

Yankee Mockingbird

► THE MOCKINGBIRD is the chief boast of all southern birddom, and justly so. He is an excellent songster and possessed of an exceedingly varied repertoire.

But though the North is not blessed with the mockingbird, it has an almost equally talented cousin of his in the catbird. The mockingbird and the catbird look a good deal alike, being slim, long-tailed birds of a general gray color scheme, and they have the same habit of ducking in and out among the branches when you try to get a good look at them; not flying away, but keeping inconvenient bunches of leaves between themselves and the would-be observer.

The cousinship is most clearly traced through the catbird's song. This mockingbird of the North has an assortment of notes of his own and of imitations of other sounds, that fairly rival the stock of his more widely reputed cousin in Dixie. There are even some loyal Yankees who prefer the catbird. And, indeed, if it were not for the mewing call he sounds when excited or alarmed, the catbird might well have been formally named the Northern Mocker.

That catcall is the most realistic imitation in nature, though it is not a deliberate

imitation. Catbirds were using it long before white men came to America and brought their pets with them. But it is so much like the voice of a somewhat distressed kitten that it will fool even a cat.

But let not cat presume on a similarity of language and try to get familiar. The catbird, like the mockingbird, has a decidedly combative streak, and will turn himself into a low-flying strafing combat plane if anybody, no matter how big, gets too close to his nest.

The true Southern mockingbird is an artist, and his song is not merely a means to a living but an end in itself. He will tinkle and coruscate and whistle his own scintillating music, and for variety ring in bits from the repertoires of other birds, with catcalls and rusty-hinge squeaks by way of scherzo interludes.

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CARTOGRAPHY

Need Topographical Maps

► THE IMMEDIATE need for accurate topographic maps for the entire United States was strongly emphasized at the American Congress on Surveying and Mapping meeting in Washington. Most modern methods of making such maps, combining aerial photography with land-surveying methods, were discussed by experts from federal, state and university offices.

Such maps are essential in any program having to do with the construction of state and federal highways. But they are also needed in the effective development of mineral and water resources, the effective use of soil, the location of dam sites, industrial plants, electric lines, radio transmission stations, reclamation and drainage projects and many other uses concerned with the surface of the earth.

Map-making from photographs taken from airplanes can no longer be called a new process now after about two decades of use, but many new instruments have been developed to make the results more accurate. Important among them is a method of making automatic profiles by use of a new radar altimeter.

The basic principle in utilizing an airborne altimeter for obtaining elevations involves the use of a constant pressure altitude for a datum, and of measuring by electronic means the distance to the terrain as the plane moves along the profile track, the meeting was told by Vernon F. Reynolds of Aero Service Corporation, Philadelphia.

Two types of instruments are used. One is a radio-altimeter, based on frequency modulation and used as a low-altitude clearance indicator. The other is a radar type which uses the echo principle and is primarily for high altitude pressure flying.

GEOLOGY

Probe Origin of Two-Mile Wide Crater in Canada

► WHETHER A two-mile wide crater in barren northern Quebec near Hudson Bay was actually made by a gigantic plunging meteorite should be discovered this summer.

A joint U. S. -Canadian expedition headed by Dr. Victor Ben Meen, director of Toronto's Royal Ontario Museum, backed by the National Geographic Society, is to fly to the site and explore the scar in the earth that resembles the craters of the moon.

Mine detectors and other modern scientific instruments are to be used in determining the origin of this spectacular crater, discovered by Frederick W. Chubb, a prospector, and first visited last year.

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A new radar altimeter designed for topographical surveying has been developed, he stated. One feature is its accuracy. This altimeter also permits the making of a continuous strip chart recording the radar height of the plane, the aircraft variation from the constant-pressure altitude, and the radar height to the selected constant-pressure altitude.

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NAVIGATION

Guided Missiles Toughest Problem in Navigation

► GUIDED MISSILES that must find their way to distant targets with great speed and accuracy present the most challenging problems in navigation today, Dr. Paul Rosenberg, New York consulting physicist, told the Institute of Navigation meeting in New York, speaking as its president.

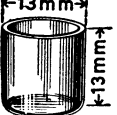
Not only will the guided missile cause the most significant advances in navigation in the future, but, Dr. Rosenberg said, "it is destined in all probability to be the most important single type of weapon in any armed world conflict of the near future."

The guided missile depends for its effectiveness upon its ability to get to a munitions depot thousands of miles away, or a ship at sea, or another guided missile traveling at speeds measured in thousands of miles per hour.

No longer is the sextant the most representative symbol of navigation, Dr. Rosenberg said. The navigation of the future should not be symbolized solely by an electron tube, because modern navigation in the air, on the sea and land utilizes many sciences and techniques.

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