

GENERAL SCIENCE

"How-To-Do-It" — a Hobby

➤ A HOBBY by any other name is confusing. The Government, which has discontinued some how-to-do-it books, notably the National Bureau of Standards' *Care and Repair of the House* (see SNL, May 21, p. 323), has now published a catalogue of available books entitled "Hobby Publications."

"Hobby publications, as such," the catalogue states "are not published by the Government. However, many of the books, circulars, and pamphlets issued by the various Government departments and agencies, as part of their official programs, contain information that could possibly be useful to hobbyists or those seeking interesting pastime activities."

The catalogue lists 11 such hobby-like categories and one other called "Miscellaneous" in the contents. Included are such pastimes as aviation, birds, cooking, collecting, gardening, photography and sewing.

Altogether, there are 91 books, circulars and pamphlets listed, ranging in price from five cents for a six-page folder entitled *Pointers on Making Good Lawns* to \$4.50 for a paper-bound, 734-page book with illustrations, *Life Histories of North American Wood Warblers*.

Each section is headed by a small paragraph devoted to spelling out why the subject is attractive to some people and is possibly a hobby.

Under the section "Birds," for instance, the Government reports, "Four popular Government publications written especially for the bird fancier, for those who find attracting, protecting and observing birds a pleasing hobby."

Under "Building, Painting and Repairing," the Government says, "Many men find that woodworking, carpentry and painting, done in their spare time is not only a pleasant pastime, but also one that can result in real savings."

Most of the publications are of interest and value. Helpful hints, and how-to-do-it techniques are transformed into readable material with illustrations and blueprints where needed.

Those interested in husbandry can find hobby publications instructing them on how to raise hamsters, geese, turkeys, guinea pigs, minks, squabs, ducks and chinchillas. Housewives can learn about canning, pickling or poultry cooking and fitting dresses, caring for the sewing machine or making coats at home.

Even for the newspaperman the Government has provided a pamphlet entitled *U. S. Government Printing Office Style Manual*, pointing out that "the art of writing is a hobby and profession that is centuries old." It covers grammar and general information "for writers and editors."

Science News Letter, June 25, 1955

NEUROLOGY

Brain Tells When to Stop

➤ DISCOVERY OF a new function of the human brain was announced by a group of New York neurologists at the meeting of the American Neurological Association in Chicago.

It is the capacity to determine when a behavior pattern is appropriate and to stop it when the pattern is no longer appropriate. A decrease in this function, as shown by certain tests, points to brain damage. There is no particular brain center or region for this function.

The function, or its absence, were shown by tests, including one in which the subject stands with arms stretched out, tongue stuck out, eyes closed. Those without brain damage soon stopped to ask the purpose of the performance. Those with damaged brains continued for long periods without question.

Another test required writing small circles in a horizontal row and then, on command, changing abruptly to write parallel lines in a vertical row. A second part of this test was writing a series of "Z's" and then changing abruptly to a right-angled figure.

Persons with intact brains changed easily and completely from one established pattern

to the other. Those with damaged brains did not, nor did they make any comment when asked to go back to writing circles instead of straight lines. The more extensive the brain damage, the more trouble they had changing patterns.

Scientists reporting this brain function were Drs. Thomas C. Guthrie, Louis Berlin, Arthur Weider, Helen Goodell and Harold G. Wolff.

Science News Letter, June 25, 1955

ASTRONOMY

Naked-Eye Comet Visible in Sky

➤ A NAKED-EYE comet is now visible in the sky. It looks like a star surrounded by a luminous fog and is trailed by an invisible hazy tail.

The comet, discovered on the evening of June 12, can be seen in the constellation of Perseus, which swings from low in the northwest in the evening to northeast in the early morning.

Its magnitude is six, but good viewing conditions are needed to spot it.

The first comet bright enough to be seen by naked eye from the Northern Hemisphere in several years, it was discovered by Antonin Mrkos of the Skelnate-Pleso Observatory in Czechoslovakia. The new comet, the fifth to be found this year, is named after him.

When discovered, the comet's position in the sky was right ascension, four hours, 45 minutes; declination, plus 44 degrees, 14 minutes. It was found at 20 hours and 48 minutes, Universal Time, which is 4:48 p.m. EDT.

It is moving to the north, away from the sun, and will become fainter.

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