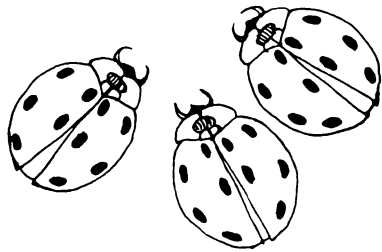


ENTOMOLOGY
NATURE RAMBLINGS



Lady-Beetle

*"Ladybird, ladybird, fly away home.
Your house is on fire, your children
will burn."*

➤ THIS CHANT has been a favorite for children for no one knows how long. For these bright little beetles, more ready than most of their kin to use their wings, are very attractive to the youngsters.

It is easily understandable that an early and naive natural history should have called these apparently harmless, gentle insects "ladybirds." But more recent and careful investigations have shown that by rights they should be known as "leopard beetles," for they are among the most voracious little hunters in the insect kingdom.

There are many species of ladybirds, but in general they all resemble a tiny round pill cut in half. Their short legs are attached to the flat side of their body, and they run as fast as these short legs can carry them, first in one direction, then in another.

The ladybird comes in a variety of colors. Sometimes she is black with red or yellow spots, sometimes red or yellow with black spots, but always her coat is shining. Fast as her legs will carry her, the ladybird is still slow-moving, like most of the round beetles. The lady's prey, however, is slower

still, for it consists mainly of aphids, scale insects and similar plant parasites.

This predacious habit on the part of the ladybirds naturally makes them valuable friends of man, for our gardens and orchards suffer heavily from the inroads of these pests. The fruit-raising industry particularly pays millions in involuntary tolls to various types of scale insects. In some regions, notably California, capturing wild ladybirds and turning them loose in the groves has become a very important horticultural practice.

The ladybirds commonly winter in the debris on the forest floor in the woodlands of the higher hills, and to these places the gatherers go, shaking and sifting them out of their winter nests. The beetles are as a rule too sleepy to mind, and they are carefully kept at the proper temperature in cold storage until spring.

Science News Letter, June 4, 1955

METEOROLOGY

Rain Making Succeeds In Tropical Clouds

➤ THE CHANCES of rain forming in warm tropical clouds is doubled if seed water is dumped into them, a University of Chicago meteorologist told the American Meteorological Society meeting in Washington.

Dr. Horace R. Byers reported, for the first time, success is making rain in statistically designed experiments. There was only one chance in 50 that results were pure luck, he said.

Starting of rain in the tropical clouds by water seeding was spotted by radar echoes, but whether the rain actually fell to the ground was not determined in the experiments, supported by the Air Force and conducted over the open sea near Puerto Rico.

Other rain-making studies made over the semi-drought areas of southeastern Missouri and northern Arkansas, using dry ice instead of water as seeding material, produced no results, Dr. Byers reported, because there were not enough clouds to conduct statistically designed experiments.

To eliminate differences in cloud characteristics that might vary from day to day, two paired clouds were selected on each day of flight, but only one was treated.

Radar sets, especially designed by Louis J. Batten of the University, detected echoes from the cloud only when droplets induced by the water dumped into it had grown to raindrop size.

Dry ice was used to seed clouds in the Midwest studies because clouds in these latitudes often rise to levels where below freezing temperatures are found before producing rain. Moisture in such clouds usually remains as water droplets, even though temperatures are below freezing. The dry ice cools some of these droplets to much lower temperatures and changes them into snowflakes.

Science News Letter, June 4, 1955

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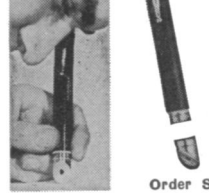
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