

# Nature's Program for July

The material on this page is furnished by the Coordinating Council on Nature Activities.

This "Nature Calendar" is prepared monthly for Camp Fire Girls by the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. It is written by Dorothy A. Treat, assistant to Harold Madison, Curator of Education at the museum.

Great mullein stalks standing erect and tall like lighted green candles add a picturesque touch to stony pastures.

When turk's cap lilies bloom along hot, sunny lowland roads, follow the trail into a cool, moist wood, where the jewel weed grows. Pinch the green pods and watch them pop and throw their seeds.

On a wading expedition around the pond, one is likely to encounter a school of young horned pout accompanied by their parents. These odd-looking fish, with their waving horns, have no scales.

Many a bullfrog creaking in the pond at night falls a prey to families of minks and raccoons out in the swamp on frog hunts.

Sweet, juicy dewberries and big, ripe blackberries are ample compensation for stained fingers and purple tongues.

Young birds as big as their parents are flopping about on uncertain wings or cheeping in the grass while waiting to be fed.

Goldfinch fledglings are still in their thistledown nests, placed shoulder high in the bushes.

Myriads of "lightning bugs," or fireflies, make the woodlands shine like a distant city in the night. In June these fireflies were little glow-worms.

Science News-Letter, July 2, 1927

## What About the Weather?

Weather has been one of the chief subjects of conversation among people of all ages and all climes, but in the words of America's great humorist, Mark Twain, "little has ever been done about it." Now, what can we do about the weather? Who has an idea? Study the weather, and how? Build a weather cock? Good! That sounds interesting. Every community center should have a weather cock, one that will actually work and point the direction of the wind under every circumstance. For freedom of movement and interference from too inquisitive hands, it is wise to place this on the roof of a building or on a high pole in the yard. It is very necessary that it be high enough to be free from the local gusts of wind and to be in the direct lane of whatever currents of air may be blowing.

Now, we shall have to keep several

points in mind in building a weather cock. In the first place, it must turn horizontally on a pivot, passing through the center of gravity; second, one side of the pivot must present much greater surface to the wind than the other, and third, cross-pieces should be fitted on the support to mark the four cardinal points. The building of the weather cock offers a good opportunity to find out just what is meant by "center of gravity." After all these directions, we are ready to design weather cocks of different shapes and to work out unique plans for decorating these interesting articles. You may find helpful hints in books and magazines, for years ago weather cocks and weather vanes were quite common, particularly in New England villages. Later, an exhibit can be held of the finished and decorated articles.

We have now led up to the point where we can begin the study of the simple laws governing the forecasting of weather, starting with the direction the wind blows and its force of speed. A visit to a nearby weather station would be most interesting, will prompt lots of questions, arouse great interest and clear up many vague ideas. Our pioneer forefathers and the Indians determined the direction of the wind by such simple methods as smoke or dust or by the moistened thumb or forefinger held over the head. They also observed many weather signs which were thought quite dependable

then and still may be found useful aids in determining what the weather is to be.

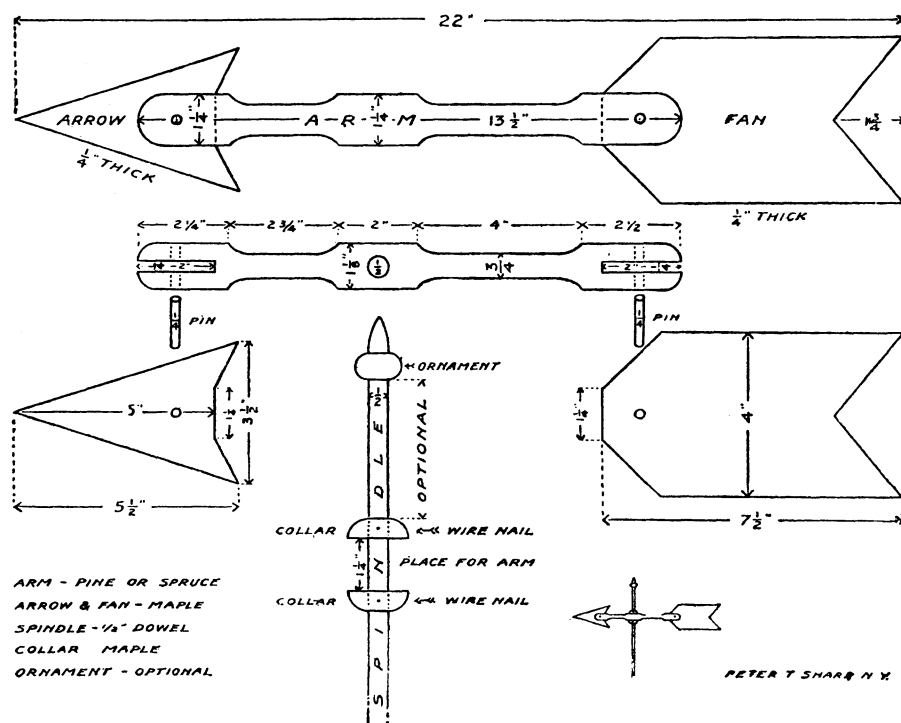
While we are on the general subject of weather, what about lightning rods? Have you noticed that there are more of them now than there were a few years ago? Did you ever see a lightning rod on a tree? What is a lightning rod good for, anyway? Did you ever hear an old-timer say: "Avoid the oak, it draws the stroke; crawl under the thorn, it will shield you from harm?"

One group of children can be responsible for checking up the weather each day, and another group can make a record of the prevailing winds, so, by the end of a few months, the relation of weather to prevailing winds may be noted quite accurately.

Other facts to be observed include the effect of the wind upon the clouds. Clouds traveling in different directions indicate that there are different currents of air. The effect of prevailing winds upon trees may be observed when on hikes. What is the difference in clouds and what do they mean? Suppose we get acquainted with the clouds, so that we can call them by names, just as we do the trees, for they are all named, and each name has a special meaning.

As this game of weather study goes on, we can expect to find a miniature weather station being constructed at the community center, with

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weather maps, charts and weather display flags, all worked out by members of the groups.

—By HARRY ALLEN,  
*Playground and Recreation Association of America.*

Science News-Letter, July 2, 1927

## Weather Vane for Camp

This weather vane is not so difficult to make as a first glance at the sketch might lead you to believe. I have suggested the kinds of wood that are suitable, but any other woods which may be at hand will answer. First, lay out the "Arm"— $1\frac{1}{4}$  in. x  $1\frac{1}{8}$  in. x  $13\frac{1}{2}$  in. Plane the edges square. Mark the distances for the mortises, arrow, fan and holes, and also for the parts of the arm that are hollowed out. Make two saw cuts for the mortises and trim out with a chisel.

If you haven't a chisel, make one. Take a large cut spike or nail and grind or file it down. That will do very nicely. Care should be taken when boring the hole for the spindle to keep it plumb. Screws or nails may be substituted in place of the wooden pins which secure the arrow and fan to the arm. The arrow and fan

should be laid out in pencil also, and carefully cut. A dowel or any round piece of wood will answer for the spindle. Hard wood is preferred for this, on account of the strain, when the wind blows hard. The collars, between which the arm turns, may be made from a spool. Fasten them on with small wire nails as indicated. The distance between the upper collar and ornament and the ornament itself, are optional. After putting the arrow together take off the sharp edges and smooth with sandpaper. Do not use any sandpaper until you are through using edge tools.

A weather vane half this size would give equally good results. It should be painted or varnished to preserve the wood.

—PETER T. SHARP,  
*Boy Scouts of America.*

Science News-Letter, July 2, 1927

Realizing the need for a national program that would coordinate the nature activities of national groups working with young people, the American Museum of Natural History invited these volunteer organizations to form a council to be known as the Coordinating Council on Nature Activities for the purpose of teaching the growing generation, through nature activities, the value of all wild life and natural resources and their conservation.

The various organizations represented are as follows:

American Museum of Natural History, American Nature Study Society, Boy Scouts of America, Camp Directors Association, Camp Fire Girls, Inc., Girl Scouts, Inc., Pioneer Youth of America, Playground and Recreation Association, Woodcraft League of America.

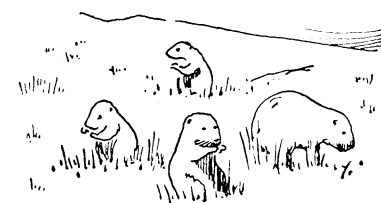
Science News-Letter, July 2, 1927

## MEMORANDUM

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## NATURE RAMBLINGS

By FRANK THONE



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### Prairie Dogs

As you speed across the plains on your way to a vacation in the Rockies, you will see many "towns" of prairie dogs. These gregarious little rodents are fairly close relatives of the woodchuck or groundhog, and have no more to do with dogs than guinea pigs have to do with hogs. They have the same elementary social organization that many other gregarious animals have, the most outstanding feature of which is the posting of sentinels that warn the rest of the approach of danger by shrill whistles.

Prairie dogs are sources of unending entertainment to travelers, and especially to their children, but they are equally unending annoyances to ranchers. They have the insatiable nibbling appetites with which all rodents are endowed, which means that they do a lot of damage to crops. And on the range, where there is much riding to do, their innumerable burrows are always catching horses' hooves, sometimes causing broken bones for either horse or rider.

The old tales of prairie dogs, owls and rattlesnakes sharing the same burrows must be relegated (with a sigh, perhaps) to the realm of fable. Rattlesnakes do live in prairie-dog villages, but there is no evidence that they do more than occupy abandoned burrows. Perhaps they oust the original tenants, or even eat their families. Owls also take over empty prairie-dog apartments, but the little owl of the plains country is a burrower himself, and able to make his own dug-out.

Science News-Letter, July 2, 1927

The United States uses up about four-fifths of the world's gasoline production.

Nearly 40 per cent. of automobile fatalities happen to children under 15 years.



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