



California Academy of Sciences

**DINNER IS SERVED**—A tasty fish is being popped into the middle of a wreath of waving tentacles—the mouth of a sea anemone. The beautiful but deadly sea animal grabs the fish, closes its tentacles and pushes it into its digestive cavity. Each day spectators can watch the anemones being fed in this manner at the Aquarium of the California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco.

## CONSERVATION

## A Whooping Crane Dies

► **THE HARDSHIPS** of nature, not the guns of man, appear responsible for the felling of one of America's beloved rare whooping cranes.

Bones and feathers, but no bullet, are all that remain of the crane found dead March 17 at the wildlife refuge along the Gulf Coast.

These meager remains of the young bird offer little evidence as to what specifically caused the death, but the bird probably died of natural causes, a wildlife researcher of the U.S. Department of Interior in Washington, D. C., has concluded. Wildlife predators had stripped the body clean, he said.

Predators around the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas include the great carrion-eating birds such as vultures and caracaras, and mammals such as coyotes and bobcats.

The seven or eight-month-old bird, born last summer in Canada, died sometime after Feb. 25, the Fish and Wildlife official reported.

At that date a census of the rare white birds counted 33. The count on March 17 located 32, plus the dead bird. Now the numbers of the small band are one less than when they arrived last fall from their Canada refuge.

The whooping cranes are now on their long 2,500-mile flight up through the United States to their summer home at Wood Buffalo National Park, near Great Slave Lake in Canada.

These majestic birds, America's tallest,

are white with red-crowned heads and black-tipped wings.

Each year their spectacular flight up the middle of the United States into Canada is awaited anxiously by citizens along their flight path.

Special reports are sent for hunters to help protect the long-legged birds as they fly singly or in small groups high in the sky up the Red River Valley between Oklahoma and Texas, across the salt plains of northern Oklahoma and southern Kansas, over the sandbars on the Platte River in Nebraska, the reaches of the upper Missouri River in the Dakotas, and the potholes and prairies of southern Saskatchewan.

• Science News Letter, 85:223 April 4, 1964

## EDUCATION

## Summer Courses to Train For Science Museums

► **TO TRAIN** for establishing and operating science museums throughout the country, two courses will be held during the summer, one in invertebrate zoology at Yale's Peabody Museum of Natural History, and the other in paleontology at the University of Nebraska State Museum in Lincoln. Sponsored by the National Science Foundation, the training programs for science museum personnel will be under the supervision of the American Association of Museums. Last summer similar programs in anthropology and astronomy were conducted.

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## Nature Note

### Sea Anemone

► **IT LOOKS** like a beautiful underwater flower, but the sea anemone is neither a flower nor beautiful in habits. It is a member of the animal kingdom and belongs to the same phylum as jellyfish and corals.

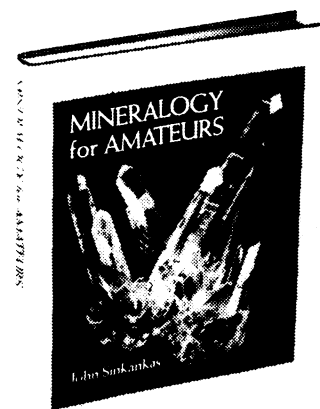
The sea anemone depends on its colored waving tentacles, each containing lethal stinging cells, to snare its victims. Any unfortunate fish brushing against the tentacles is paralyzed and then engulfed in the tentacles.

The weird sea animal inserts the food-laden tentacles into its mouth and thus into the primitive digestive cavity. After feeding, the sea anemone remains closed in a lump for several hours.

Certain fish such as the clown fish are seemingly immune to the tentacles' stinging cells. Scientists believe the mucus on the surface of these fish probably prevents the tripping of the stinging cells' mechanism.

Of the more than 1,000 species of sea anemones, the brown anemone, *Metridium dianthus*, is the most common and largest found off the North American coast between New Jersey and Labrador. Its central stalk is nearly four inches high and two and a half inches across with hundreds of brownish yellow tentacles.

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