

Wildlife Afield

Endangered Species Important To Everyone: Lizard Might Save A Life

BY JIM DEAN

It is a common practice to poke fun at scientists who study obscure plants and wildlife species. Just recently, Jack Anderson, in his syndicated newspaper column, Washington Merry-Go-Round, suggested that projects designed to study Indian whistling ducks and a species of lizard in Yugoslavia were a waste of taxpayers' money.

Perhaps he is right. Perhaps not. At any rate, his attitude is fairly prevalent. I suppose those who are inclined to oppose such studies might also have been quick to attack any proposal years ago to study a relatively obscure European wild plant known as foxglove for the same reason.

Who knows but what some obscure worm or lizard might be the key to a cure for some dread disease—a cure we may not discover for many, many years.

Recently, the National Geographic magazine reported the discovery of a species of sole (a flatfish similar to our flounder) which is the only known fish capable of producing a toxin which repels shark attack.

Unlimited, but only if we do not foolishly wipe out our laboratory. The Journal reports that a powerful toxin, isolated from a segmented worm with a long Latin name, has been developed and is now being marketed as an insecticide for use in controlling rice borers in Japan.

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The Old Timer

IDENTIFY PROBLEM Before reseeding bare spots in your lawn, North Carolina State University extension specialists suggest that you examine the spot to see if the problem can be identified. There may be a piece of building scrap, such as a board, brick or mortar, just underneath the surface. If so, remove it and rake in dirt to level the spot before seeding.

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