

Pelican Myths

► PELICANS are familiar sights to winter vacationers in warmer parts of the country. They are amusing to watch as they strut pompously on the shore, reminding one irresistibly of a certain type of statesman slightly overdoing his dignity. Afloat or in the air, however, they are more in their element; for heavy birds they are good fliers, and of course they are first-class swimmers.

There are two things rather widely believed about pelicans, one dating back into antiquity, the other of more recent vintage, but both equally false.

Quite generally accepted during ancient and medieval times, and lingering still in the minds of some persons, is the belief that the mother pelican pierces her own breast with the sharp hook on the end of her beak, and lets her young drink her blood. This pious legend of parental self-sacrifice found its way into much early religious art, and is still perpetuated on the coat-of-arms of the State of

Louisiana. It seems to be based on two pelican habits; the feeding of the young by permitting them to thrust their heads and necks into the parent's beak, to feed on fish regurgitated from the crop; and the pelican's way of resting its wet beak-end on its breast, sometimes leaving a patch of darkened feathers.

The more modern pelican-myth is based on the big chamois-skin-like pouch under the bird's long beak. Its remarkable capacity has been celebrated in a slightly profane limerick that presumably everybody has heard. But the pelican's pouch will not store a week's rations, or even a day's. The pelican uses

it as a fishing-net, not as a storage-place. He can gulp down amazing quantities of fish, but they go to his crop and his stomach.

Pelicans in more northern areas are as a rule seen only in summer; the birds migrate southward in the winter. Perhaps the most famous of such pelican summer colonies is the one that nests on a couple of tiny islands in Yellowstone Lake, and add to the region's picturesque quality for the benefit of park tourists. These birds are said to fly all the way to the Gulf of California for their winter fishing.

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• Books of the Week •

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THE BIOLOGY OF MELANOMAS—Myron Gordon and others—*New York Academy of Sciences*, 466 p., illus., \$5.00. Results of a conference on the biology of normal and atypical pigment cell growth.

CHEMICAL CALCULATIONS—Bernard Jaffe—*World Book*, rev. ed., 180 p., illus., \$1.60. For high school students.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE STUDY OF TUBERCULOSIS—Research Department, *National Jewish Hospital at Denver*, 378 p., illus., paper, free to medical libraries and chest specialists from National Jewish Hospital at Denver, 3800 East Colfax Ave., Denver 6, Colo.

COOPERATION IN THE AMERICAS—Interdepartmental Committee on Scientific and Cultural Cooperation—*Govt. Printing Office*, 146 p., illus., paper, 40 cents. Department of State publication 2971. An account of what is being done to improve inter-American cultural relations, including the story of the book translation program in which Science Service participates.

EPILEPSY: Psychiatric Aspects of Convulsive Disorders—Paul H. Hoch and Robert P. Knight, Eds.—*Grune and Stratton*, 214 p., illus., \$4.00. Written by experts, this book stresses the clinical approach rather than research activities and gives attention to the psychiatric as well as the medical needs of the patient.

FLOWERS OF PRAIRIE AND WOODLAND—Edith S. Clements—*Wilson*, 83 p., illus., \$2.25. Flower lovers will enjoy this little book, beautifully illustrated in color.

GRAND COULEE: From Hell to Breakfast—Fred O. Jones—*Binfords & Mort*, 64 p., illus., \$2.00. The story of a great dam done mostly in photographs and drawings. The author was formerly geologist for the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation.

HANDBOOK OF CHILD GUIDANCE—Ernest Harms, ed.—*Child Care Publications*, 751 p., \$8.60. Contributions from specialists on guidance for the normal child, the physically handicapped, and problem and subnormal children, with chapters on child guidance training and social and religious aspects.

LIBERIA—Charles Morrow Wilson—*William*

Sloane Associates, 226 p., illus., \$3.75. An interesting description of a little-known part of the world.

MAGIC SHADOWS: The Story of the Origin of Motion Pictures—Martin Quigley, Jr.—*Georgetown Univ. Press*, 191 p., illus., \$3.50. The romantic story of all the early beginnings dating back to 5000 B. C. and the ancient Chinese shadow plays.

MECHANICAL DRAFTING ESSENTIALS—Walter E. Farnham and Francis T. McCabe—*Prentice-Hall*, 196 p., illus., paper, ring binder, \$3.65. Combined text and workbook.

MODERN ADVANCES IN INORGANIC CHEMISTRY—E. B. Maxted—*Oxford*, 296 p., illus., \$7.00. A British review of recent developments in this field.

THE NEW QUIZ BOOK—Albert H. Morehead and Geoffrey Mott-Smith—*Penguin*, 144 p., paper, 25 cents. With answers.

PLANTS AND ENVIRONMENT: A Textbook of Plant Autoecology—R. F. Daubenmire—*Wiley*, 424 p., illus., \$4.50. Of interest not only to students of botany and agriculture, but to anyone concerned with plant growth and man's physical environment.

PROPERTIES OF ENGINEERING MATERIALS—Glenn Murphy—*International Textbook Co.*, 2d ed., 459 p., illus., \$4.50. Text for engineering students.

THE SCIENCE OF PLASTICS: A Comprehensive Source Book Based on the Original Literature for 1942-1946, Vol. I.—H. Mark and E. S. Proskaur, Eds.—*Interscience*, 632 p., illus., \$9.00. A book of abstracts.

SWEDEN, THE MIDDLE WAY—Marquis W. Childs—*Penguin*, rev. ed., 178 p., paper, 35 cents. An account of the experience of a modern European country in attempting to avoid the political extremes.

TECHNIQUES OF OBSERVING THE WEATHER—B. C. Haynes—*Wiley*, 272 p., illus., \$4.00. Written for high-school and college courses by the chief of the observations section, U. S. Weather Bureau.

TOOLS: And How To Use Them for Woodworking and Metal Working—Alfred P. Morgan—*Crown*, 352 p., illus., \$3.00.

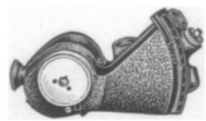
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