

Is That So?

By EUGENE BURNS
Ranger-Naturalist

Although most of us think of birds as accomplished fliers, not a few are masters of the water—magnificent divers and sub-surface swimmers. In fact, one flightless penguin makes lone submarine migrations, traveling swiftly, and alternately diving and leaping with the grace of a porpoise.

Of diving birds, and there are many, surely none can exceed the gannet. From a height of 100 feet he may sight a fish deep in the turbulent water—no small accomplishment—suddenly close his wings and plummet with the speed of a falling stone.

Increases Velocity

Should a deep dive be necessary to catch the prey, the gannet will increase his velocity by propelling himself downward with powerful wing thrusts and then, the instant before he strikes the water at around 100 miles an hour, close his wings tightly. So great is the force of his dive that the momentum will carry his streamlined body downward 90 feet. In such a power-dive, a gannet hit a board six feet below the surface so hard that its beak was imbedded and it broke its neck.

As the gannet is the unexcelled diver, so surely the penguin of the Antarctic is the all-time swimming champ of the bird world. Its short legs trailing and short paddle-like wings driving, this expert can arrow through the water at speeds exceeding 22 miles an hour—faster than most fish including trout.

The penguin's underwater speeds are great enough to shoot him out of the water and on to a ledge of ice five feet above the surface.

There are other great swimmers and divers among birds. Among the best in both fields are the loons, actually more at home in the water than the air. So smooth is their diving that they can sink below the surface without leaving a ripple and once below they can swim fast enough to outmaneuver most fish. As for the depth of their submarine operations, they have been caught in fishnets 180 feet below the surface.

Escape Under Water

Grebes, landlubbers as well, excel in both entries. When pursued by canoe they usually prefer to make good their escape by swimming under water. (A remarkable feature of these underwater experts is that their stomachs invariably contain a ball of their own feathers. Even baby grebes begin to swallow bits of down as soon as they are hatched. The purpose? Perhaps to act as a fish-bone strainer.)

Ducks are so much at home in the water that we easily forget that they are splendid fliers—mallards and canvas backs exceed 50 miles an hour and the green-winged teal has been credited with speeds from 70 to 160 miles but the last figure, surely, calls for a strong tail wind. As for diving, the old squaw duck of the Great Lakes perhaps goes deepest for ducks—it has been caught in gill nets 150 feet below the surface.

For all these underwater birds, special adaptations have been made. To bear the shock of its tremendous 100-mile-an-hour power-dive, the gannet has developed an extremely heavy skull and tough neck. But that isn't all. The breastbone is strengthened by one of the bones of the shoulder girdle being tilted forward and the tissues of the breast contain large "air cushions"—air sacs which are connected to the lungs and can be emptied and filled at will to lessen the shock of the impact. Its external nostrils can be closed to hold out water.

All divers and swimmers are waterproof—copious amounts of oil being secreted by oil glands. So good is this proofing that some birds like ducks can spend a whole night on the water without so much as becoming moist below the surface feathers. For that matter, the guillemot which spends almost its whole life on the water will even ride out the wildest of ocean storms.

Feathers Resemble Scales

The oily feathers of penguins which can be pressed tight against their bodies, resemble scales much more than feathers, quills being absent entirely.

With all these underwater experts, as far as I know, legs are placed far back on the body—where they can be trailed or used like propellers. Most have short legs, usually with big feet

in which toes are connected with a web. Brought forward, the feet close to flat blades; when pushing they open wide like paddles.

As for paddles, that underwater champion, the penguin, has modified its wings—once used for flight—to make side paddles which it uses vigorously. Several other birds such as the puffin, cormorant and some ducks also use their wings underwater to build up their top-speeds to overtake their prey.

Few underwater swimming speeds have been clocked—and those may be far from top-speeds: the great crested grebe, 4.5 miles (man's best is 4.1) per hour; the black shag, a cormorant, 12; the Magellanic penguin 13; the Magellanic flightless steamer duck, 15; the blue penguin 18; and our champ, the Gentoo penguin, 22.2 miles per hour.

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Leever Motors Co. Sold; Name Altered

Leever Motors company has been sold to R. R. Parsons, Roseburg, it was announced Saturday. The long established Medford motor firm, 315 East Fifth st., is the local Dodge-Plymouth automobile and Dodge truck agency.

Parsons is moving here from Roseburg where for the past eight years he has been a partner in Barcus Sales and Service, Dodge dealers. The new Fifth st. agency will be known as Bud Parsons Motors.

Mr. and Mrs. Earl Leever and Mr. and Mrs. Dick Leever are planning to make their homes in Phoenix, Ariz.

Mr. and Mrs. William Leever and family plan to stay in Medford for a while, and he will remain with Bud Parsons Motors.

Lakeview Uranium Ore Above Average

Lakeview — (U.P.) — Bob Adams, part owner of the "Lucky Lass" uranium mine northwest of here, Saturday said he had received confirmation of his ore samples.

Adams said the mines ore averaged 0.68 per cent uranium when graded by the U. S. Bureau of Mines at Albany. This was slightly higher than the average recorded for the White King mine, at 0.66, which touched off a full-scale uranium hunt in the Augur Creek area two weeks ago.

State geologists have reported that the White King, operated by John Roush and party, produced high grade selected samples rated at 1.37 per cent. The average was considerably lower, however.

More than 500 prospectors were reported in the region, 14 miles from here.

Cushman Legislator Injured in Accident

Redmond — (U.P.) — State Representative Earl Hill, 64, of Cushman, was hospitalized here today with a cerebral concussion suffered in an auto accident on the Sisters-Redmond highway Friday.

Hill said his car skidded off the road and tumbled down a short distance into Deep Canyon when a front tire blew out as he rounded a curve. He was able to crawl from the wreckage.

Hospital attendants said the state legislator's condition was not believed to be critical.

Dead line for Sunday Classified is noon Saturday.



NEW CLUES in mysterious disappearance of Stephanie Bryan, 14-year-old Berkeley Cal., schoolgirl are studied by Dr. Paul Kirk (left), University of California criminologist, as he examines automobile owned by Burton Abbott (center). Purse belonging to missing girl, books, and other personal belongings were found in basement of Abbott home in Alameda, Cal. Police Lt. R. T. Sherry (right) uses tongs in handling articles dug up from basement so as not to disturb fingerprints. Abbott is questioned by police. (International)

Sunday, July 24, 1955

MEDFORD (OREGON) MAIL TRIBUNE—FIVE

Eagle Point Youth Escapes When Horse Drowns in River

Bill Caldwell, 18, Eagle Point, escaped uninjured when the horse he was riding was washed downstream in the Rogue river near Union Creek recently.

Caldwell was on a fishing and camping trip with Kenneth Bitterling, 18, also Eagle Point, the week end of July 4, when the two attempted to ford Rogue river near Natural Bridge. Caldwell's horse, which was the first to enter the river, went into a hole.

Washed Down Stream

Caldwell was washed downstream and toward the river bank where he escaped onto a rock. The horse was unable to get out, became lodged between rocks and

drowned. Bitterling did not cross the river.

The horse was removed from the river late last week. The body had to be dynamited from between the rocks, and was pulled out downstream, where it was buried.

Several tourists complained to the county court about the horse, members of the court said, but removal of the horse was delayed until the owner could be located by forest service personnel, who helped remove it.

Taipei — (U.P.) — The Nationalist Air Force has added a new wing of U. S. F84 Thunderjet fighter-bombers, it was revealed here yesterday.

The average depth of the Gulf of St. Lawrence is 417 feet.

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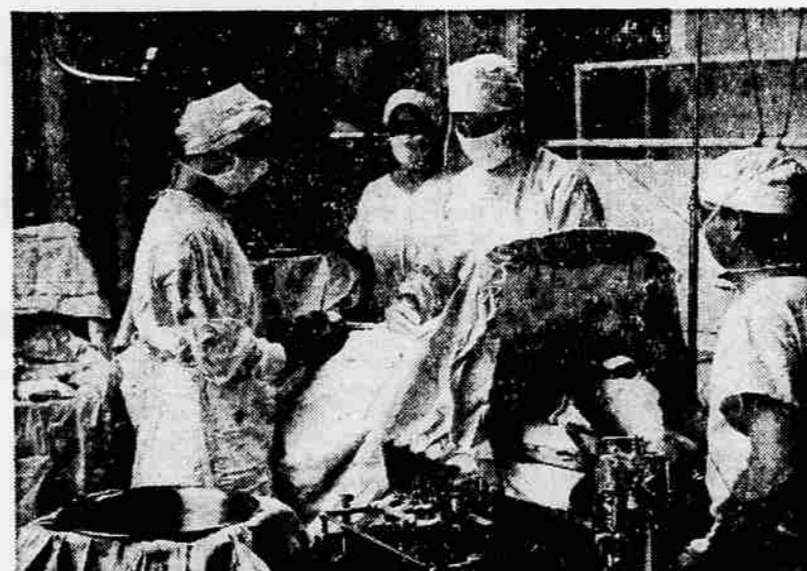
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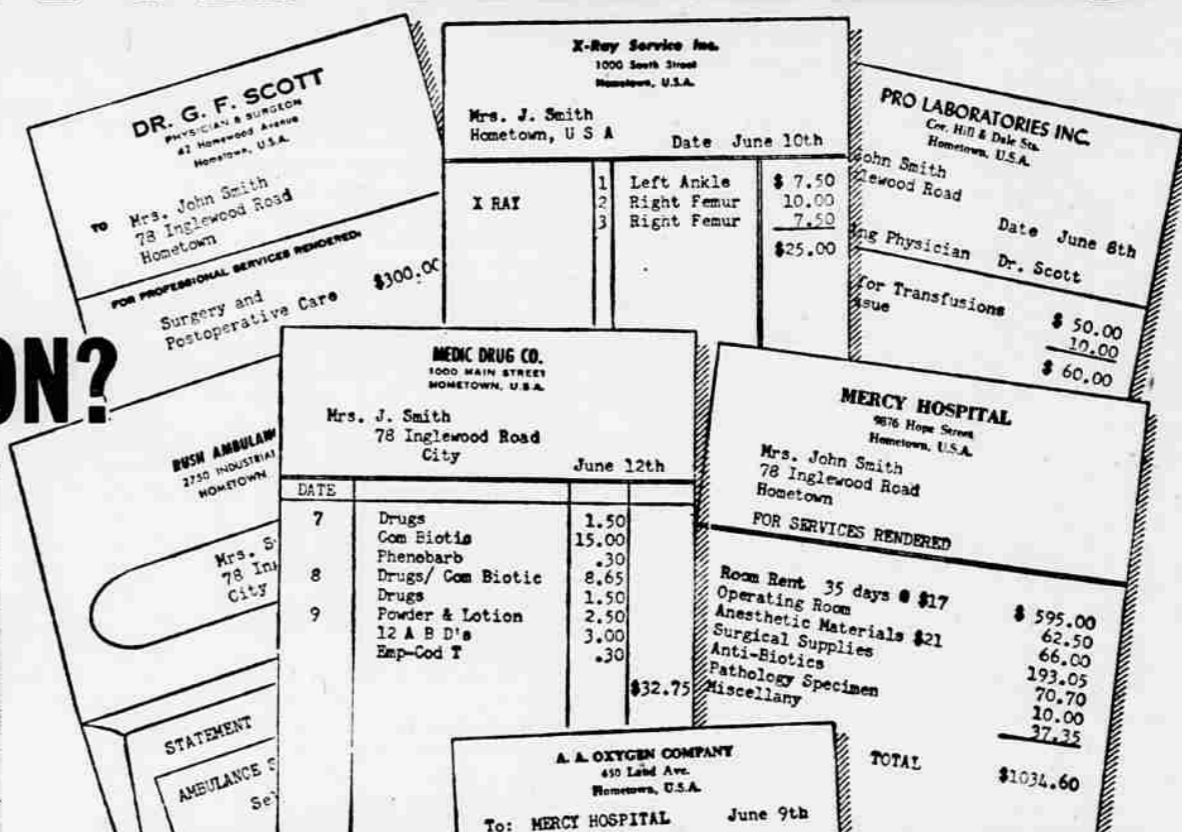
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