

NATURE NOTES

The Bulletin of the Webster Groves Nature-Study Society

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Webster Groves, Mo.

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ONE PLUS ONE EQUALS ONE!

Over the top of a hill on the east side of a valley through which our nature-study group were hiking there suddenly appeared a flock of forty or fifty-five geese flying in "V" formation toward the southwest along the Meramec River. They were quickly followed by another flock having only seven to nine birds and also in "V" formation. Soon they caught up with the last of the larger flock and flew right up through the center of the "V" to the vertex where there seemed to be some confusion for a few seconds. The birds were so bunched together that it was not possible to distinguish one from another. Then suddenly from the mass of flapping wings one bird fell back toward the rear keeping near the center of the "V" until nearly abreast with the last of the birds, when it drifted over to the left side and fell into line. In the meantime the other birds of the confused lot fell back one at a time until all were in line on one side or the other. These all went back along the lines instead of the center of the "V" as the first bird did. During this time the flock changed its direction much nearer to a westward line of flight along the Meramec valley. Thus, one plus one equals one. Allenton, Mo. October 19, 1930. - Aves.

QUAERO

Come to the Lodge and take a walk;
Polistes dodge, for they can talk.
Raptores see. Pliocotomus bright
And two or three Antrostomus sight.
Radicula sour, be Tristis feet,
Although in flower, he likes to eat.
Spizella, too, oft love to dine
On grubs a few and algae fine.

There is out here Mecoptera
And very near zygotera.
The Pleiades come into view,
Bright Betelgeuse and Algol too.
Then rested be on easy couch;
Calicidae won't make you "Ouch!"
Renew your youth. Hunt day and
 night
Till unknown truth you bring to
 light.

- Hattie Stones.

SPRING OR FALL?

Astronomically, the outing of October 18 - 19 was a failure. All Saturday evening the sky was overcast with rapidly moving clouds that played hide and seek with the stars. From the small amount of time that any of the stars were visible we believe that the game was mostly "hide".

From the standpoint of members and visitors present we can call this Astronomy Group outing a great success; there were nineteen persons there for all night and three others were there for the star gazing period. Considering the cool weather, this was a very good turn-out. It may be well to say that fourteen of the twentytwo were ladies. What happened to the men?

On Sunday morning all were surprised to see it sleet and snow with a strong wind from the north and west. It was rather chilly for this time of the year. In some respects we were reminded of the snow of late last spring, after the foliage had come out on the trees. Not only did we have the green foliage of the forest, but many of the wild flowers that are usually only found in the spring, were in bloom. This helped to make the day resemble that one of last spring all the more.

At breakfast time two of the party were ~~amongst~~ missing. They reported on their return after nine o'clock that they had seen the snow storm from the top of a high bluff overlooking the Meramec valley. The sight of the falling snow up and down the valley in white streaks was very impressive. Several flocks of migrating birds were seen during the morning. Two were believed to be geese of some variety and another was a flock of what we believe to be ducks. The gray day did not permit color determinations at all and the birds were rather indistinctly seen on account of the trees. Another flock of geese was seen in the afternoon. This one was much larger than the others; it probably had forty-five or fifty individuals.

- S. L. O.

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CLOSING DATE CHANGED.

Hereafter, all articles intended for publication in the next issue of Nature Notes must be in the editor's hands before the fifteenth of the month before the date of publication, instead of the twentieth, as heretofore.

INSTINCT.

The September meeting of the Entomology Group was devoted to the subject "Instinct", which was discussed by the chairman and illustrated by material from his collection.

Many examples of instinctive behavior in insects were described including the spinning of cocoons, the making of the bag of the bag-worm, the correct selection of larval food-plants by butterflies when laying their eggs, and the behavior of solitary wasps in digging their burrows, hunting their prey, transporting victims to their nests and closing up the burrows.

It was concluded from the examples cited that instinct had their beginning in intelligent or modified behavior that became habitual or mechanical and eventually developed into a part of the inheritance of the species. They are therefore to be regarded as inherited knowledge or ability, and in general they are advantageous to the species even though their rigidity may sometime bring disaster to the individual. In spite of this rigidity, insects possess a capacity for modifiable behavior that varies according to the species. This is most apparent in the very insects whose instinctive behavior is most complex showing that neither a high development of instinct nor a high development of intelligence necessarily excludes the other. On the contrary, both are at their maxima in the highest insects such as ants and wasps. Both require a degree of neural coordination that is feebly developed in the lower insects and reaches its culmination in those groups that are most highly organized.

There still remains much to be learned about this most interesting phenomenon.

THE BATTLE OF THE JELLY GLASS.

Not long ago I watched a very unequal battle between two sworn enemies, an ant and a beetle. The ant was a large red female about ten or twelve millimeters long and the beetle was twice her size. But that did not deter the plucky little hymenopteron. As soon as the beetle was introduced into her cage she flew at him and sought to drive him off. The two insects clinched, mandible scraping mandible. I watched the battle for half an hour but neither combatant seemed to be losing ground, so I finally left them fight in peace. Returning two hours later, I found they were still at it, so again I left them to their pleasure. However, half an hour afterward I returned and found each insect peaceably eating from the same crumb of cake, the ant minus the left antenna and the beetle minus right one; otherwise both seemed in perfectly normal and healthy condition. Neither tried the stunt again for the rest of their lives and each died a supposedly natural death.

- D.A.B.

RETURN ENGAGEMENTS?

In recent trips afield I have been very much interested in the spring-blooming plants in bloom this October. On October 12 I found Viola pedata, V. bicolor, V. cucullata and Nothoscordum bivalve. On October 20 I found V. Cucullata again, blooming after a snow flurry, and on the same hillside near Antonia, Mo., Verbena canadensis and Ptelea trifoliata, the last named being a June blooming plant. Can it be that the three or four weeks of mild weather after the terrible drouth has so successfully upset things that it threatens the morale of our spring flowers?-- what suggestions have you to offer?

-DAB

ASTRONOMERS,- ATTENTION!

All persons interested at all in astronomy should not fail to read the article in Nature Magazine for November on Eros. This little planet will be visible during the coming winter. We shall publish in Nature Notes an article telling exactly where and when to look for this tiny neighbor of ours.

Another chance will not come for forty-five years; not until the year 1975. Don't miss this opportunity to see Eros.

Webster Groves Nature-Study Society

A BRANCH OF THE AMERICAN NATURE-STUDY SOCIETY

(Organized in 1920)

Webster Groves, Mo.

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~~Postponed:~~ The Nature Melody meeting scheduled for Friday evening October 31 has been postponed until November 10.

** ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR NOVEMBER - 1930 **

GENERAL MEETING.

~~Monday~~ ^{Friday} November 7, 8 PM, at the U.S. Entomological Laboratory, 527 Ivanhoe Place, Webster Groves.

Mr. Henry M. Kennon, in charge of the Bird Houses at the "Zoo" in Forest Park, will tell about the new bird house and the tropical birds to be seen there. This will be a fine meeting.

GROUP MEETINGS.

Photography: Monday November 3, 8 PM, at the Mueller residence, 12 Armin Avenue, Glendale Heights. Bring cameras and take pictures of objects with your own camera, - with and without filter.

Nature-Melody: Monday November 10, 8 PM, at the U.S. Entomological Laboratory. "Migratory birds and orthoptera". Mrs. Satterthwait, chairman.

Geology: Thursday November 13, 8 PM, at the Laboratory. "Evolution of the face of the earth": Mr. Mueller, Messrs Harold and Stuart O'Byrne, Miss Dorothy Boyer. Miss Marty, chairman.

Microscopy: Friday November 14, 8 PM, at the Laboratory. "Microscopical examination of the blood". Bring microscopes. Dr. Meiners, chairman.

Botany: Monday November 17, 8 PM, at the Laboratory. The postponed program of October 10; "Do plants have sex"? Miss Boyer, followed by Mr. Bradley's mounted specimens to be used as a memory test of the trees they represent.

Entomology: Friday November 21, 8 PM, at the Rau residence, 549 East Argonne Drive, Kirkwood, Mo. We will have as a guest, Dr. I. Parfentjev from Russia, who will give us a talk on "Metabolism of Hymenoptera".

Astronomy: Saturday November 22, 8 PM, at the Mueller residence, 12 Armin Avenue, Glendale Heights. "The neighborly visit of planet Eros". If the sky is clear and the weather is right, part of the evening will be spent out of doors. Bring field glasses. Mr. Townsend, chairman.

Ornithology: Friday November 28, 8 PM, at the Jones residence, 690 Bonita Avenue, Webster Groves. "Migrations of North American birds". Mr. Palmer, chairman.

Juniors: Mrs. Pickens announces--

A Junior Field Trip, Thursday afternoon November 6, time and place to be announced.

A Bristol School Group, Wednesday afternoon November 26, at Mrs. Pickens' home, 72 Marshall Place, after school.

An Avery School Group Friday afternoon November 28, on an After-school hike from Avery School to the Tschannen home.

Anne A. Jones, Secretary