Small Worlds Around Us

By Lynn M. Watkins

About the Rugged World of a Tidal Flat

When the tide goes out and the hot sun beats down, the tidal flat, that disputed area between high and low water, becomes dry land.

Hours later the incoming water cover it, soaks down and cools it and awakens the hosts of living creatures that know it as home.

The tidal flat is a densely populated area, a myriad of living creatures live their mundane lives in an environment that is alternatly bone-dry for hours at a time and exceedingly wet for other intervals. Besides their many enemies, the creatures that live here constantly have to fight floods and droughts.

A Lifeless Place

Ordinarily, we think of a tidal flat as an area of sand or mud which is exposed during the ebb-tide; a lifeless place. At least once every 24 hours it becomes dry or semi-dry and then, as the water comes creeping in, completely inundated. Here are the two extremes — flood and drought. But in this seemingly lifeless area live one of the most motley collections of creatures that can be found anywhere on this earth.

These animals must be adatable to an elastic degree. Many of the inhabitants are smaller than the period at the end of a printed sentence. Others are much larger.

There are several varieties of crabs, together with a host of their relatives, such as the sand-fleas, mantis-shrimp, hundreds of worms and mollusks by the thousands. Every one of them, the great and the small, must be ever alert, ready to burrow down into the sand or mud when the water drains away from the flat.

If they wait too long they will die from sun exposure. Down in the wet sand they wait until the murmur of the incoming tide awakens them. As the water covers the sand they crawl up toward the surface. They adjust their upward climb, the speed of their ascent, to the rise of the water, emerging from the sand only when the ocean covers the flat. Then they become feverishly active, as if knowing that in a few hours they will again be forced to go below-ground.

Too Hasty

A too hasty appearance above the sand-ceiling of their environment would be fatal. If the sun did not dry them out, a hungry bird might spot them. There would be hazards of many kinds. With a blanket of water over them they are reasonably safe. They feed and mate, for soon the sea will leave and they will be stranded again, it's always "later than they think" and it is fortunate that they cannot think.

Their little lives are adjusted and attuned to the tides which of course wait for no man or any other animal. These little inhabitants of the sand flats are the counterparts of our own "clock-watchers and whistle listeners."

Try as hard as they will they will never see the day when conditions will be any better or any different. It's a tough life and a short one.

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Political Science Seminar at Eugene

Eugene (UPI) Gov. Orville Freeman of Minnesota is scheduled to speak at an American Political Science Association Seminar here for winners of public affairs reporting awards.

The seminar is under direction of Warren C. Price professor of journalism at the University of Oregon, and Evron M. Kirkpatrick, executive director of the American Political Science Association. It started Tuesday and runs to July 6.

Newsmen from New York, Seattle and San Francisco will be featured speakers on the program along with faculty members.

YOUNG QUEEN

Welshpool, England (UPI) Assistant County Education Superintendent John Davies has to decide whether the carnival queen chosen this week end is old enough to reign. Carnival Queen Marjorie Evans is 14.

KIWANIS CONVENTION

Miami Beach (UPI) The 45th annual Kiwanis international convention opened Tuesday with an address by Albert J. Tully, international president, to 18,000 delegates at Convention hall.

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