

tissue, permitting the enzymes to hydrolize a glucosoid in the fruits, liberating the hydrocyanic acid.

Due to the low temperature of that morning, sufficient amounts of this extremely toxic compound had accumulated in the fruits to cause the death of the cedar-waxwings.

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A NEW LOCALITY FOR THE BLACK WIDOW SPIDER

AN adult female of *Latrodectus mactans* (Fabr.) was found early in July, 1935, at Parfrey's Glen, near Prairie du Sac, at the edge of the Driftless Area of Wisconsin. This is the first case of finding this spider within the boundaries of this state.¹ The web, found in tall marsh grass about two and a half feet from the ground close to a marshy plot near a small stream, was of characteristic construction. The spider was brought back to the laboratory, where she laid two eggs sacs within five days of each other. The young hatched in about twenty days.

It is of particular interest to note that two males and two females of *Gea heptagon* (Hentz), an orb-weaver previously reported only from the southern United States and as far north as the District of Columbia,² were also found in the same locality. A collection of spiders made during the past four years, including about four thousand specimens and over two hundred species from many different localities through-

out Wisconsin, has failed to reveal the presence of these two species elsewhere in the state.

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FRESH-WATER MEDUSAE IN IOWA

ON August 20, a strange animal was reported in Avon Lake, a gravel pit 10 miles southeast of Des Moines. On investigation many specimens of the fresh-water medusae, *Craspedacusta sowerbyi*, were found moving about near the surface of 15-foot water.

At different times, these animals were collected and kept alive in jars for ten-day periods. The character of 4 tentacles erect while swimming could not be definitely ascribed to this species. Some individuals did show a tendency to hold the long tentacles upward, however the majority of medusae observed held the tentacles in a pendulous position.

Observations were kept on these coelenterates in their natural medium for 30 days. At the end of this period they had moved out of the deeper water into shallower reaches. Specimens on the 18th of September swam, either with all tentacles upward or all held downward.

This is the first time apparently that *C. sowerbyi* has been recognized in Iowa.

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SCIENTIFIC BOOKS

VAGARIES OF BELIEF

Wish and Wisdom: Episodes in the Vagaries of Belief. By JOSEPH JASTROW. D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc., New York, 1935, 394 pp., \$3.50.

MORE than three hundred years ago Francis Bacon, having discerned that knowledge can be power, set himself the task of describing and classifying the knowledge which is not power. He divided it into three groups: the delicate, the contentious and the fantastic. Like the knowledge which is power, fantastic knowledge is an effort to discriminate and to manipulate natural causes in such a way as to control the march of natural events. Like true knowledge, this effort takes on a certain pattern of procedure and operation. But unlike true knowledge of causes this effort neglects the conditions and ignores the methods of control. In effect, it deliberately leads human beings astray.

¹ C. E. Burt, *Jour. Kans. Ent. Soc.*, 8 (4): 117-130, 1935.

² A. Petrunkevitch, *Bull. Am. Mus. Nat. Hist.*, 29: 345, 1911.

In this forthright and epigrammatic book Joseph Jastrow resumes Bacon's epic theme. He brings together samples of fantastic knowledge from all the ages, beginning with Lucian's classic Alexander and stopping with Richet and von Reichenbach and their contemporaries. He stops, he does not finish, because the material goes on, not only reproducing old fantasies but generating new ones. It can be exhibited by the method of sampling alone. That the analysis and judgment of the samples should carry conviction to believers in the fantastic is not, of course, to be expected. The study can only confirm those who already agree with Mr. Jastrow in their infidelity: they can not convert the true believers. But to his fellows in infidelity Mr. Jastrow's book should bring merri-ment and illumination. Between a "Foreword" and an "Afterword" of psychological comment, he sets, decently and in order, a chain of instances which he classifies as "Credulity," "Magic and Marvel," "Transcendence," "Prepossession," "Congenial Conclusions," "Cults and Vagaries" and "Rationalization." Under "Credulity" he links the picaresque career of