

Is That So?

By EUGENE BURNS
Ranger-Naturalist

In naming our animals, curious inconsistencies occur, especially among birds.

Our Muscovy duck did not originate in Russia as the name might seem to imply—it is a native of tropical America. Domesticated and raised for its meat, the Muscovy is often seen in tropical countries where it can stand the heat better than other



tamed ducks. This duck hisses like a goose and when in flight resembles a goose because of its large size.

If the difference of quail, partridge and bobwhite has upset you, don't let it bother you any more. In the northeastern U.S., the bobwhite is often called a "quail" while in the south hunters refer to them as "partridges."

Of course you've heard many people exclaim about the beauty of a peacock's tail. Tain't so. The tail feathers are blackish and hidden by the "train."

Actually, the peacock's dazzling fan of iridescent golden and green feathers adorned with elaborate "eye spots" of blue are not his true tail feathers at all. The "fan" grows out well above the tail.

And used for courtship? Not always. This vain bird will often go through his elaborate performance for admiring humans just as willingly as for his modestly colored dame. Inasmuch as the folklore of many lands has allusions to the peacock, quite likely the bird was domesticated centuries ago.

The "native pheasant" more properly should be called the ruffed grouse. It is famous of course for its habit of selecting a log in the woods, come spring, and strutting along it with tail widely spread and the black ruff on his neck fully expanded, and from time to time "drumming."

Big Argument

For a long time there was a big argument about this drumming: one group of woodsmen and hunters maintained the grouse produced this sound by beating on the log with its rapidly-moving wings; another maintained, equally vehemently, that the grouse beat its side. The argument has finally been settled by a slow-motion camera: and both were wrong! The wings are whirred so rapidly through the air itself, without touching log or body, that the feathers set up the drumming sound.

Most people consider gulls and terns seacoast birds, and in fact, the gull is frequently and incorrectly called a sea gull. Far from it: terns stray far from seacoasts—in fact, the family includes the world's champion long-distance migrator; and two gulls have been honored by a monument for valuable service offered a city which is 600 miles inland!

Now it is true that these birds often frequent the seashore, except for one gull which feeds chiefly on insects which it catches in flight or on the ground. This is the Franklin gull—one of those which was honored by Salt Lake City.

The statue is a tall marble shaft topped by a ball on which two gulls have just landed. Its purpose? To express the thanks of a grateful city. About a hundred years ago a plague of crickets threatened to destroy the priceless crops of the pioneer Mormons who had recently arrived in the West. The menaced crops were saved by flocks of Franklin and California gulls which wiped out the pestiferous insects by what must have seemed like a miracle.

Prairie Pigeon

Another name for the Franklin gull, which is the only northern species to migrate into the southern hemisphere, is "prairie pigeon"—also a misnomer.

For that matter, what's the difference between "doves" and "pigeons"? None, really. The former name, however, is used more often for the smaller, gentler members of the pigeon family. (The family includes two species, sad to say, which man exterminated: the passenger pigeon of North America and the Dodo of Mauritius in the Indian ocean, about 500 miles east of Madagascar.) Both doves and pigeons belong to the order Columbiformes.

For good measure, a trio of others: our so-called robin red-breast is not a robin but a

Hungarians Threaten Mass Evacuations

Vienna—(UP)—Thousands of Hungarian workers are threatening to flee to the West in protest against the return of Communist dictatorship, according to reports reaching Vienna.

Reports from Hungary said workers at factories in scattered regions of the country staged protest marches and demonstrations in open defiance of martial law.

The new blue-coated police force of Premier Janos Kadar turned out in force on several occasions but there were no reports of violence.

Workers carried placards bearing such slogans as: "We will flee to the West" and "Mass dismissals must end," the reports said.

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FREED FROM HER WATERY PRISON—The Norwegian tanker Eli Knudsen, which had been stranded in the Suez Canal since the Anglo-French invasion of Egypt, sails out of Port Said harbor into the Mediterranean. She was the first of 13 marooned vessels to reach the sea.

Sale of Robinson's Art Collection Near

New York—(UP)—Sale of actor Edward G. Robinson's famed art collection for an estimated \$3.25 million was reported imminent today by art world sources.

The prospective buyer, who was not identified, was understood to have outbid a dealer who had offered \$3 million for the collection, regarded as one of the finest in this country.

Moncton, New Brunswick—(UP)—A U. S. Air Force plane crashed near Andover, N.B., today.

Corvallis—(UP)—Al Lindow, Portland, has been elected president of the Oregon Dairymen's Association.

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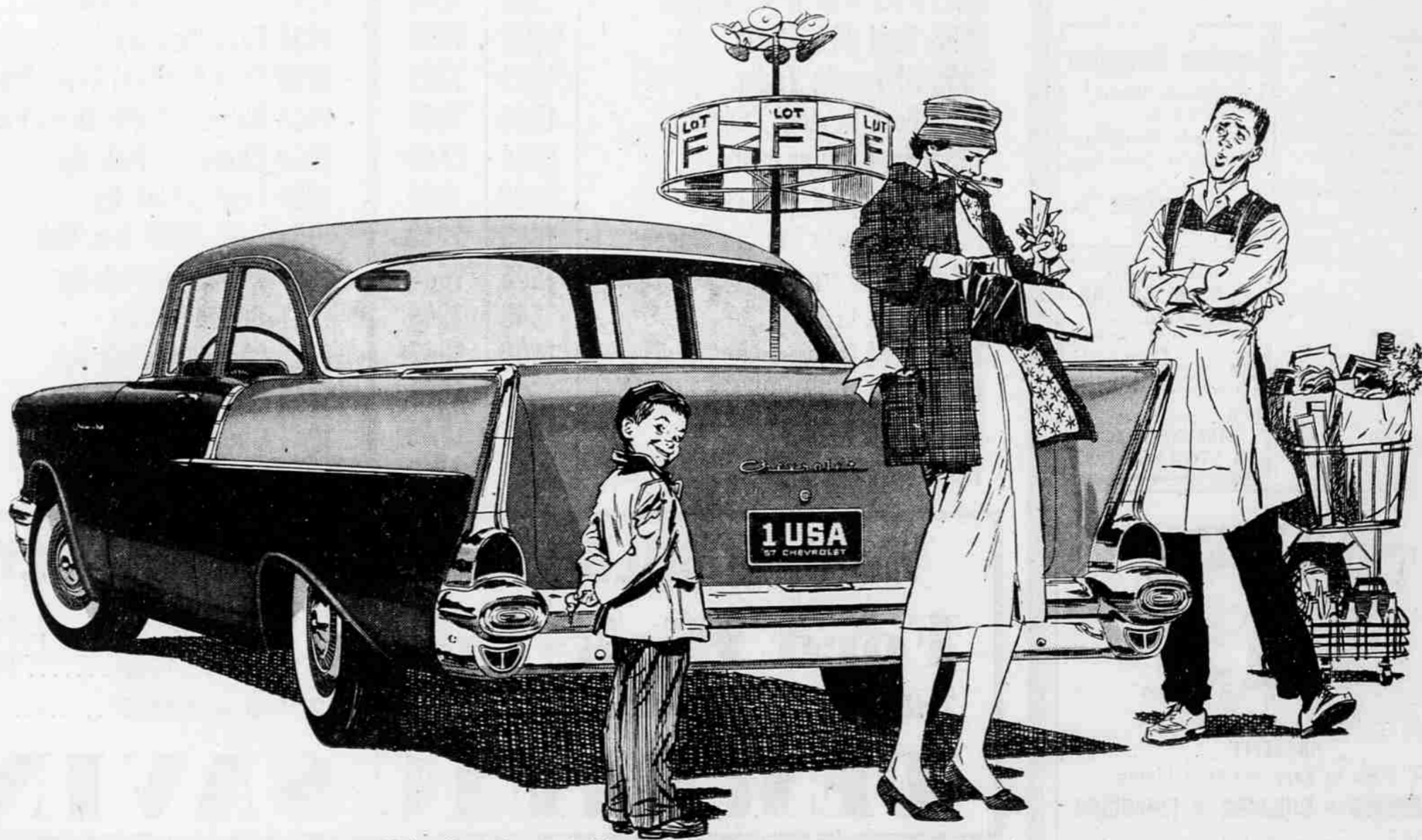
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