

• New Machines and Gadgets •

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TEXTILE MARKER comes in an unbreakable squeeze bottle and marks all fabrics and textiles easily and indelibly. The markings dry instantly and reportedly do not smear in many launderings or dry-cleanings. The ink is available in white, yellow, red, and black.

Science News Letter, July 25, 1959

AUXILIARY SPEAKER can convert phonograph, radio, or television to stereo effect or can provide a remote control speaker anywhere in the house. The speaker has two remote controls, one to adjust the auxiliary speaker's volume and one to adjust the main set. The speaker is easy to install and comes with 20 feet of cable.

Science News Letter, July 25, 1959

CREAM-TYPE DETERGENT comes in a tube ready for use by travelers or campers. It cleans wash-and-wear clothes and is delicate enough to be used for hand soap. The detergent is said to make suds in even the coldest mountain streams.

Science News Letter, July 25, 1959

NEEDLE-POINT OILER of transparent plastic resembles a physician's syringe. The oiler, shown in the photograph, is a pocket-



size combination applicator and reservoir with a thin stainless steel spout for lubricating sporting gear, home and office appliances, precision tools and hard-to-reach places.

Science News Letter, July 25, 1959

CLOCK KIT and instructions make it possible to assemble a four-by-six-inch pen-

dulum clock which has brass frame and gears. A hand-painted Alpine scene decorates the face of the clock which is said to keep accurate time.

Science News Letter, July 25, 1959

WATER BICYCLE for the lake is lightweight, portable, and can be dismantled to fit in car trunk or closet. The water bike has nylon resin gears and plastic floats. It will support up to 250 pounds with safety and stability.

Science News Letter, July 25, 1959

BABY FEEDER has a plastic spoon attached to a squeeze container. When the container is squeezed the food flows through a nozzle onto the attached spoon. The feeder is recommended for traveling, and it can be washed and sterilized as easily as a bottle.

Science News Letter, July 25, 1959

SOLDERING IRONS for the home craftsman heat quickly and are well suited for delicate work or heavy duty. The irons, which feature pre-tinned replaceable tips, are sturdy and well balanced. There are three sizes: 30-watt, 60-watt and 80-watt models.

Science News Letter, July 25, 1959



Nature Ramblings



By HORACE LOFTIN

THE POUCHED MAMMALS that developed in Australia were probably not escapists enjoying the freedom from worry and competition man associates with island life. However, that is the happy state of life they achieved for thousands of thousands of years until European man brought in shiploads of trouble, in the form of strange new animals. The original animals found it hard to compete with the newcomers.

Possibly Australia was not an island when the first marsupials developed. Evidence exists that it must have been much closer to a land mass. This was early in the evolution of mammals, before the non-pouched mammals were well-developed. Later the island continent became sealed off by the sea, guaranteeing the isolation of the marsupials for long ages.

The first pouched mammals were probably similar to the present-day opossum in general structure and appearance. But, with the passage of centuries and in the absence

Island Refuge



of other competition, the marsupials began to evolve into a vast array of forms. Each of these forms became adapted to "capitalize" on a particular feature of the habitat. In time the diversity of marsupial animals equalled that of virtually all the familiar Eastern and Western Hemisphere mammals.

For example, the kangaroos are grass-eaters, occupying the same "ecological niche" that the bison did in America or the antelopes do in Africa.

Others, such as the dasyure or "Tasmanian devil" (see illustration) became

meat-eaters, preying on lesser marsupials. Not only in habit but in general appearance is the dasyure like many of our own predatory mammals.

Then some marsupials took to the trees, like the phalanger or the familiar koala bear, again imitating in habit and structure many non-marsupial animals occupying a similar niche. One family of marsupials took to a subterranean form of life and are something like our moles. The wombats are reminiscent of our bears in locomotion and appearance.

Scientists recognize two important lessons to be learned from this great diversity of Australian marsupials. The first of these can be summed up in the term "radiating evolution," meaning that a generalized animal type tends to evolve in many directions to "fill up" the different kinds of habitats available to it. The other is "parallel evolution," since the forms of the marsupials seem to parallel those of non-marsupial animals as they evolve to fill similar places in the economy of nature.

Science News Letter, July 25, 1959