

spiders begin to disperse and migrate in order to colonise new areas where the food supply is greater. The method they use is known as 'ballooning.' As the sun dries off the dew, upward air currents are created. The spider runs to the top of a plant, fence, etc., and lifting the tip of the abdomen emits a globule of liquid silk. This silk is drawn out in a thread by the air currents and hardens as a result of this drawing out, not simply by contact with the air. When the thread is long enough to support the spider, it lets go of its support and flies away. The spiders sometimes are carried many miles. Eventually, they come down to earth and on landing cut free the 'parachute.' This again floats away and

becomes entangled with other threads, sometimes quite thick bands are thus formed, and when this again settles down it is very conspicuous. The single thread is very fine and difficult to see unless the light is reflected from it, but when entangled together with other threads it is easy to see and quite tough and resilient.

"I cannot explain the disappearance of these strands when held in the hand. It may be that the threads of the strand you describe were not so entangled and when handled broke up into individual threads thus becoming very inconspicuous. Spider silk cannot melt because heat does not affect it, it is on the whole less soluble than true silk."

LIFE ON THE MOON?

by the Reverend Guy J. Cyr

THE leading article in the January-February issue was, as usual, excellent, and I think that one of its points could well be elaborated. The leader writer remarked that the scientist is logical in rejecting that which is impossible, but the philosopher goes deeper and asks: "Does man know the *limits* of possibilities?" Obviously he does not, for he keeps on discovering and inventing things which, in the previous generation, were "impossible." I do not like that pessimistic word, especially when it is applied to the question of extraterrestrial life. In my judgment, the scientist as an individual and privately does not like it either. Even in his carefully worded public statements you can see the typical scientist today believes clandestinely that there are living creatures elsewhere in the cosmos.

Years ago telescopic observations "proved" that the surface of the moon was covered by rocks casting weird shadows. Then, the astronomers "discovered" smaller pieces in the form of volcanic slag and ashes and, of course, the reports are filed with the unproven word "lifeless." Then later the word "dust" becomes prominent as a description of the material which allegedly constitutes the lunar surface. It's much better; but, it's far from being as *lively* as "soil," "loam" or "humus."

However, that "dust" is more mysterious than life itself, for according to various researchers for the U.S. Air Force and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration this dust is fibrous and skeletal; and there is nothing like it on earth.

Briefly, these experts in the past year or so, after analysing carefully data obtained from visual, photometric, polarimetric, infra-red, microwave and radio-wave observations, concluded variously that the surface of our natural satellite must be covered with a material comprising "deep holes with vertical walls and sharp edges." This substance, whatever it is, they continue, must be covered by dust which must cling to the slopes, even the vertical walls of the deep cavities. These quotations are from the *official* report made by NASA, December, 1962.

A Positive Approach

However, the very same scientists were much more free to talk and, therefore, much bolder in their individual reports made in writing or orally. Notice the positive approach in their expressions when they described recently the composition and structure of the lunar surface: "powder that has a cobweb-like structure." Another: "deep layers of fluffy matter." A third

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one: "The moon's surface is fuzzy to a depth of about an inch . . . having mostly open spaces as in reindeer moss . . . a skeletal fuzz."

From these and other reports including shades, tints and the albedo, I boldly conclude that the moon is covered with vegetation which, unlike ours, is hairy or woolly. Let me spell it out for you and show how it matches the above-mentioned latest descriptions of the lunar surface. Some of these plants, in my opinion, would be trees, standing vertically like ours. The stems and the branches, if any, would have broad, rubbery, thick leaves well adapted to the rigorous environment. As some terrestrial organisms, but to a higher degree, through aeons of evolution, they would have developed an insulating-sealing integument which prevents the escape of heat and moisture. moreover, they would probably have the ability to store much water, extract oxygen from some compound, etc.

An Interesting Parallel

On the Santa Marta mountains in north-eastern Colombia there are sheep-like bushes covered by hairy or woolly leaves. As on the moon, they are exposed *alternately* to the dry, hot conditions of a desert in the summer and then to the arctic cold of the winter. Why couldn't the leaves and stems of my hypothetical lunar trees be thus covered? Incidentally, since the "surface of the moon is a very poor conductor of heat," and since the atmosphere, if any, is very thin, the transfer of heat from one place to another is very slow. So, as the experts point out, if a given area on the moon has a very low albedo it could be very hot there and yet very cold just a few miles away or even just around the corner where the albedo is very high. There are other considerations which would bring about these microclimates: thermal capacity of substances, very high mountains, which present the surface more directly and at the same time cause long and long-lasting shadows.

So, my hypothetical lunar forest would fit the descriptive words of the experts. The "deep holes" would be the spaces between the trees; "the vertical walls" would be the sides of these trees. Since the atmosphere, if any, is very thin there would be no winds, no rain, snow, etc.

So, these "trees" would tend to have well defined, sharp edges, which would behave like walls as far as the above mentioned electromagnetic waves are concerned. There is no implication, because there is no way of telling, that these "walls" are hard or if they are covered by "dust." And now how about that "dust" which is found to cling to the "vertical walls" of these "holes," and which, according to some, is about an inch thick? The "hair" or "wool" on the broad, rubbery leaves would be very numerous and thick but short and flexible with possibly horizontal ramifications, too; it would be the kind selected by nature in an evolutionary process as the fittest to survive the bombardment from cosmic rays and space debris. This "wool" could conceivably ramificate in all directions and give the effect of a "cobweb-like, skeletal structure."

What We May See

But, some experimenters find that the "dust" is "deep." They probably got "echoes" from a whole tree while "looking" down at and through it vertically. That's deep, soft, fuzzy and skeletal. So, the scientist who found that reindeer moss was the most satisfactory model, said what the others wanted to say but did not have the government's permission to do so. They will very soon: perhaps even before this is published, for, as I am writing this very line, Ranger-VI is on its way to the moon with six cameras, and these will "see" objects which are not bigger than a card-table (2.5 ft. × 2.5 ft.). So, I expect that Sunday, February 2, 1964, the world will see on TV all kinds of "weird" plants and animals including, perhaps, humanoids, who must be very hairy.

(EDITOR'S NOTE. — This article was written before Ranger VI was launched and before it was known that the photographic devices had failed to function. In the London *Daily Telegraph*, and only in that paper as far as we can tell, it was reported that Dr. Kal Rakas of the Lowell Observatory near Flagstaff, Arizona, indicated that something was visible near the target area of Ranger VI about 90 seconds *before* it hit the moon. Dr. Rakas, the report continues, said he saw with the aid of a large reflector a small flash about 50 or 60 miles from the impact point).

World round-up

*of news
and comment
about recent
sightings*

ENGLAND

Stafford Plastic Effigy from the Sky

This mysterious occurrence, which could be the work of a practical joker, was reported in the *Wolverhampton Express and Star* of January 21: "It was just going dark when the object floated gracefully out of the sky into a garden at Dixey-Road, Stafford, on Saturday. But it caused quite a stir.

"Was it a man from Mars, people wondered and straightaway a call went to Stafford police calling for someone to investigate.

"When the police arrived they found not a man from Mars, but a giant effigy of a man, 20ft. in length which was gas inflated.

"Made of black plastic material in the shape of a body, it is now awaiting a claimant at Stafford police station.

"Said a police spokesman today: 'This was obviously a prank. It is not Government property. It is just a plastic effigy and it was inflated with gas. Where it came from we don't know and we are not making extensive inquiries to find out either.'

As a police "spokesman" has dismissed the whole affair as a joke, probably nothing more will be heard of the matter. However, it is far from easy to make a plastic model. It must therefore have come from some factory in which case it should be possible to identify it. Mr. Wilfred Daniels, who kindly sent us the above cutting is making further enquiries.

Kent Mystery

While the incident reported in the *London Evening News* of February 14 may have no connection with flying saucers, it is reprinted here in case it has: "Police from Cranbrook and Hawkhurst in Kent were today keeping watch in the Weald area for a huge, unknown animal with two-inch razor-sharp claws.

"The hunt began when farm worker Mr. John Golding, of Park Cottages, Hawkhurst, found a set of giant paw marks leading across Duval's Farm.

"He called the farm owner, Mr. F. C. Brinsley, and together they followed the trail across the farm. Then they told the police. Police measurements show that the animal's front feet are nearly two feet apart.

"A local vet. Mr. Douglas Good believes that the prints were made by a member of the 'big' cat family, which was heavy enough to sink nearly two inches into the fairly firm ground."

One or two points may be noted. It would seem strange that this item of news should have produced no sequel. An animal of this weight would surely have been traced by its footprints. If they suddenly ceased they can only have disappeared "into thin air." As nothing more has been heard of the mystery that is presumably what has happened. It is also interesting to recall the mystery cheetah which was alleged to be roaming the Shooters Hill area of London last summer at the time of the Charlton Crater affair. The *London Daily Mail* did connect the animal with flying saucers, but merely to ridicule

both mysteries. The Cranbrook "animal," however, cannot be so easily dismissed as an hallucination: the footprints remain to frustrate the scoffer. But was it an animal?

Isle of Wight

Mystery Hole

Our old friends the Bomb Disposal Squad are having a busy time these days, but they seem to be uncovering more mysteries than bombs. They were out recently at Meopham in Kent; but we have heard nothing at all about their discoveries. Another outing for them was in a field at Puckwell Farm, Niton, Isle of Wight.

The Southampton *Southern Evening Echo* on January 23 carried a photograph of the mystery hole which was described as being 15 feet deep and two feet wide. Leonard G. Cramp, author of *Space, Gravity and the Flying Saucer* visited the field and commented: "The indications are that it might be a bomb which has been protected by a layer of stone which has collapsed to cause the fissure. As long as it was protected by a layer of stone it could have been ploughed over for years." He added, however, that some connection with a space object could not be ruled out.

Chiswick Sighting

The *Brentford and Chiswick Times* carried the following report in its December 27, 1963, issue: "As seven-year-old Julian Mills was walking home in Had-