

Ask Andy

Cowbirds Are Negligent Parents

Andy sends a complete 20-volume set of the World Book Encyclopedia to John Revell, 8, 1522 Alderwood St., Eugene, Ore., for his question:

What is a cowbird? Most birds are loving parents. The mother bird sits on the nest to keep the eggs warm with her soft feathers. Sometimes the father bird takes turns sitting on the nest while the young birds develop inside their eggs. Later, the parents feed and educate their babies. But the cowbird does none of these things.



JOHN REVELL Award Winner

Of all the birds that live in our land, Mr. and Mrs. Cowbird are the most careless parents. They do not even make a home for their children, for they build no nest at all. They are not even around when the baby cowbirds hatch from their eggs. They do nothing to feed their babies or teach them to fly.

We wonder how baby cowbirds manage to grow up at all. But they do, because in summer we see parties of them playing together. They seem to be fond of cows, for often we see them near a herd of cattle. This is how the cowbird got his name—he is friendly with cows.

True, Mrs. Cowbird does not take the trouble to build a nest, hatch her eggs and bring up her babies. But she is very careful to place her children in good foster homes. She lays each brown speckled egg in the nest of another bird. Sometimes she lays two eggs in the same nest. The foster parents may be song sparrows, wrens or warblers. Birds, of course, cannot count and sometimes the foster parents mistake the cowbird egg for one of their own.

But some of the foster parents sense that the cowbird egg

is a stranger. They may desert the nest altogether and start a new one. They may try to bury the cowbird egg in the bottom of the nest or build a second story on top of it. Little Mrs. Wren is apt to poke her beak into the cowbird egg and pitch it out of her nest.

But every year, thousands of cowbird eggs are adopted by foster parents. This is sad, for the cowbird hatches sooner than his foster brothers and sisters. He is bigger and often shoves them out of their rightful nest. When grown, he flies away to join his relatives. The cowbird is a black bird with a brown head and his wife is drabish grey. They feed on grain and grass seeds and also gobble up grasshoppers.

Many birds refuse to take a cowbird egg into the nest and most of Mrs. Cowbird's eggs never get a chance to grow up at all. But when a cowbird baby hatches, things are different. Almost any bird will feed a baby bird who cries for food. Mr. and Mrs. Song Sparrow may desert the cowbird's eggs. But a young cowbird will be fed in the nest of a vireo, a redstart or a Baltimore Oriole.

Andy sends a Hammond's Nature Atlas of America to Billy Cowan, age 8, of Peterborough, Ont., for his question:

What is smoke? A fire is fed by fuel such as wood and coal. When the dancing flames break away, the wood and coal gradually disappear. The smoke which coils up from the blazing in sooty clouds explains part of this mystery. In the heat of the fire, the wood and coal turn into other things—and one of these things is smoke.

Wood and coal are made from tiny particles and the heat of the fire breaks these particles to pieces. They are now different particles. Some become gases and float off to mix with the other invisible gases in the air. Some become fragments of carbon, small enough to float in the air. It is these carbon particles which make the clouds of sooty smoke.

Andy awards each day a full set of the World Book Encyclopedia for the first question he selects to answer. When a second question is answered a large world globe or atlas is awarded. Questions are accepted from teen-age or near-teen-age readers. They should be addressed to the Register-Guard, 925 High St., Eugene. Andy prefers that questions be written on postcards rather than in letter form.

To Your Good Health 2 Ailments Have Similar Symptoms

By DR. JOSEPH G. MOLNER

Dear Dr. Molner: For four months my husband has had anginal-like pains in his chest and arms. Finally tests and X-rays proved it to be gall bladder trouble, cholecystitis. The doctor put him on medication and a low-fat diet.

What is this ailment, and does it take a long time to cure?—MRS. L.M.

Cholecystitis means "inflammation of the gall bladder," and it is usually quite painful.

It also has a nasty habit of resembling heart disease, and it is not uncommon for the two to be confused until suitable tests have been made. (It's really tough when, as occasionally happens, a patient may have both problems at the same time.)

With proper treatment, such as your husband is getting, the condition may clear up completely, or it may lapse into a chronic state. In the latter event X-rays will disclose faulty functioning of the gall bladder and stones may be found.

Stones do not disappear by themselves, nor by any known medication. If they are there and causing trouble, surgery may be necessary.

U.S. Water Use Up Sharply

WASHINGTON—Americans are using more water than ever to keep cool, clean and occupied.

Water consumption by factories, farms and homes has jumped more than 12 per cent in the past six years. The United States gulps its liquid assets at the rate of 270,000 million gallons per day, says the National Geographic Society.

The greatest water glut is not the hot tennis player or suburban gardener but American industry. Industrial cooling processes account for more than half the water consumed in this country. It takes 65,000 gallons of water to produce a ton of finished steel, 200,000 gallons for a ton of rayon, and no less than 600,000 gallons for a ton of synthetic rubber.

Irrigation farmers rank as second largest users of water, followed by individuals at work, play and home.

Billions of gallons go down the drain annually from such modern conveniences as showers, sprinklers, swimming pools, dishwashers, laundromats and garbage disposals.

Sheer waste takes a heavy toll. Even during New York's severe water shortage of 1949-50, engineers estimated that 200 million gallons a day dripped from leaky faucets and pipes alone.

Water-hungry America fortunately can draw on a nationwide rainfall averaging 30 inches a year, or ten million gallons for every man, woman, and child.

However, more than 70 per cent is used by growing plants or returned to the atmosphere by evaporation and breathing. Storage lakes, reservoirs and canals lose nearly half their water in vapor.

Moreover, water is not evenly distributed. Mountainous regions of a week, yet Nevada averages only nine inches all year. Some areas which are flooded in the spring suffer drought by late summer.

The Herculean task of supplying water to arid zones and cities where demand exceeds supply is being approached in several ways: conservation measures, notably antipollution and the re-use of water; the building of larger aqueducts, and conversion of fresh water from the sea.

Scientists have been experimenting with a chemical spray which blankets reservoirs and lakes with a film to cut evaporation losses.

Attempt to unscramble sea water are being intensified by governments and private industry. Success on a large and inexpensive scale could open up a vast new resource, for oceans cover almost three-quarters of the earth's surface.

The idea of desalting water is not new. In 49 B.C., during his siege of Alexandria, Egypt, Julius Caesar produced fresh water for his troops with solar evaporators. It is assumed that the condensing vapor was collected by oiled silk or fabric screens.

White Receives Astronaut Wings for X15 Flight

WASHINGTON—The Air Force pinned astronaut wings on Maj. Robert M. White Thursday, the first man to fly a winged aircraft into the realm of space.

In the Pentagon ceremony for the X15 research rocket plane

White, 38, last Tuesday flew an X15 to an altitude of 264,000 feet—almost 59 miles—well above the 50-mile height which the National Aeronautics and Space Agency and the military have agreed qualifies a pilot as a spaceman.

BUZ SAWYER comic strip panels with dialogue about a security guard and a woman.

STEVE CANYON comic strip panels with dialogue about a car and a woman.

ALLEY OOP comic strip panels with dialogue about a man and a woman.

LIT ABNER comic strip panels with dialogue about a man and a woman.

SHORT RIBS comic strip panels with dialogue about a man and a woman.

CLANG CLANG CLANG comic strip panels with dialogue about a man and a woman.

STEVE ROPER comic strip panels with dialogue about a man and a woman.

BUGS BUNNY comic strip panels with dialogue about a man and a woman.

BEETLE BAILEY comic strip panels with dialogue about a man and a woman.

BLONDIE comic strip panels with dialogue about a man and a woman.

GASOLINE ALLEY comic strip panels with dialogue about a man and a woman.

REX MORGAN comic strip panels with dialogue about a man and a woman.

STEVE ROPER comic strip panels with dialogue about a man and a woman.

BUGS BUNNY comic strip panels with dialogue about a man and a woman.

ALLEY OOP comic strip panels with dialogue about a man and a woman.

SAM'S STRIP comic strip panels with dialogue about a man and a woman.

OUT OUR WAY comic strip panels with dialogue about a man and a woman.

MAJOR HOOPLE comic strip panels with dialogue about a man and a woman.