

# • New Machines and Gadgets •

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**DOG'S DOOR BELL** lets you know when your dog wants in or out. The mechanical device is mounted on or near the door with two screws and requires no wiring or batteries. It is said that when the dog is trained to use the bell, he will stop scratching your door.

Science News Letter, March 12, 1960

**DRAIN PIPE HOSE** of vinyl plastic attaches to the downspout from a house rain gutter to carry rain water four feet away and sprinkle it on the lawn. The hose prevents gullies in the lawn caused by water running directly from the spout. When the rain stops, the hose is designed to coil itself up next to the spout.

Science News Letter, March 12, 1960

**ROD-LESS REEL** of red, green or blue anodized aluminum is a complete fishing outfit that can be carried in a pocket. Useful for casting, trolling and still fishing, the deluxe model has 140 feet of 14-pound-test nylon line and five spoon plugs.

Science News Letter, March 12, 1960

**PLASTIC CROQUET SET**, shown in the photograph, resists splintering or cracking under hard, competitive blows of vigorous players. Showers and dew will not harm the polyethylene plastic. The set can



be washed without harm to the colors and lustrous finish.

Science News Letter, March 12, 1960

**KEY PROTECTOR** holds house keys or valuable business keys. Hooked over the

handle to a filing cabinet or garage door, the protector cannot be removed nor the keys taken from it unless one knows the combination to the protector's lock.

Science News Letter, March 12, 1960

**WALL COVERING** of vinyl and cork is colorful, washable and especially suited for dens, family rooms or children's rooms. It takes picture hooks, nails and thumbtacks like a bulletin board. Remove the tack and the vinyl surface is drawn together by the cork backing and the hole is gone.

Science News Letter, March 12, 1960

**COLORED RECORDING TAPE** is designed to help studios distinguish between various categories of recorded materials or between recordings made at different levels or equalizations. There are three colors, blue and green and the conventional oxide brown.

Science News Letter, March 12, 1960

**TRANSISTORIZED GEIGER COUNTER** slips into worker's shirt pocket. The five-ounce battery-powered counter clicks audibly 20 times a minute for background radiation, more urgently as radiation hitting the wearer increases, until finally reaching a high-pitched whine.

Science News Letter, March 12, 1960



## Nature Ramblings



By HORACE LOFTIN

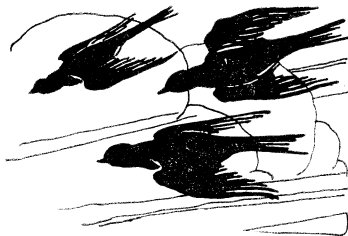
### False Spring

UNTIL well into January, winter was more like Indian summer in the lower South. Topcoats stayed in the closet and oil heaters were used just enough to take the chill from the air. On particularly warm days, frogs sang in the marsh and bats could be seen darting after insects. In the second week of January, the buds of a mulberry tree began to swell, threatening to open with each day's sunshine.

Many of the typical winter birds of the region, especially the hardier insect eaters, had been strangely scarce through the winter months. Where were they? Possibly farther to the north than was their usual custom, due to the mild weather.

From the sights and sounds of nature and the warmth of the air, spring seemed just around the corner, though the calendar denied the fact.

Overnight this picture changed. First came heavy rains, followed by a great cold



front which swept down from the north. Morning broke bright and clear, but a thick frost colored the lawns and fields. The mulberry buds died and browned, deceived by the false spring. No bats flew or insects chirped in the near-freezing air that day! But on the sides of the road and in the brown fields, flocks of winter birds were suddenly seen in large numbers, as if driven south by the icy front.

The bats, the frogs, the mulberry, the northern-lingering birds all were fooled, so to speak, by this springtime weather in winter. But many or most of the plants and animals that must hide or run before the temperatures of winter were not tricked. While the mulberry tree responded to the unseasonably warm weather, the great pecans that line city streets refused to rouse from dormancy. Similarly, many of the birds ignored the warmth and kept to their usual winter quarters, while other insects, amphibians and reptiles continued in their winter sleep.

Actually, the majority of the plants and animals which are greatly affected by winter do not "become aware" of spring's arrival by changes in temperature. Rather, it is the gradual lengthening of the days—the increasing amount of sunlight—that tells them when spring is imminent. The swallow and the pecan are not to be tricked like the mulberry and the bat by a false spring which might lure them to disaster.

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