

ENTOMOLOGY

NATURE RAMBLINGS

by Frank Thone



'Teen-Age Insects

► THIS WEEK is the big week for "17-year locusts." In parts of the Midwest and Southwest, big, brown, shiny-winged insects are swarming by billions out of holes in the ground and making the air dizzy with their song.

There is no need, though, to fear for our precious crops. They aren't really locusts—that name somehow got stuck to them by mistake. Their real name is cicadas.

Although they all look alike, there are two kinds of them. A dense brood is emerging all over central and southern Iowa. These belong to the 17-year cicadas, which is the northern species. The southern species, which is swarming from Missouri and central Illinois south through Arkansas and thence eastward to the Carolinas, are 13-year cicadas.

They will hang around for a month or six weeks, singing, mating and depositing their eggs in the soft bark of young tree twigs. Then they will all die, and nothing more will be seen of them until the end of their respective 17-year and 13-year cycles. During all that time the young that hatch from the eggs and drop to the ground will be living in subterranean burrows, sucking sap from roots. With this strange existence of many years underground and a few weeks of sunlight and song, they are the longest-lived of known insects.

Scary folk will see an omen of coming war in the bright orange "W" formed by a junction of veins on each wing. But that "W" always appears, whether the world is at war or peace.

Science News Letter, June 1, 1946

About 3% of the deaf have a deaf parent.

BIOCHEMISTRY

Riboflavin Needed for High Altitude Living

► THE BODY cannot adjust to conditions of high altitude without an adequate supply of riboflavin, or vitamin B₂, it is indicated in experiments at the University of California, which also provide further evidence that this vitamin is essential in carbohydrate metabolism.

If the body has a sufficient supply of riboflavin it makes an unusual adjustment to the low pressure of high altitude. The body burns up carbohydrates faster to do the job ordinarily done by a normal supply of oxygen at sea level.

Dr. Agnes Fay Morgan, noted nutritionist and professor of home economics, and Mary Wickson, researcher, found that in riboflavin-deficient rats this adjustment to an increased consumption of carbohydrates is not made.

However, if injections of riboflavin are given the deficient rats just before exposure to high altitudes, the adjustment is almost normal. The work indicates that persons flying at high altitudes be given adequate supplies of riboflavin. While the research was done to aid in combat warfare, it is also applicable to peacetime flying.

Dr. Morgan said also that the results may indicate that persons living in mountainous areas at high altitudes may need extra supplies of riboflavin to insure an increased carbohydrate metabolism to compensate for a decreased supply of oxygen in the air.

Science News Letter, June 1, 1946

GENERAL SCIENCE

Young Scientists Were Not Drafted in Russia

► RAPID ADVANCE of Soviet research which "threatens America's leadership in science" is due largely to the ample supply of young Russian scientists who were not drafted into the armed services even during the war, Dr. I. M. Kolthoff, University of Minnesota chemistry professor, charged in a speech before the American Chemical Society Delaware section.

America will have to pay a high price for the short-sighted policy of drafting our present generation of young scientists into the armed forces, Dr. Kolthoff declared, basing his opinion on observations during a scientific trip to Russia last year.

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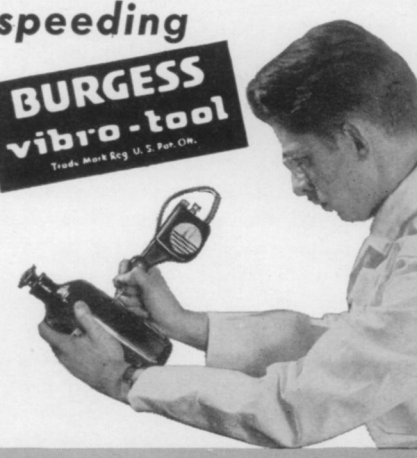
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