

Caged Sparrows Found Restless

Washington—(Science Service) — When it comes time for a migratory sparrow to migrate, the bird will try to get off — and in the right direction — even if caged.

Several white-crowned sparrows (Zonotrichia leucophrys) were caged under an open sky. During the autumn and spring migration times, the birds showed a decided orientation toward the south and north, respectively, two California researchers reported in the journal Science.

In August, September and October, the sparrows "exhibited significant night restlessness." Daytime activity tended to be random in contrast to the southerly nighttime motions, said L. Richard Mowald and Richard G. Rose of San Jose State college, San Jose, Calif. This occurred even though the birds were within a few miles of their natural winter homes.

Overcast or cloudy sky interfered somewhat with the sparrows' direction orientation.

Some radio tubes are so tiny that a thimble could hold 10 of them.



SKIS DEMONSTRATED — With the Manhattan skyline forming a backdrop, Bob Coppage skims over the waters of the Hudson river during a demonstration of his "power skis." Coppage is dressed in a waterproof suit to protect him from the icy spray kicked up by the 22-horsepower outboard motor that propels the 150-pound craft. Retail price of the power skis is \$495. (UPI Telephoto)



Small Worlds Around Us

By Lynn M. Watkins

The Rattler Doesn't Coil — He Folds

If you want to get technical about it, and be certain whether it is a coil, loop, or a fold, that the rattlesnake goes into before he strikes, you'll have to admit we've been calling it wrong. It is not a coil at all, it is a fold; the snake actually holds his body in a series of folds, or loops. If he is coiled he would have trouble getting any force to his strike.

When the snake is resting and not excited, hungry, or angry, the body is mostly in the position of a coiled piece of rope, but when he becomes alarmed the forward third of the body, that is the head and neck, or what would be the neck in ordinary animals, goes smoothly into a series of loops. From the looped position the head darts out in what is called the strike.

It Is a Fold

Most of us, when we are suddenly brought face to face with a "coiled" rattlesnake never take the time, or have

the interest, to notice whether the body of the reptile is in a coiled, or looped position, but actually it is definitely a loop, or fold. This is not something the present day snakes have adopted recently — they have been striking from a folded loop since the very beginning. This characteristic is usual, there may be exceptional snakes who reverse, or complicate the striking procedure.

Another supposed limitation to the strike of a rattlesnake has also been disproved by actual experience. It was generally believed that the rattler could not, or would not, strike straight up. This limitation was believed to offer some protection to the person who was reaching down to pick up one of these reptiles, as it was presumed the snake could not strike over its own head, so the snake handler reached down from above.

But many rattlesnakes have the ability to strike directly upward and accomplish it with speed and punch, as well as they can lash out sideways. Individual snakes have individual abilities and peculiarities. The normal characteristics of any snake cannot always be ascertained ahead of time.

They're Individuals

Snakes, like men, mice or monkeys all have a different point at which they blow their tops, or go off the deep end. What makes one man, or one snake, or one monkey angry is only a pleasant joke to another; it's just a case of individuality.

There have always been observers who claim that a rattlesnake which is cornered and bothered until it is almost frantic with anger will strike itself, and die of its own poison. Others say a rattlesnake is immune to its own venom. It is well known that a rattlesnake only strikes at a warm object, so it does not, normally, bite another snake or itself, but a snake that is very angry loses all sense of instinct and strikes at anything, warm or cold.

He, like a man who becomes violently angry, loses his head entirely, and does things he would never do if he were normal.

(Released by The Register and Tribune Syndicate, 1960)

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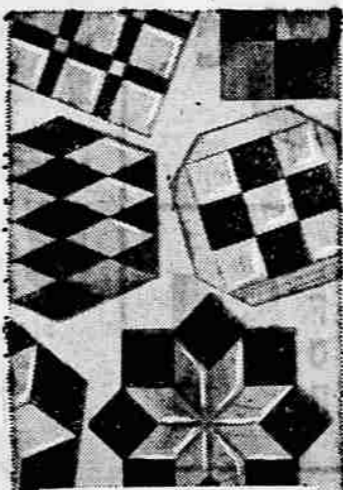
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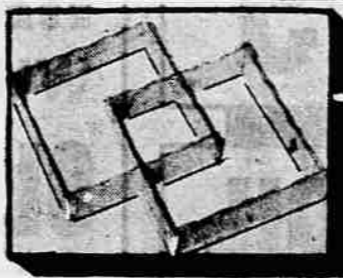
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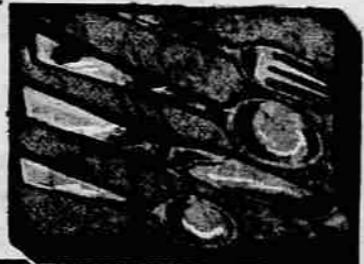
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