

## PSYCHOLOGY

# Record People's Actions

A psychological shorthand machine has been invented enabling the operator to record how people get along together in small groups.

► INVENTION of a kind of psychological shorthand machine which will make it possible to study just what goes on in small groups such as committee meetings or family councils around the dinner table, was announced by its inventor, Dr. Robert F. Bales, of the Laboratory of Social Relations at Harvard.

In the study of how people get along together in small groups, it is important to be able to make a record of what each one does—when one bawls another one out, when he asks for another person's opinion or consults the whole group, when he tries to break up an argument or offers a compromise, when he makes an irrelevant remark, when he gets mad and pounds the table, or when he just sits silent and loses interest in what is going on.

Dr. Bales has found that all the possible actions of a person in a small group meeting can be classified under 14 headings. On his machine 14 numbers appear in a row. Beneath them a wide roll of white paper moves slowly. As each person says or does something, the observer makes a note below the appropriate number.

If Man 1 says to Man 2, "You've done

a poor job on this," the observer scores 1-2 (Man 1 to Man 2) under the number 14 which means "deflates other's status." If Man 3 starts out, "I wonder what you people think about this . . ." the observer will score 3-0 (0 stands for whole group) under the number 9 which means "asks for opinion."

To avoid interfering with the naturalness of the meeting, the observer and the machine are placed on the other side of a one-way-view window which looks like a plain mirror to those in the conference room. Thus the observer can see and hear everything that goes on without himself being observed. Dr. Bales calls his new research instrument an "interaction recorder."

Science News Letter, May 14, 1949

## ICHTHYOLOGY

## Fish Shower Phenomenon Seen by Ichthyologist

► FISH falling from the sky, a much-disputed phenomenon, have finally been observed by a witness whose word must be

respected even by skeptical scientists, for he is a professional ichthyologist, or researcher into the facts of fish life. Dr. A. D. Bajkov, of the Oyster Laboratory in Biloxi, Miss., reports the "fish rain" in the journal, *Science* (April 22).

He states that he was having breakfast with his wife in the town of Marksville, La., when the waitress informed him that fish were falling from the sky. The couple immediately went out to investigate, and found that there had been a really heavy fall of small fish, from two to nine inches in length, not only in streets and yards but on the roofs of houses. The zone covered by the fish shower was 1,000 feet long by 75 to 80 feet wide.

Recalling a report of a shower of frozen fish in Essen, Germany, in 1896, Dr. Bajkov felt some of the specimens. He found them cold, but not frozen.

Most numerous, among the species represented, was the hickory shad. Other species were large-mouth black bass, goggle-eye, two kinds of sunfish and several kinds of minnows. All were in fresh condition.

There was no report of any tornado in the vicinity at the time, but Dr. Bajkov recalls having seen on the previous day a number of smaller whirlwinds or dust-devils. One of these, passing over a well-stocked pond, may have picked up the fish and later dropped them as it whirled over the town higher in the air.

Science News Letter, May 14, 1949

## ZOOLOGY

## Herds Roam Free Yet Stay in Sight

See Front Cover

► NATIVE big-game animals can be seen at the nearest big-city zoo, but they are so obviously penned that the illusion of wildness is shattered. In most of our National Parks and many of our National Forests, such animals exist in abundance, but in those practically limitless spaces they don't always oblige by remaining in sight.

A happy medium has been provided in the new Jackson Hole Wildlife Park, a 1,500-acre tract of wilderness just south of Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming. Good roads make it readily accessible to tourists, and cleverly camouflaged barriers around a 400-acre sector keep a herd of bison and one of American elk or wapiti where people can be sure of a look at them. A glimpse of what they may see is shown on this week's cover of the *SCIENCE NEWS LETTER*.

Other animals in the new park include moose, mule deer, white-tailed deer and pronghorn antelope.

Besides being a tourist attraction, the Jackson Hole Wildlife Park affords research opportunities for zoologists and their students. Parties from 14 colleges and universities studied there last summer.

Science News Letter, May 14, 1949



**GROUP INTERACTION RECORDED**—Dr. Robert F. Bales of Harvard University sits behind a one-way window and records people's reactions to each other by his unique method which involves the use of a kind of psychological shorthand machine.