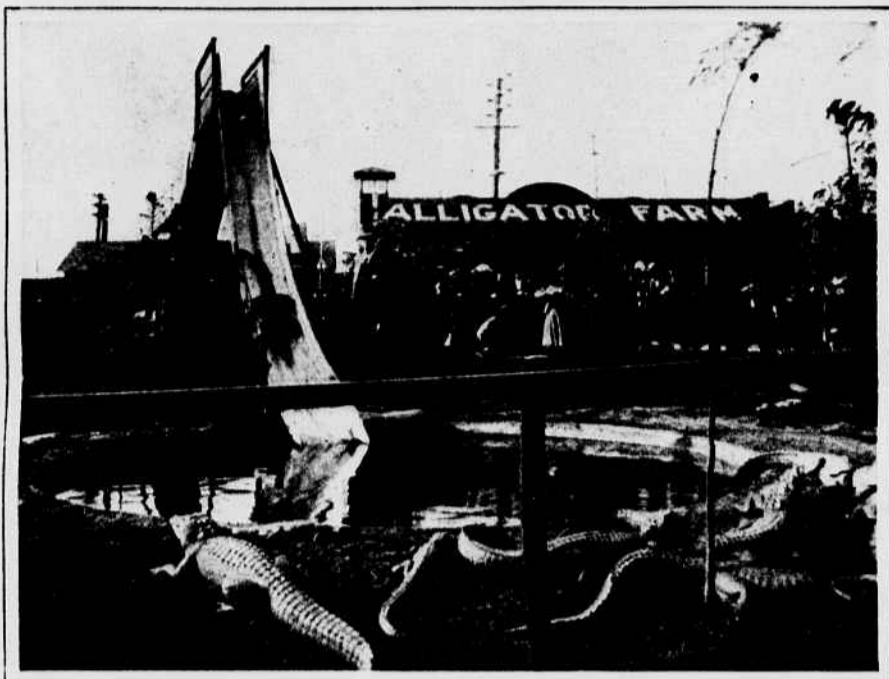


Raising Alligators by Hand



Alligators have about as little intelligence as any beast you can find. It took eighteen months to teach two of this group to climb the runway and slide down into the water.

PERHAPS the most unusual of farms is the alligator farm.

For years the increasing demand for alligator hides has been a great incentive to hunters, the result being that the millions of saurians that formerly held sway over the vast swamps of Florida have been nearly depleted. As an evidence of the ruthlessness with which this slaughter has been carried on, the United States Fish Commission reports that between 1890 and 1900 more than three million alligators were killed in Florida alone. Still the slaughter goes on; and, since Florida has been so nearly cleaned out, the hunters have transferred their activities to Louisiana, Texas, and Mississippi. Thousands of alligators are killed annually in each of these States, and at the present rate the alligator will be extinct in a very few years.

With the idea, therefore, of producing an article that is becoming more and more scarce, and on which the market value is increasing by leaps and bounds, George Earnest of Los Angeles conceived the idea of starting an alligator farm.

When it is understood that an alligator two feet long is about ten years old, that alligators do not breed until they are thirty years old, and that the specimens have to be taken alive, a few of the obstacles attending the enterprise become self-evident.

Catching Live Alligators

ALLIGATORS are usually hunted at night. The hunter is equipped with a light canoe, a large-bore, double-barreled shotgun, and a big bull's-eye lantern. He paddles noiselessly through the swamps, flashing his light to locate the prey. An alligator's eyes look like green balls of fire on the water. If carefully approached the beast will lie still and allow the hunter to paddle up to him, quietly awaiting the approach of the fascinating light. When within a few feet of the alligator, the hunter discharges both barrels at its eyes; this usually kills it outright. The body is then secured with a grappling-hook before it can sink, and lashed fast to a convenient stump, out of water, to be picked up on the return. Frequently thirty or more in a night are killed by this method.

In securing live alligators it was necessary to devise an entirely new method. The dens, which are burrows under overhanging river-banks, are located in the daytime. When an inmate is located, it is prodded with a long pole, on the end of which is firmly attached a wooden ball about six inches in diameter. When the alligator is enraged it snaps at the pole and seizes it in its jaws. An alligator never relaxes its grip, and, hanging on to the stick, is drawn out of the hole.

Men in boats throw ropes around it, lashing it securely, and it is towed to camp.

Great care must be used in handling the beasts. One snap of an alligator's jaws will crush a man's leg, and a blow from its armored tail will knock a man senseless.

In a series of such hunts Mr. Earnest secured enough mature alligators to stock his farm.

The alligator farm is located upon the banks of a small mountain stream, the course of which has been altered to form a number of small lakes and swamps, all as nearly like the natural home of the monsters as possible. Here they live, breed, bask in the warm sun, and appear entirely contented and satisfied with their lot.

How the Young Ones Are Raised

THE month of June is their breeding season, and during this period they are exceptionally dangerous. The males bellow like enraged bulls, and become so vicious that it is dangerous to go near them. Among themselves they fight like demons, and in order to prevent their inflicting serious injury on each other the males are securely muzzled.

In July the female begins nesting. She fashions the nest by scraping together a pile of rubbish, sticks, reeds, stones, and mud, and on this she deposits from thirty to sixty long, narrow, capsule-shaped eggs, covering them with rubbish and mud. She stands guard night and day until they are hatched.

The nests on Mr. Earnest's farm are robbed as soon as the eggs are laid. This in itself is a ticklish and dangerous operation, and is never accomplished until the female has been roped, her jaws bound, thrown on her back and securely pinioned. The eggs are placed in an incubator maintained at a temperature of eighty degrees, and are moistened every day. They hatch in sixty days. When hatched the young are placed in a separate inclosure, and, being of identical size, about six inches long, there is no danger of their preying on each other.

All Alligators Are Cannibals

IT is not generally known, but alligators are cannibalistic—the larger sizes devour the smaller; in fact, they prefer their own flesh to any other. This makes it necessary to grade them according to sizes.

The young alligators are exceptionally hardy, and beyond feeding require absolutely no attention. They are apparently immune to disease, and only the severest injuries will kill them. They grow very slowly, and never stop growing. The largest alligator in captivity, Okeechobee, is more than twelve feet long, and is estimated to be five hundred years old. Their

heads are mostly solid bone, and an alligator ten feet long has a brain not much larger than a walnut. They hibernate during the winter, and for six months—from October to March—eat absolutely nothing. They have no tongues, the mouth being filled with a spongy membrane which enables them to open it under water without swallowing a drop. The lower jaw is fixed and immovable, and they snap and bite by raising and lowering the upper jaw. They display absolutely no intelligence, although Mr. Earnest did succeed, after eighteen months

of patient effort, in teaching two females to climb a runway and slide down a chute into one of the lakes.

The "crop" on this strange farm can not be gathered until it is thirty years old, as that length of time is required for them to reach commercial size. Were it not for the fact that the stock is being constantly replenished by frequent hunts, that the farm is visited annually by thousands of tourists who pay an admission fee, and that many young alligators are sold as souvenirs, it is doubtful whether the enterprise would pay.

She Finds Money that People Throw Away

STRANGEST among the many strange employments of women in the United States government service is that assigned to Mrs. Mary Warren, who for more than thirty years has been picking over the waste-paper baskets in the Treasury Department.

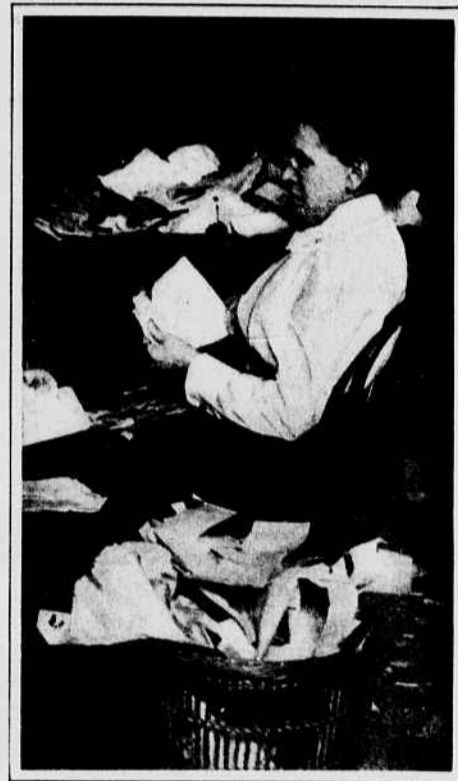
In this long period of faithful duty in a seemingly humble and disagreeable occupation, she has recovered countless sums of money. The largest amount she ever found in one package was \$10,000. Scarcely a day passes that she does not save half a dozen checks that have by some oversight been left in envelopes.

Of late years her work has been growing lighter, so that now she picks over about five bushels each day from the Treasurer's office. In years past the work was enormous, all of the waste paper of the entire department being carefully inspected. The quantities used to be so large that a force of three or four women could not get through it all in a day.

The Day \$10,000 Was Lost

"IT would be impossible to tell you even roughly how much money and valuables I have found in waste paper," said Mrs. Warren. "Every day we used to recover a great deal of money. We never kept track of how much, because we simply returned it to the Treasurer, and it was traced back to the desk from which it was lost, and thus properly checked off. As far as I know, there was never anything of value lost that we did not recover."

"Once I found a bundle of \$10,000, in various denominations, that had by some chance fallen from a desk into a waste-paper basket. There was considerable excitement throughout the department that day. I returned the package to General Francis Eastman Spinner, who was then Treasurer. He locked it up, and there was a rigid investigation of the affair. Nowadays, with checks in more common use, there is very little money found



Once she found \$10,000 in bills in the Treasury waste basket. After that the Department got more into the way of using checks.

among the waste paper; yet only to-day I found six checks, and that would be a fair daily average."

Mrs. Warren has her recovery office in a secluded section of the first floor of the Treasury Building. So unobtrusively does she do her work that there are many employees in the department who do not know that there is such an office in the building. The hundreds of sight-seers who are shown through the building daily never get a glimpse of this merry little woman picking over the refuse.

Acting Two Parts at Once



To sleep comfortably in an arm-chair in one corner of the stage, and lie dead on the floor in another while a beautiful lady bends over you, seems too much for one man to do at one time. But here you have it in this picture of a scene from Lubin's "The Dream Dance." Of course, it's just another of "those camera fakes"—photographing the scenes at separate times, and superimposing one negative upon the other.