay them a visit.

The best way to secure regular visits from humming-birds is to plant a trumpet-creeper vine somewhere about the premises. The deep-throated, flame-colored flowers of this tropical plant are the favorite food-counters of these hovering, humming, darting small bits of feathery energy. But they can be lured by other deep or long-spurred flowers that common bees have trouble getting into, for example, the common annual larkspur.

The common feeling that there is something exotic about humming-birds, that they do not exactly fit in with the rest of our birds, is quite correct. The whole family is essentially tropic, and those that visit us during the summer come late and leave early on their flight to warmer lands at the summer's end. In the tropics there are thousands of them to one in the temperate zones, and our few non-tropic species are quite eclipsed by dozens and scores of humming-birds that never leave their warm home-lands.

Some of the tropical humming-birds replace insects in the familiar role of carrying pollen from flower to flower, thus insuring fertilization and a crop of seed. The yellow dust catches on the feathers of their heads, and the next flower they visit receives a bit of it on its stigma. Many of these flowers have given up all dependence on insects as pollenation agents, and rely entirely on their special humming-birds guests.

Science News-Letter, June 25, 1927



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