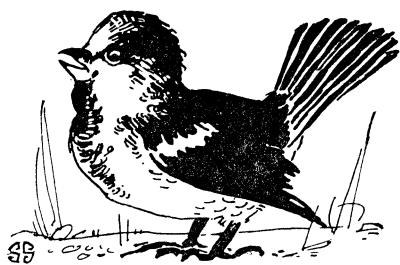


BIOLOGY
NATURE RAMBLINGS

By FRANK THONE



“A Rat in Feathers”

This generation, that groans under the burden of a multitude of pests, finds it hard to realize that some of the worst of them were deliberately brought in from foreign lands by our forefathers. Yet apparently reliable tradition has it that the dandelion was thus imported, and the gipsy moth and its ill cousin the browntail. The Norway rat came uninvited, but the English sparrow, the rat's equivalent in feathers, arrived as a guest. It is even recorded that several determined efforts had to be made before the bird became established in this country. Nowadays we wonder at the misguided persistence of our ancestors no less than at their bad taste in birds.

There simply isn't one redeeming feature about the English sparrow. He is dirty and frowsy in his personal appearance. His nest is an untidy mess, always where it is most bothersome, and rebuilt with the repetitious tenacity of a rat as often as you tear it out. He is a quarrelsome bully toward his betters, and a murderer of their young whenever he gets a chance. He is forever and copiously using his voice, which hasn't a single musical note in it. He is faithless to his spouse, who is equally faithless to him. He is a disgrace to his kinsfolk, for the rest of the sparrow people are “quality” among birds, and have a position of their own among the country gentlefolk. If, as old moralists argued, there is some use for all created things, the only utility of the English sparrow so far discovered is to perfect the patience of the saints and the vocabulary of the sinners.

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Cockatoos sometimes live to be 80 years old.

There are more than 6,000 kinds of capterpillars in America north of Mexico.

Jewels of the Darkness

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among which tan predominates—one especially lovely kind on the hind wings of which are bands of glowing rose and black.

We must take our catch from the poison jar about every ten minutes and put them in the bags.

We will feed them with dried apples soaked in honey, and water, a teaspoonful of strained honey to a quart of water. Apples may be soaked all day, then be dropped into the bags. The moths only sip the moisture from the apples, so they may be again dried and used many times.

The moths must be classified by carefully comparing their markings with the pictures of moths in Elliott and Soules' “Caterpillars and Their Moths,” or some other reliable moth book. They should then be put in separate bags, only one kind of moth to a bag, with the name written on it.

Each day we must keep a watch for eggs. These are sometimes so tiny they are hard to see and are of different shapes, colors and exquisite patterns when seen through a microscope. A full description should be kept of these as there are many common moths whose eggs have never been described. The date when egg are first seen in the bag should be put down under the moth's name. When the moth dies, the eggs have all been laid, not before.

Eggs should then be cut out from the bag with enough paper around them to insure handling without touching them. They should be kept in test tubes with the name, date of first laying and date of death of moth written on gummed labels.

Watch the eggs for any change in shape, colors or markings and put down the dates when changes take place and what they are.

Watch Those Caterpillars!

At last the eggs hatch. When the caterpillars come crawling out of their eggs, they'll want more room to romp around in than the test tubes will allow, so put them into jelly glasses or jars. Brush out the jars every day with a paint brush having a fairly long handle. Usually, a very little sprinkling may be done for young caterpillars are thirsty “critters.” Great care must be taken as the tiny creepers are easily drowned.

Some eat their shells after hatching and this habit should be noted in the record. Usually it is twenty-

(Just turn the page)

NEUROLOGY

Perfect Brain in Future?

Evidence that the human brain of which man is so proud is probably just a forerunner of the perfect brain of the future is presented by Dr. Frederick Tilney, professor of neurology at Columbia and one of the foremost authorities on the brain in this country. So far as instincts are concerned, present day man has not progressed beyond the prehistoric Neanderthal man who lived 100,000 years ago and looked like a gorilla, he states.

The first comparative study of the evolution of man's brain and its relationship to the brains of the higher apes has just been completed by Dr. Tilney. His results reported to the *Archives of Neurology and Psychiatry* indicate that the human brain has made steady growth up to the present time, and that it is now in an intermediate stage.

Famous specimens of prehistoric fossils, some several million years old, were placed at the disposal of Dr. Tilney by the American Museum of Natural History.

“When the brains of all the prehistoric men we know are placed side by side there is not a question of doubt about this progress in development, which is sufficient to convince the most skeptical,” he states. “There is a definite increase in the width of the brain, expanding those areas which have to do with sensation and the part of the brain which has to do with the higher faculties of reason and judgment.”

Where man has stood still, or perhaps even fallen behind, is in learning to control his own nature, he concludes.

Of the oldest man-like creature known to science, Dr. Tilney says: “In size and appearance its brain resembles that of a three-year-old child.”

From careful comparison of famous relics of early men and apes he finds evidence of the close relationship between them in the evolutionary scale.

As one of his conclusions, he states: “That there was a definite prehuman stock, capable of producing both anthropoid and man, cannot be disputed.”

Science News-Letter, July 23, 1927

A new bird refuge has been established in Alaska.

Alexander the Great was a left-handed swordsman.