



The Eagle's Tribute

► THE GREAT BALD EAGLES of Saint Marks Wildlife Refuge are finding life a lot easier since spring has come to their home in this almost primeval wilderness tract in north Florida.

Only a few weeks ago, the bald eagles had to depend on their own prowess to secure a meal, hovering patiently in the air until they could swoop upon an unwary coot or catch a fish swimming close to the surface.

With the return of spring to northern Florida, early February down there, lesser birds of prey, the fierce-looking ospreys, suddenly appeared in the refuge to take over their old nests and feeding grounds.

The return of the ospreys means both easy meals and fun for the bald eagles.

An osprey depends on catching fish for the greater part of his food, and he is an industrious hunter. But after he has caught a plump mullet in his talons and starts to fly home with it, his victory may be short-lived. If his success in fishing is observed by a hungry bald eagle, he is apt to have

to give the fish in tribute to his great cousin.

For the bald eagle delights in attacking the osprey, flying at him, worrying him, intimidating him until he loosens his iron grip on the fish and it falls from his claws. Thereupon, the eagle scoops up this easily won meal and flies away with it to dine at leisure from atop his favorite dead tree.

While not a very "noble" act for this "noble" bird, the bald eagle, with his superior size, seems untroubled by remorse over this meal taken from his hard-working but smaller relative.

In spite of harassment from the bald eagles, however, the ospreys are a thriving race in the swamps of Saint Marks. Their sleek forms can be seen darting and circling over the marshland in large numbers, and their short, sharp, cheeping whistles—a surprisingly mild "chewk chewk chewk" for such a large, striking bird—seem to be the predominant voice of the wilderness.

Perched on a high, dead tree near his great nest of twigs and Spanish moss, an occasional osprey can be seen fiercely tearing at a fish in his talons, one the bald eagles did not get.

Even then, however, a fish crow will probably be waiting on the limb, at a respectful distance, ready to eat the crumbs of the osprey's feast.

Science News Letter, March 31, 1956

BIOCHEMISTRY

Blood Defect Discovered

► UNKNOWN NUMBERS of babies will be saved from death or blindness and imbecility by a discovery of scientists at the National Institute of Arthritis and Metabolic Diseases, Bethesda, Md.

The life-saving discovery is that the babies inherit a blood defect that makes them unable to handle part of the sugar in milk. This can cause blindness, severe mental defect or even death, Dr. Floyd S. Daft, the institute's director, reported at hearings held recently by a House appropriations subcommittee.

As a result of the discovery, doctors will be able to detect the condition and take the babies off milk in time to save them.

How many babies suffer from this defect is not known. The disease has been known for some time, but has been considered rare. It may, however, have been more widespread than doctors realized, because many infant deaths and cases of blindness and imbecility of no known cause may have been due to this condition.

A few days after birth a baby with this disorder becomes extremely ill, gets diarrhea, loses its appetite, loses weight, and is jaundiced.

The name of the disease is galactosemia, meaning the presence of galactose in the blood. Galactose is one of the two sugars that make up lactose, or milk sugar. The other half of lactose is glucose, the usual sugar in blood.

HORTICULTURE

Lawn Seed Mixtures Found Inadequate

► IN PLANTING a lawn this spring, be particular about the seed mixture.

This advice came from Dr. B. E. Clark, head of the department of seed investigations at the Cornell University Experiment Station, Geneva, N. Y., after he made a survey of 108 different lawn seeding mixtures being sold currently.

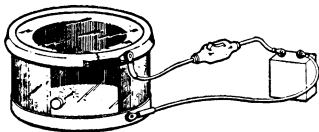
Most mixtures were found to be deficient in Kentucky bluegrass and fescues. According to the Cornell Extension specialists, a lawn seeding mixture for use in a sunny spot should have at least 55% Kentucky bluegrass of either the common or Merion varieties. Only five percent of the 108 brands analyzed contained the recommended amount. The average for all the brands was 14%.

A good lawn mixture should also include red fescues, rough bluegrass and colonial bentgrass. These, with the Kentucky bluegrass, should constitute 80% of the mixture, the agronomists state. Of the brands examined only 16% contained the desired amount.

Contents of lawn seeding mixtures are listed on the package.

Science News Letter, March 31, 1956

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