

Moses and the Mother Bird

► HERE is advice from a very wise man: "If you should happen to come upon a bird's nest in any tree, or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, and the mother sitting on the young or the eggs, you must not take the mother with the young. You must rather let the mother go, and only take the young, that you may prosper, and live long."

This simple statement seems to put in a single clear rule all of the many individual techniques for the conservation of our irreplaceable natural resources—from song birds to primeval forests. It says in short, when you use anything from nature, be sure that enough is left to replenish naturally what you take away.

And who was the great naturalist that left us this advice? Why, gray-bearded Moses, the law-giver of the children of Israel (Deuteronomy, Chapter 22, verse 6).

Conservation of natural resources must have been a very real concern of those desert wanderers. Keeping the waters of scattered oases clear and unpolluted was a matter of life and death. Overgrazing of the land by their flocks might mean starvation later. Thoughtless destruction of wildlife and forests resulted in future want.

Did the Israelites follow this admonition of stern old Moses? No; for the lands that once were famous for their greenness have long been turned into bare, eroded desert. Trees were cut and not replaced. Sheep and goats nibbled away the blanket of grass that anchored the topsoil. The Promised Land became a bleak land.

So, as another Biblical figure said, there is nothing new under the sun. The rules of good conservation practices were the same at the dawn of history as they are today, and wise men recognize the same "commandments" that must be observed to safeguard natural resources.

As in Israel, to insure tomorrow's plenty in the United States and the rest of the world, "you must not take the mother with the young."

Science News Letter, January 7, 1956

PSYCHOLOGY

Sucking Is Just Reflex, Not Freudian Drive

► EVIDENCE that sucking is a simple reflex and not an inner drive as is claimed by psychoanalytic theory, was reported to the American Association for the Advancement of Science meeting by Dr. W. T. James of the University of Georgia.

Experience with baby puppies shows that when they are with the mother, the young pups suck. They suckle when their little stomachs are crammed full as well as when

they are empty. They suck if they have just been sucking on a bottle and if they have been taking food from a dropper.

And they continue to suck until they fall asleep if the mother stays with them. They begin again immediately when they awake, provided the mother is present.

"Sucking is just one of the many reflex systems of the body which plays a part in life," concludes Dr. James.

Science News Letter, January 7, 1956

Questions

GEOPHYSICS—How will whistlers be studied? p. 3.

MEDICINE—For what scientific reason were hens taught to smoke cigarettes? p. 5.

How is it possible to save the life of a person who is "dead drunk"? p. 5.

What are ammoniated cigarettes? p. 4.

PSYCHOLOGY—How young can a baby monkey learn to monkey with things? p. 6.

Photographs: Cover, Mount Wilson and Palomar; p. 3, Bell Aircraft Corp.; p. 6 and p. 7, Northrop Aircraft; p. 16, McGraw Electric Co.

Do You Know?

Puerto Rico *sweet potatoes* have been successfully introduced in Thailand.

Pantothenic acid is a member of the *vitamin-B* complex and has been found necessary for growth in rats, chicks and microorganisms.

Aircraft production in Great Britain has more than doubled during the last five years.

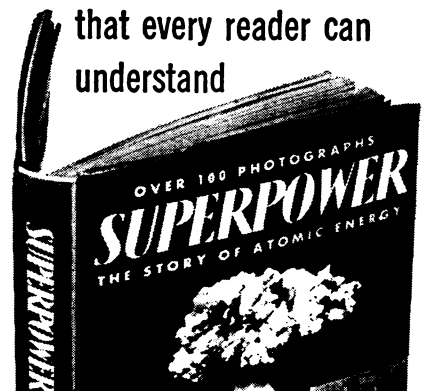
Next year's *grasshopper* threat is expected to be more than three times that of 1955 on western rangelands.

Some 200 commercial varieties of *cheese* are made in France, the most important, in order, being Camembert, Gruyere, Port Salut and Roquefort.

Of all the known *rodents*, included in more than 550 described genera, only the house mouse and the house rat are world-wide in distribution.

The vitamin, *folic acid*, has been used in the treatment of tropical sprue and forms of nutritional anemia associated with pregnancy, pellagra and the administration of sulfa drugs.

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