

ENDOCRINOLOGY

Canaries Lose Song When Hormone Shot Wears Off

➤ A SHOT OF MALE hormone can make a normally songless female canary give forth with avian arias that rival those of the males, scientists report.

The effect wears off after a while, however, and the females go back to being their own songless selves.

This is reported by Drs. E. H. Herrick and J. O. Harris, Kansas State College of Agriculture and Applied Science, Manhattan, in *Science* (June 28).

Pet dealers have complained that some of their imported canaries sing like typical males for a time, but later refuse to sing at all. Some of these "hold-backs" have been identified as females.

Since it is known that a little male sex hormone can make female chickens and turkeys sound like the males, the suspicion arose that the imported male birds were really females in hormone disguise.

To see if transformation could be made, the scientists took nine known female canaries and gave five of them an injection of human male sex hormone, testosterone phenylacetate. Nine days later, two of the treated birds gave out with a series of chirps that were more closely connected than before, and within 12 days all the treated birds were definitely "singing."

At first the songs were not very long, but as the days passed they grew more sustained and were soon indistinguishable from those of the males.

"Vigorous singing" kept up for about a month and then started dropping off. About five weeks after the injection, the hormone had worn off and only the typical female chirp was heard.

Science News Letter, July 13, 1957

CONSERVATION

Rodent Eating Wildlife Out of House and Home

➤ THE NUTRIA, a beaver-like rodent, is out-eating waterfowl and other wildlife.

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service reports the animal now poses a serious threat to waterfowl feeding areas on national refuges.

A South American native, nutria, or "king-sized muskrat" or swamp beaver, as it is sometimes called, has been established in this country since 1937 when it was introduced into Louisiana by fur farmers. However, nutria has not been considered as a valuable fur animal for the past several years.

Because of their birth rate—a female bears about two litters a year with five or six young in a litter—nutria escapes from fur farms have managed to establish themselves all the way from the Mississippi delta to the mouth of the Rio Grande and on the West Coast.

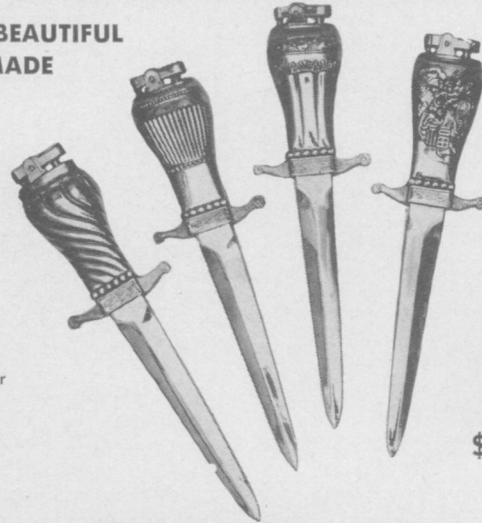
The thousands of nutria are in direct competition with wildlife for the natural feed found in marsh areas.

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