

• New Machines and Gadgets •

If you want more information on the new things described here, send a three-cent stamp to SCIENCE NEWS LETTER, 1719 N St., Washington 6, D. C. and ask for Gadget Bulletin 435. To receive this Gadget Bulletin without special request each week, remit \$1.50 for one year's subscription.

⚙️ **CORN CUTTER**, a newly patented kitchen tool to remove cooked sweet corn from the ear, has a handle, and an ordinary rigid cutting blade for paring which extends into two semi-flexible, semi-circular blades to fit around the ear of corn. The flexibility of these overlapping circular blades permits them to adjust themselves to the size of the ear.

Science News Letter, October 9, 1948

⚙️ **MAGNIFIER-ILLUMINATOR**, which combines in one instrument means for lighting and enlarging objects for visual examination, utilizes three six-watt, nine-inch fluorescent tubes and a high-grade five-inch lens which brings objects into sharp focus at 13 inches. It can be clamped into any desired position.

Science News Letter, October 9, 1948

⚙️ **HIGH POWER MAGNETRON** tube, with a continuous wave output of 50,000 watts at the extremely high frequency of 1,000,000,000 cycles per second, has an output estimated roughly at 1,000 times as high as that of a standard broadcasting station. Earlier magnetron tubes made the war-developed radar a success.

Science News Letter, October 9, 1948



⚙️ **RELIEF MAPS** of molded plastic, for use in studying geography and geology, are light in weight, extremely durable and can be readily stored or displayed, as is evident from the picture. In making, pre-printed vinylite sheets are placed over a plaster mold which in turn was made from an

aluminum sheet on which contour details had been formed.

Science News Letter, October 9, 1948

⚙️ **GLASS-SHIELDED**, single lamp fluorescent fixtures, which produce soft diffused illumination in places where bare lamp fixtures are unsuitable, include attractively ribbed, opaque glass diffusing panels and end caps with decorated medallions. They are suitable for home as well as commercial applications.

Science News Letter, October 9, 1948

⚙️ **INSERT SHELF** for the bathroom medicine cabinet is made of a colored plastic and holds on one end a man's shaving equipment in special slots, and on the other, where the shelf is edged, the toilet preparations which a woman wants to have handy. Extension arms with padded ends fix the shelf in place without the use of tools.

Science News Letter, October 9, 1948

⚙️ **MILK BOTTLE CAP** makes a utility dispenser out of a milk bottle. The plastic cap with a side handle fits any standard milk bottle, grabs one side of the bottle top with an elastic grip, and can be opened like any hinged lid by thumb pressure on the lower part of the handle.

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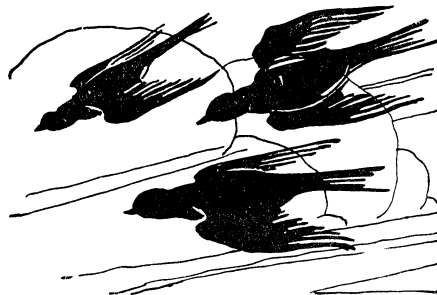
• Nature Ramblings by Frank Thone •

► **COLUMBUS'** landing on one of the smaller islands of the Bahamas, that opened up the Western Hemisphere to exploration and settlement, will be celebrated next week in many of our states and cities. Again the daring imagination, skilled seamanship and stubborn determination of the great navigator will receive their due meed of praise.

But Columbus had helpers, barely mentioned in most accounts of his famous first voyage. Their aid seemed slight even to him, yet it came at a critical time, and perhaps prevented failure or defeat just before the moment of final success. These helpers were small birds.

In Columbus' own account of the crucial last few weeks before land was sighted at daybreak of October 12, 1492, he makes mention of signs of land picked up by the sailors of his three little ships—a branch with berries, several pieces of hand-worked wood, birds flying overhead. The latter were of kinds that the Spaniards did not know, but it was quite evident that they

Columbus' Helpers



were not all sea-birds. Land must not be too far off. Mutterings of possible mutiny subsided, and all eyes strained anxiously towards the horizon, for the first sign of green that might rise above it.

Two things made possible the observation of those significant flocks of land birds. It was mid-autumn, and the migration of birds that nest on the North Ameri-

can mainland towards their winter homes in the West Indies and northern South America was at its height. Had the three caravels been a little faster or a little slower, they might have missed the high tide of the fall flight, and so encountered few birds, or none.

The second factor that made possible the sighting of the birds was Columbus' choice of course during this terminal part of the voyage. He was sailing westward close to the twenty-fourth parallel of longitude, which carried him straight to the island he subsequently named San Salvador. He did not know it, but he was all the time passing the larger islands of the West Indies, which lay well to the south. Since these islands were the destination of many of the birds he saw, he was actually intersecting their migration routes. Had he turned and followed the first flocks he saw, late in September, he probably would have made his landfall somewhat sooner, and on a larger island.

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