



MAKING GRAND SLAM, Junior Champion Aberdeen Angus Holy Cow is judged grand champion of Chicago's 59th International Live Stock Exposition. Chuck Wood, Jr., 17, who raised steer, gets congratulatory kiss from his mother (right). Dr. Herbert H. Kilvee (center), president of Exposition and Chuck's father are interested spectators.

Is That So?

By OLGA BURNS

When starlings assemble by the thousands, as they do now to begin their annual flight south, they do not seem like a disciplined bird, but if you watch one flock, you will quickly notice an almost precision flight.

A flock of them slide together, beat their wings in unison and change direction in a highly military manner.



Whether their maneuvers are due to voiced commands, I don't know, but that seems logical from the actions of some flocks I've seen. They had no apparent leader as in the case of a V-shaped flight of ducks or geese.

Furthermore, from the way a flock of them will fly over a cherry orchard, plunge into one tree and strip it bare of fruit, it certainly seems as if they acted on orders rather than instinct.

In any case, the starlings make plenty of use of their voice. They have a variety of notes, often mimic other birds and can be taught to whistle and even say a few words.

The starling's history in this country is odd, to say the least. Like the English sparrow, he was brought over from England. But unlike the sparrow, he found life hard during the horse and buggy era, not really getting started until the advent of the automobile.

In 1850, 1872 and 1889, starlings were brought over to this country and turned loose. Nothing happened. Finally, in the spring of 1890, in Central Park, N. Y., 50 were released and another 50 the following year. From then on they spread. By 1905 they had reached Philadelphia and gone nearly as far north as Boston. In another two dec-

ades they fanned out across the Mississippi, and since then they have kept right on going.

Net Effect Good

Though they have done considerable damage to certain fruit crops and have frequently shown an unfortunate liking for corn on the cob, their net effect on agriculture is probably good. They eat enormous quantities of insects, including many of the worst kinds. As to the quantities of grain they eat, the greater part they take is waste that has been spilled on the ground.

Incidentally, the majority of the eating done by the starlings is by the nestlings. There are two, sometimes three, broods a year averaging from three to six each. Most of the food the youngsters consume is animal, largely small worms and insects. Studies of them in the nest show that the babies eat about once every six or seven minutes from dawn to dusk, a task that keeps both parents pretty much constantly on the wing.

(Released by McClure Newspaper Syndicate)

Free: By special arrangement with the editors of the Encyclopedia Americana, my panel of judges will award each week to the reader who sends me the best true-life nature adventure, the best nature observation, or the best question on nature and wildlife, a 30-volume set of this world-famous reference work in a handsome Sealcraft binding. Each week new submissions will be considered. Sorry, I simply can't answer your many friendly letters. Please address your letters to: Is That So? c/o Medford Mail Tribune, Box 1069, San Francisco, Calif.

Toy Business Takes on Aspects Of Rousing Boom

Boy, 12, Confesses Setting School Fire

New York—A 12-year-old boy was taken into police custody Wednesday after allegedly admitting he set a fire in the basement of the Brooklyn parochial school where he is a seventh grade pupil.

Police said the boy told them: "I did it to be funny." The fire, in the Holy Rosary Elementary School, was one of two which forced evacuation of almost 2,000 students in sub-freezing weather.

Both were extinguished quickly with minor damage, but the fire department said both were of suspicious origin.

The other was at Public School 138, Brooklyn, where 1,042 students were marched out in fire drill order during a minor blaze on a bulletin board which was extinguished before firemen arrived.

Networks Vision Convention Saving

Washington—The nation's major television-radio networks have told Democratic and Republican party leaders they're out to hold their 1960 national political conventions in the same city. NBC said a common convention site would save it \$325,000; CBS saw a saving of \$327,000; and ABC would save \$250,000.

The TV-radio representatives Tuesday went before committees trying to pick convention sites. No decision was reached and none is likely before January when the committees meet again.

Los Angeles—The toy business, dragging its heels through the long summer while the nation recovered from a recession, has taken on the aspects of a boom. Manufacturers who met a wave of caution from their retail outlets cut production when early Christmas ordering fell far below expectations by late summer.

The trend now has been reversed and retail jobbers have splashed in orders that have emptied wholesale warehouses and caused speedups in assembly lines to meet an increased demand for toys that began only a few weeks ago.

'General Fall-down'

Pensick and Gordon of Los Angeles, largest manufacturers' representative west of Manhattan, regard the early trend as a "general fall-down."

"Retail outlets played it too safe, they ordered too low," according to Al Gordon, who with Sam Pensick has been dispensing toys in the West since 1925. Gordon said the late ordering meant retail dealers possibly would have toy shortages as parents swept through their stores in last-minute shopping sprees.

Caution Explained He defends the dealers and explains their caution was based on the recession in business in general. However, he also feels they did not make allowances for the fact that the toy business always makes a spurt in December when nearly 75 per cent of the toys are sold for the year.

"There never has been a bad year in our business," Gordon adds. "People buy for their kids whether times are tough or not. In hard times toy prices are down and they still buy everything they possibly can for the kids."

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