

# • New Ideas and Gadgets •

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⚙️ **BIRD-RETRIEVING GRAPPLE** for use by hunters eliminates the need for dogs or boats to recover felled waterfowl that float offshore. It consists of an elongated floatable body connected on one end to a casting line. On the other end are mounted six C-shaped grappling hooks. The birds are caught with the hooks and easily pulled in from shore. U.S. Patent 3,044,205.

• Science News Letter, 82:96 August 11, 1962

⚙️ **FEATHERWEIGHT SENSOR DEVICE** no larger than a dime is wafer-thin, frictionless, and has no moving parts. Capable of measuring positions of light sources, its applications include use in continuous duty satellites, in worldwide nuclear blast warning systems, as a sun-sensing position indicator, and in many industrial processes.

• Science News Letter, 82:96 August 11, 1962

⚙️ **PLASTIC BOTTLE-SPOON**, helpful for feeding children in the transition stage from bottle to spoon feeding, consists of a squeezable bottle with a screw-on spoon-top combination. The strained food is squeezed from the five-ounce bottle, shown in the photograph, through the top directly onto



the spoon. The tube opening can be cut back for coarser foods.

• Science News Letter, 82:96 August 11, 1962

⚙️ **INFLATABLE SOLE AND HEEL** for footwear gives a comfortable cushioning

effect. Inflated with a self-sealing valve that is a part of the sole and heel structure, it can be attached to any conventional shoe or boot. It is provided with an easily replaceable tread held in place magnetically, making it simple, convenient and durable. U.S. Patent 3,044,190.

• Science News Letter, 82:96 August 11, 1962

⚙️ **EXTENSION SAFETY LAMP** is an 11-inch-long fluorescent tube protected by a transparent plastic shield with reflector sealed into a rubber cap and handle. Insulated even when wet, the cool-burning light can be used safely near inflammable materials. The lamp has a hang-up hook and either a 25- or 50-foot extension cord.

• Science News Letter, 82:96 August 11, 1962

⚙️ **OCCUPANT-PROPELLED SHOPPING CART** enables a person to sit in comfort while shopping for groceries or other merchandise. The four-wheeled vehicle is provided with a shopping basket, seat with back, pedals for propelling and lever for steering. The seat back swings forward to permit nesting of another cart if desired. U.S. Patent 3,044,801.

• Science News Letter, 82:96 August 11, 1962



## Nature Ramblings



### Gray Fox

Photograph by ALLEN M. PEARSON • Text by WILLIAM E. SMALL

► **YOUNG** gray foxes are now reaching the age when they will leave their families and strike out on their own.

Gray foxes (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*), despite the great losses in population due to bounty hunters, traps, accidents and disease during the early years, are spreading across the United States and Mexico. Three to seven young are produced by each pair during the year. And since the fox cannot stand crowded conditions the younger generation quickly takes up new territory after leaving their mothers.

From the Eastern Seaboard to the Great Plains, throughout the Southwest, and up the Pacific Coast, the gray or tree fox has pushed into nearly every habitable woodland and brushy field.

Urocyon is nearly the same size as his cousin, the red fox (*Vulpes fulva*), subject of many famous fables such as Brer Rabbit. Both foxes are approximately 40 inches long when fully grown. The gray fox is somewhat taller but the prized red fox is heavier, with a thicker, handsomer pelt.

Unlike the red fox, Urocyon chooses more wooded regions for its home because of its ability to climb trees. Hugging the trunk with forelimbs, it forces itself upward with the hind legs. When pursued, the gray fox climbs rapidly and hops from limb to limb to conceal itself—hence the name tree fox. It is not as smart or as cunning as the red fox.

When cornered, however, the gray fox is a vicious and brave warrior, fighting for the preservation of the family as well as self. The slashing paws and glistening teeth can leave their marks on the adversary, as many fox hounds have evidenced.



In spite of the carnivorous smile the fox's diet is not limited to meat. It loves fresh fruit, relishes insects and small mammals, digs for turtle eggs and reptiles, and attacks wounded or penned birds.

Breeding occurs from January to March, 60 days before birth. The young are dark and tiny, but grow quickly. They are weaned in eight to ten weeks and leave their mother in August or September to hunt on their own.

Although the death toll is high in the first few months of life, gray foxes are one of the few species not facing extinction.

• Science News Letter, 82:96 August 11, 1962