

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 picturesqueness for the benefit of park tourists. These birds are said to fly all the way to the Gulf of California for their winter fishing.

Science News Letter, February 14, 1948

Books of the Week

TO SERVE YOU: To get books, send us a check or money order to cover retail price. Address Book Dept., SCIENCE NEWS LETTER, 1719 N St., N. W., Washington 6, D. C. Ask for free publications direct from issuing organizations.

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.

TRANSACTIONS OF THE KANSAS ACADEMY

**U. S. SURPLUS BARGAIN
CELESTIAL NAVIGATOR'S
SEXTANT**

**A SUPER
VALUE**



Used by mariners and airmen to determine their position on the earth's surface by the stars, planets, sun, moon, etc. May also be used to determine angle of elevation of mountains, stars, etc.

COMPLETE INSTRUCTIONS INCLUDED
Genuine Link Model A-12, held in high regard by airmen and mariners alike, for day or night observations on the surface or in the air. Easy to use. Being of the bubble (artificial horizon) type, it uses the famous Link method of averaging sights. Includes fine fabric covered case—complete with recording drum and instructions. Good used condition. Mail orders promptly filled. **WITH CASE, F.O.B. \$17.50**
HOUSTON, only

AERO PARTS SUPPLY
MUNICIPAL AIRPORT—Dept. SNL 2,
HOUSTON 12, TEXAS

OF SCIENCE, Vol. 50—*Kansas Academy of Science*, 367 p., illus., paper, \$2.00
 THE WEEKLY READER PARADE—Editors, My Weekly Reader—*Simon and Schuster*, 116 p., illus., \$1.50. An attractive book for young children containing a considerable amount of science.

WHAT ELECTRONICS DOES—Vin Zeluff and John Markus—*McGraw-Hill*, 306 p., illus., \$3.00. An explanation of how hundreds of electronic devices work, written by associate editors of *Electronics*.

Science News Letter, February 14, 1948

Science Service Radio

► LISTEN in to a discussion on sounds from the sun on "Adventures in Science" over Columbia Broadcasting System at 3:15 p.m. EST Saturday, February 21. Grote Reber, radio physicist at the National Bureau of Standards, will be guest of Watson Davis, director of Science Service. Mr. Reber will tell you of the hissing and popping radio noises he has intercepted from the sun and stars.

Science News Letter, February 14, 1948

PHYSIOLOGY

Sex Influences Malaria

► SEX has something to do with the severity of malaria, at least in poultry. Two recent studies, one on chickens, the other on ducks, have closely parallel indications on this point.

The research on chickens, which was carried out by Drs. B. F. Bennison and G. Robert Coatney of the National Institute of Health, appears in *Science* (Feb. 6). They inoculated young chicks with the germs of a type of malaria peculiar to fowls. Subsequent examination of their blood showed that the female chicks were "taking it harder" than were the future roosters. The young females also got less benefit from treatment with quinine than did their brothers.

The experiments on ducks were carried out on adult birds by Dr. William Trager of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research. He found similar differences between females and drakes. This held, however, only when the ducks were not actively producing eggs. Egg-laying females were less affected than their inactive sisters.

This indication that the presence of the primary female sex hormone in the blood has a suppressive effect on the malaria germs is not borne out by one experiment performed by Drs. Bennison and Coatney. Their chicks, of course, were not producing the female sex hormone because they were immature. When this hormone was injected into them, it failed to affect the sex difference in severity of attack by the malaria parasites.

Whether these results on chicks and ducks have any significance in the several types of human malaria is still an unsettled question. Drs. Bennison and Coatney have checked over a large number of clinical records, and find no significant differences between men and women patients.

However, there is an opportunity to make a controlled test, because paretic patients are sometimes purposely given malaria infections to produce a fever that will benefit their worse malady. It is proposed to make a careful study of a considerable number of such therapeutic

malarias, in the hope of obtaining a more definite answer to this newest angle in the age-old riddle of the sexes.

Science News Letter, February 14, 1948

Special Pre-Publication Offer to Readers of Science News Letter

THE
A★L★P★H★A★B★E★T

By DAVID DIRINGER, D.Litt.

THIS book by the distinguished British archaeologist and orientalist, is one of the most important works of real scholarship published in this century. Historians and literary scholars, as well as others interested in the story of human progress will find this work of great value. Dr. Marcus N. Tod, the eminent Greek epigraphist of Oxford University, writes that the author's "learning and scope fill me with amazement."

The main text is divided into two parts, the first of which deals with non-alphabetic systems of writing over the whole world. The second part deals with the alphabets that have been or still are in use all over the world.

CONTENTS

<p>First Part NON-ALPHABETIC SYSTEMS OF WRITING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Cuneiform Writing II. Hieroglyphic Writing III. Cretan Scripts IV. Indus Valley Civilization and Its Undeciphered Scripts V. The Hittites and Their Scripts VI. Chinese Language and Writing VII. Ancient Central America and Mexico, and Their Scripts VIII. Mysterious Script of Easter Island IX. Other Ideographic Scripts X. Syllabic Systems of Writing XI. Quasi-Alphabetic Scripts 	<p>Second Part ALPHABETIC SCRIPTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Origin of Alphabet II. South Semitic Alphabets III. Canaanite Branch IV. Aramaic Branch (incl. Arabic) V. Non-Semitic Offshoots of the Aramaic Branch VI. Indian Branch (incl. Saurashtran) VII. Further-Indian Branch (incl. Korean Alphabet and Woleai Script) VIII. Greek Alphabet and Its Offshoots IX. Etruscan and Italic Alphabets (incl. Runes and Oghams) X. Latin Alphabet (incl. the English Script)
---	---

Publication: April, 1948 1,000 Illustrations, 600 Pages \$12.00

-----SPECIAL ORDER COUPON-----
 PHILOSOPHICAL LIBRARY, Publishers
 15 E. 40th St., Dept. 35, New York 16, N. Y.
 Enclosed is \$_____ for _____ copy(ies) of THE ALPHABET, at the special Pre-Publication price of \$10.00 per copy. The book(s) will be mailed to me immediately upon publication.
 NAME _____
 ADDRESS _____

Publication date is April 1948. If you send in your order before publication, you can get your copy for ONLY \$10.00.