



Weasel

AN ANIMAL for whose relative scarcity all poultry-keepers are thankful is the weasel. He is the very incarnation of relentless pursuit and insatiable bloodlust, and the great majority of people hate him—and fear him a little—without ever seeing him in their lives. Yet his cast-off clothing becomes the garments of kings. For one species, the long-tailed weasel, in winter puts on shining white fur, except for a jet-black tail-tip, and becomes the ermine.

The reputation of the weasel runs back to the Middle Ages at least, as that very old folk-song, "Pop Goes the Weasel", would indicate. And "Pop" he does go, without any question, for his light, slim, muscular body is a collection of living springs. He is, for his size, the finest jumper in the animal world. Naturalists state that he has even been seen to leap into the air and capture low-flying birds.

Mostly, however, the weasel hunts by scent. Once on the trail of a luckless animal he follows him remorselessly as fate, and sooner or later surely overtakes him. It does the victim no good to climb trees for the weasel can climb as well as he. It does him no good to hide in a hollow limb or in a crack in the rock, for the leaping death that follows him can crawl through any crevice. Once in a while a terrified hare will forsake the timber and by a burst of speed in the open leave him behind; but slower game never escapes. The one good thing that can be said of the weasel is that he keeps down the number of small rodents, which might otherwise become a pest.

Science News Letter, July 18, 1931

PSYCHOLOGY

Nervousness Major Cause In Automobile Accidents

NERVOUSNESS on the part of the driver, especially where muscle coordination is poor, has been named a major cause in automobile accidents. Under the auspices of the National Research Council, Dr. A. R. Lauer and the late Dr. A. P. Weiss made a two-year study at Ohio State University of the psychological principles in automobile driving.

Visual defects, the psychologists learned, are not dangerous in themselves but only to the extent to which they produce a strain on the operator of the car. Of these actual defects, that of being crosseyed is the one most highly associated with accident probability.

Certain types of accidents are largely due to inattention resulting from a tired or worried condition. Any single defect, however, may be compensated by other adjustments, especially if the individual knows his limitations.

Automotive driving should be regarded, Drs. Lauer and Weiss stated, partly as an educational problem. Because the actions of individual drivers are so complex, it is unreasonable to hope at the present for a simple test to determine their skill. Rather should the actual performance of each driver be measured, and consequently a complete standardization of measuring apparatus for this purpose is needed.

Science News Letter, July 18, 1931

BACTERIOLOGY

Food is Main Problem Of Bacteria at Sea

BACTERIA that are carried out to sea in myriads by rivers and are washed down by rain from the air have a good chance of surviving in their new and strange environment, if only they can find enough to eat. This is indicated by experiments performed at the State College of Washington, Pullman, Wash., by Prof. Victor Burke and Lenna A. Baird.

They took a score of different kinds of bacteria from a river, cultured them in the laboratory, and planted samples from their cultures in both fresh and salt water. After a time they counted survivors, and found that most of their species were doing almost as well in salt water as they were in fresh.

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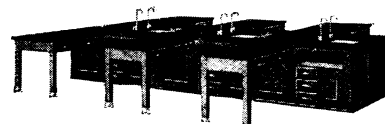
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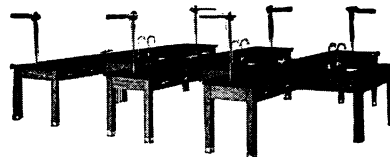
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