

Inexpensive Summer Fun

Birds' Nests and Feathers Make Good Specimens

(Ninth of a series of 12 articles. Next week—Collecting Indian Relics)



O. K. TO TAKE NOW

Bird nests are good items for the collector and now that the breeding season is past, can be taken without harm. Feathers, loosened by preening, are even more colorful.

YOUNG collectors nowadays find their style somewhat cramped when it comes to birds. In earlier times, boys used to make collections of birds' eggs. They were interesting and attractive things; and climbing after them was vigorous exercise with the added spice of difficulty and a certain amount of danger. If you have ever read "Tom Brown's School Days," that classic of English schoolboy life of a century or so ago, you will remember what sport birds'-nesting used to be considered.

All that is changed now. We have come to realize how valuable birds are and how much they have been menaced by growth of the cities and dwindling of the woods. Collecting their eggs is frowned upon by the law and public opinion. Tom Brown would find it a strange world.

However, a collector need not be baffled utterly by modern restrictions. If he cannot collect bird eggs or bird skins any more, there are still nests and feathers. These are not collected by very many

people, but that is all the more reason why a good collection of them would be real fun.

No bird's nest should be taken during the breeding season. But that season is ended now, and except for species that sometimes re-use the same nest next year, birds' nests are fair game.

Some nests are impossible to collect. Certain sea birds lay their eggs on bare rock, and the nests of some prairie birds are little more than little hollows in the ground. Nests of eagles and fish-hawks are not only inaccessible but a trifle large—six-foot masses of sticks on lofty treetops or rock pinnacles.

But abandoned nests of most small birds that live in trees are quite easy to collect. The only equipment you will need is a good stout-bladed knife, and maybe a small saw. It is best to take the branches in which the nest is set, as a rule. Cut them off six or eight inches both below and above it.

If a tree containing a woodpecker's nest is cut down or blown over by the

wind in your neighborhood, that is a good opportunity to collect one of the most interesting of all bird homes. Saw the section out, being sure to go far enough below the hole—two feet is not too much—and then split or saw lengthwise to get a vertical section of the nest.

Bird feathers can be collected as you chance upon them in field trips, but the best place to look for them is on the ground in the vicinity of nests. Birds preen themselves at home a good deal, and loosened feathers are most likely to be found nearby. Feathers may be fastened to sheets of cardboard by means of thread strung through holes, or with very narrow strips of adhesive tape across their quill ends.

For more information about collecting nests and feathers and a list of books and pamphlets on the subject, send us a postcard with your name and address. Ask for Bulletin 9. Address Science News Letter, 2101 Constitution Ave., Washington, D. C.

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ARCHAEOLOGY

Oldest Domestic Dog Shown At Anthropologists' Meeting

A PREHISTORIC dog that threw in his lot with mankind over 7,000 years ago attracted considerable attention at the International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences in Copenhagen.

The dog's remains are pronounced the oldest of any domesticated dog known. They are Maglemosian—which is not the prehistoric equivalent of Fido, but is the scientific name for an era of transition in northern Europe, when mankind shifted from the Old Stone Age into the more enlightened New Stone Age. This happened 7000 to 5000 B. C.

Scientists consider dogs the first animals domesticated by man.

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Rhubarb leaves should not be used as greens; they may cause poisoning.

ZERO TO EIGHTY

by Dr. E. F. Northrup

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