



Hitch-Hikers

➤ BACK IN that almost forgotten age when there were no automobiles the reigning generation practiced the sport of "hooking rides" on horse-drawn wagons. This was greatly frowned upon by their fathers, who themselves went to great lengths to get that cherished talisman, a railroad pass.

Hitch-hikers are still with us, and if the free pass is a thing of yesteryear on the railroads of the nation, there are still those who ride empty box-cars or the rattling rods from place to place.

This system of getting from here to there by letting some other fellow take you along was invented long ago, probably long before man appeared on the earth at all, by a fish. This is the remora, hitch-hiker of the oceans, known to seafaring men the world over as the "pilot-fish" or "shark-sucker."

A strange creature of tropic waters, the remora catches rides on sharks and other large fish, on turtles and sometimes even on boats, by attaching itself to them with a powerful sucking-disk apparatus which covers the whole top of its head.

The sucking mechanism is an odd development of the remora's dorsal fin, which starts like the dorsal fins of most other fish but rapidly changes into a powerful series of suction cups. Shaped somewhat like the sole of a shoe, the adhesive organ is divided into many compartments.

With it, the flat-topped fish attaches itself

to the belly of a shark or the bony stomach plates of a sea turtle, and is there to stay. No amount of twisting or turning or scrapping against the bottom will serve to dislodge the hitch-hiker.

The shark or turtle may take its passenger in bad grace, but there is nothing to do but grin and bear it. Aside from stealing transportation, the remora is not a parasite. It does not feed upon its host, as does the dreaded sea lamprey. Instead, it rides along until the larger fish finds a meal.

Then the pilot-fish lets go and joins wholeheartedly in the feast. When the food is gone, back goes the suction. These are the two main goals in the remora's limited ambitions: free rides and free lunches.

Even so lazy a creature is often put to work by man. Fishermen can be lazy too. For thousands of years primitive fishermen in the West Indies, in Malaya, China, Australia and Polynesia, have used the remora as a sort of self-propelled, self-directing fish hook. They tie a cord to the pilot-fish's tail, and release it where there may be turtles. Away goes the remora.

If a turtle is available, the remora attaches itself to it, the fishermen haul in on their line, and in comes remora, turtle and all.

Science News Letter, January 29, 1955

GENERAL SCIENCE

University Offers Course in Interlingua

➤ NINE UNITED States scientific publications are now using the new international language, Interlingua, and a university is offering a course in it.

This news of the language being introduced by SCIENCE SERVICE was made public in New York when Dr. Charles D. Marple, medical director of the American Heart Association, announced that *Circulation*, beginning with the January issue, will become the ninth U. S. scientific journal to use Interlingua.

These nine use the new language for summarizing articles appearing in them. One other, SCIENCE SERVICE's monthly SCIENTIA INTERNATIONAL, is published in Interlingua exclusively.

Interlingua is a language composed of elements common to Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian and other Romance languages. Its existence and value were first made known to many in the scientific and health fields at the time of the Second World Congress of Cardiology held in Washington in September, 1954. Abstracts of papers presented at the Congress were published in the program in the new language.

The increasing popularity of the language has resulted in the inclusion of an Interlingua course in the adult education curriculum of New York University. The course will start in February and will be taught by Dr. Alexander Gode, chief of the Interlingua Division of SCIENCE SERVICE and the leading authority on the language.

Science News Letter, January 29, 1955

PSYCHOLOGY

Commercials Recalled Better If Spoken Slowly

➤ WHEN A radio or television announcer gives his commercial, he should speak more slowly than he would in reading a news dispatch or than an actor would in a dramatic sketch.

This was reported to the American Association for the Advancement of Science meeting in Berkeley, Calif., by Dr. Norman Young, psychologist of Brooklyn College, New York.

When the commercial comes on, the television or radio audience seizes the opportunity to relax the attention. That is the moment for exchanging a quick word with the family, or to go to the refrigerator for a snack, Dr. Young told his colleagues.

Under such relaxed-attention circumstances, a message spoken at 145 words per minute has a better chance of being remembered than one given at 185 words per minute, he found from experiments.

Science News Letter, January 29, 1955

Questions

ENTOMOLOGY—What method was proposed to fight the screwworm in Florida and Texas? p. 78.

GENERAL SCIENCE—How much does the new budget propose the government spend on scientific projects? p. 68.

MEDICINE—How are doctors planning to test the cancer forming power of tobacco tars? p. 68.

PHYSIOLOGY—About how long does it take to rise 100 feet underwater? p. 72.

RADIO ASTRONOMY—What is the significance of the absorption lines found in radio waves from space? p. 71.

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