



PREDATOR AND PREY

*In the little jungles of the grasses underfoot, there are many beasts of prey as fierce, for their size, as tigers; none more so than the grasshopper mouse.*

## PHYSIOLOGY

## Blood Chemical May Cause Hay-Fever Symptoms

**New Evidence Points to Guilt of Histamine, Already Under Suspicion; Formed by Blood of Allergic Persons**

**N**EW evidence that a chemical released by the blood cells may be partially responsible for some of the strange symptoms of hay-fever and other allergies, is reported. (*Journal, American Medical Association*, Nov. 22.)

Using human blood, two physicians of Tulane University of Louisiana School

of Medicine, found that the cells produced histamine in the presence of giant ragweed, housedust and timothy extracts.

Histamine is a chemical which stimulates the autonomic nervous system—over which we have no voluntary control. When histamine is injected into the skin, it produces the familiar “wheal” suffered by some allergy patients. It has long been suspected that this chemical may in part be responsible for many of the clinical symptoms of allergy.

Experiments with animals supported this suspicion, and encouraged Drs. Gerhard Katz and Stanley Cohen of Tulane to test blood taken from allergy patients and non-allergic persons.

When extracts of ragweed, housedust or timothy were incubated with blood of non-allergic persons, no histamine production was noted. When, however, the blood of a person sensitive to one of the irritants was similarly tested, the

histamine level then rose considerably.

Further, the reaction was specific. That is, if the patient were allergic to ragweed, but not timothy, his blood produced histamine only in the presence of the ragweed extract, not timothy.

The two physicians concluded that the amounts of histamine released from the blood cells in contact with the irritant could be large enough to cause some of the symptoms of allergy. They asserted:

“We may assume that at least at points of high concentrations of allergens (irritants), such as the tissues of the respiratory or digestive tracts, the histamine released from blood cells circulating through these areas should, to a certain extent, contribute to some of the local tissue reactions.”

*Science News Letter, December 6, 1941*

## ZOOLOGY

## Fierce Wild Mice Hunt For Prey Like Hounds

**F**IERCE wild mice that hunt like hounds, pounce on their prey like tigers and hang on like bulldogs are described in the new Smithsonian annual report by Ernest P. Walker, assistant director of the National Zoological Park.

They are the little rodents known as grasshopper mice, common in the Southwest. Like other rodents they eat seeds and other vegetable food, but unlike most other kin-animals they prefer a meat diet, preying on large insects and small mammals and lizards. They get their name from their fondness for grasshoppers and their success in catching them.

“It follows a fresh track like a hound,” Mr. Walker states, “makes a slow and very careful approach, and when within reach, grabs its prey, usually with its teeth but sometimes with its hands. This action is so quick that the human eye can scarcely follow it . . . If the victim is a mouse or other creature nearly that size, the attack is particularly savage, much like that of a little bulldog, although the grip is not quite so tenacious, the hold being occasionally changed to obtain a more effective killing grip.”

Mr. Walker has a pet grasshopper mouse, as well as several other wild mice, including a couple of pocket mice and a kangaroo rat. The latter animal, like its big but unrelated Australian namesake, does most of its traveling by tremendous leaps and bounds on its long hind legs.

These small rodents are often credited with being voiceless, but Mr. Walker has found that they have tiny voices that tax even a reasonably acute human ear to

**Languages**  
Made *easy* By  
**Linguaphone**

Speak SPANISH, PORTUGUESE, FRENCH—or any of 29 languages—in an amazingly short time by the simplified, direct Linguaphone conversational method. In your own home listen to the voices of native teachers who lead you by easy steps to speak, read and write the language of your choice. Endorsed by the foremost language teachers. Used by a million home-study students. Send for **FREE Book**

**LINGUAPHONE INSTITUTE**  
31 R.C.A. Building New York City

hear them. He is of the opinion that there are no completely dumb animals. It is we who are deaf, rather than they who are dumb, he holds.

Desert mice, and many other animals that live in arid regions, are able to get along without drinking, and even without eating juicy leaves. Mr. Walker continues. They may lap up dew occasionally, and get a few "greens" during the brief seasons of quick growth that sometimes come in the desert, but at need they can live and thrive entirely on dried

foods. Their physiology is so adjusted that water is manufactured in their bodies out of other hydrogen-oxygen compounds.

"I have often offered water to pocket mice, kangaroo rats, grasshopper mice and other desert animals to make certain that they did not suffer from lack of moisture," he says. "Almost invariably they refuse it, though occasionally they may sip a little and then not touch water again for months."

*Science News Letter, December 6, 1941*

GENERAL SCIENCE

## Unity of American Cultures Sought in Havana Conference

### Exchanges of Students, Teachers, Scientific Leaders Among Steps For Bettering International Relations

**A**N historic forward step in cooperation and understanding among the nations of the Western Hemisphere has just taken place in Havana. National Committees on Intellectual Cooperation from nineteen American countries met to discuss ways of bringing this unity about.

A tri-lingual hemisphere is envisaged by Dr. Antonio S. de Bustamante of Cuba, who stated that understanding of one another's languages was the first essential of friendship and unity between our nations. He asserted that Spanish and Portuguese should become "second languages" of the United States, as English is fast becoming the second tongue of Central and South American states. When we can freely converse, we can cast off our suspicions of one another, read the literature of other Americans and develop a family spirit, he affirmed.

Dr. James T. Shotwell, head of the delegation from the United States, stated that the preservation of freedom throughout the world was the ultimate objective of the historic conference. He said it was impossible for cooperation and unity to be imposed upon peoples; that it must spring from a genuine appreciation of the achievements of one another. "The peace settlement of the present war must include strong measures for cultural cooperation among nations," he concluded.

The development of science and scientific societies among the American republics was brought up in a resolution presented by the delegates from Peru.

The proposal is for a series of international literary and scientific competitive contests, with money to be contributed by their respective governments. Prizes of \$8,000 and \$2,000 would be awarded each year for the most outstanding literary and scientific works.

In addition, proposals have been drafted by the conference calling for widespread exchange of students, teachers and scientific leaders among the American republics during the coming years. Selection of these would be on the basis of scholarship merit, character, ability to profit by the experience, and familiarity with the language of the country.

Resolutions were offered condemning the treatment of many scholars and scientists in occupied countries of the world today, and asking that the governments of the American nations offer every possible facility to exiled scientists and scholars, and give them freedom of movement among the several American states.

This conference marks a milestone in inter-American relations, and proposes to set up means of free exchange of various scientific and cultural works, educational films, and works of art and music. Changes in copyright laws, to give better protection to writers, were recommended.

Transfer of the scientific and cultural societies of the world to the Western Hemisphere was forecast by the Congress which voted to invite to the New World the International Sci- (Turn to page 366)

**HEAR EASILY**  
in noisy places  
with the **NEW**  
**Vacuum Tube Aid**



What a thrill to hear clearly—to live fully again—with the help of Western Electric's new Ortho-tronic vacuum tube Audiphone! Many hundreds of men and women with impaired hearing enjoy that thrill today.

*Why it's better*

Designed by Bell Telephone Laboratories, the Audiphone has many features that contribute to easier hearing.

*Tone Discriminator* enables user to understand more easily in noisy places.

*Overload Limitation* prevents unpleasant blasts from loud sounds.

*Stabilized Feedback* gives vibrant, living quality to reproduction of speech and music.

*Sealed Crystal Microphone* is stabilized against changes in temperature and humidity.

*Try the Audiphone*

An audiometric test enables the Audiphone dealer to recommend the model best suited to your needs—either the Ortho-tronic vacuum tube type or the Ortho-technic carbon type. Try the Audiphone. Send the coupon today for the nearest dealer's name.

Distributed in U. S. A. by Graybar Electric Co., Graybar Bldg., New York—In Canada by Northern Electric Co., Ltd., Montreal—In all other countries by Western Electric Export Corp., 20 Vandam St., New York.

GRAYBAR ELECTRIC CO. SNL-63  
Graybar Building, New York, N. Y.

Please send folder on Western Electric Audiphones and name of nearest dealer.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_