

PHYSIOLOGY

Whisker Crop Growth Is Faster in Hot Weather

THE WHISKER crop grows faster in hot weather. This is not hearsay. Scientific evidence, carefully gathered hair by hair, appears in *Science* (Oct. 15). The crop report was made by Dr. Paul Eaton of the Florida State Board of Health and Mary Wright Eaton.

The evidence was gathered in an experiment involving "the measurement of the hair shaved from the same part of the face at approximately the same hour and with the same technique every day for one year," the report states. The subject of the experiment is described as "P. E., florid male, aet. 59."

"The crop harvested with one stroke of a straight razor from an area of about one square inch on the right cheek immediately in front of the ear, was washed free from soap, dried and mounted," the report states. "On each slide selected for measurement 100 hairs chosen at random were measured with an ocular micrometer."

(The micrometer is an instrument for accurate measurement of minute distances.)

"Each daily value was linked with the average temperature of the preceding day as furnished by the U. S. Weather Bureau."

The report concludes with a table which shows that as the mean monthly temperature rose to 65 degrees Fahrenheit and over, the average hair growth increased appreciably, and as the temperature declined, the hair growth also declined.

Science News Letter, October 30, 1937

MEDICINE

Food Allergy Is Real, Not Imagined Ailment

HELP is needed for an increasing group of emaciated men, women and children who are suffering from a new kind of starvation amidst plenty. These are the victims of food allergy—the people who cannot eat fish or tomatoes or wheat or eggs or milk or many other common and necessary foods.

These people are not just finicky and the trouble is not in their heads. They are supersensitive to one or more of these foods and their ailment is just as real, and sometime more serious, as that of their fellow-allergics, the hay feverites whose noses are supersensitive to pollens.

Nearly two-thirds of the population has food allergy to some degree, Dr. Walter Alvarez of the Mayo Clinic told members of the American Public Health Association. About 2 per cent. of the population suffer from allergy to a severe extent.

These people need help, from bakers and food manufacturers, in getting enough to eat—enough food that does not contain the substance which poisons them. (Poisons is not a strictly medical term in this connection, but the symptoms of food allergy range from hives and headache to asthma and symptoms of food poisoning serious enough to kill if not quickly checked.)

Many of these people, in order not to starve, must eat large amounts of one food, day in and day out. They thus run a good chance of developing sensitiveness to this food, and so further limiting their supply of nourishment.

Bakeries are needed in large cities to supply these patients with breadstuffs containing no wheat, eggs or milk. Foods that they can eat should be available in cans and packages. Some of these must be imported, but Dr. Alvarez believes there will be a good market for such foods. An advantage of the imported foods is that because the allergic patients have not eaten them before, they are not likely to be sensitive to them.

Science News Letter, October 30, 1937

INVENTION

H. H. Maxim Invents A Submarine Silencer

A FAMOUS son of a famous father, Hiram Hamilton Maxim, son of Hiram Maxim, the man who invented the gun silencer that bears his name, has just been granted a patent on a silencer for the gasoline engines submarines use when cruising on the surface.

Young Maxim, now president of the Maxim Silencer Company of Hartford, Conn., declined to make any comment on the invention, but the patent papers disclose that the silencer, located near the top of a submarine's small superstructure, is adapted for flooding quickly when the underwater boat prepares to dive.

This is necessary, it was explained, because of the danger of air pockets interfering with the boat's balance. Two sound-conducting channels, designed to absorb low-pitched sounds, such as those from the explosions of a gasoline motor, feature the device, covered by patent No. 2,093,893.

Science News Letter, October 30, 1937

IN SCIENCE

ENGINEERING

Oil Flooded Out of Wells By New Water Method

OIL is being recovered from Pennsylvania wells that have ceased producing profitably under other methods of working by a new water-flooding process developed by Pennsylvania State College scientists.

Water under pressure is forced into oil-bearing rock formations through selected wells to weep the oil out through other wells, in the new method of "reviving" non-producing bores.

Six experts, including Dr. Kurt H. Andresen, Dr. Thomas S. Cooke and H. B. Charmbury, have been working successfully on standardization of the method for four years.

Increasing attention has been paid by petroleum engineers the world over to the job of extracting the last remnants of oil from a pool as increasing numbers of fields give out. Blasting, to break up rock formations clogging the bottoms of wells, has been successfully developed in this country, while Russian engineers have used compressed air to achieve the same result.

Science News Letter, October 30, 1937

PUBLIC HEALTH

Increase in TB Deaths Aftermath of Depression

AN INCREASE in deaths from tuberculosis as a late result of the economic depression is reported by Dr. Kendall Emerson, managing director of the National Tuberculosis Association. His report is based on figures submitted by the state boards of health.

In 1936 there were 70,907 deaths from tuberculosis in the United States exclusive of New Hampshire for which figures are still unavailable. In 1935 the total tuberculosis deaths for the country (including New Hampshire) were 69,471.

The 1936 increase was anticipated, Dr. Emerson said, by tuberculosis workers throughout the country, and came after a ten-year period of decreasing annual tuberculosis death rates.

Science News Letter, October 30, 1937

E FIELDS

MINERALOGY

Two New Minerals Added To List of Some 1200

TWO NEW and rare minerals—antofagastite and bandylite—discovered by a joint Smithsonian Institution-Harvard expedition to Chile have just been added to the list of about 1,200 known rock components.

Lichen-like greenish crusts found on rocks brought back from the district of Antofagasta, Chile, by Mark C. Bandy, leader of the expedition, were found to be copper chloride, a common substance in chemical laboratories, but never before found in nature. This mineral has been named antofagastite by Drs. Charles Palache of Harvard and W. F. Foshag of the National Museum.

Minute blue crystals, composed of boron, chlorine, and copper, never before discovered anywhere, have been named bandylite, in honor of their discoverer. Both of these minerals occur near the surface, in what miners call the oxidized zone. Antofagastite dissolves in water; bandylite is dissolved by ammonium hydroxide. Both rare minerals color a flame green.

Science News Letter, October 30, 1937

ARCHAEOLOGY

King's Letters Unfold Politics In Bible Age

SUPPOSE the history of our present era should somehow be lost, and scholars of the future suddenly discovered Signor Mussolini's office files. They would be awed and thrilled to read of international rivalries and maneuvering of rulers for place.

An era of ancient history has been brought to light in exactly this way through new discoveries in a city most people have never heard of. In this ruined city called Mari—in northwestern Mesopotamia, now within borders of Syria—French archaeologists have dug up several thousand letters. They are letters received by King Zimri-Lim of Mari in the course of 33 years, from about 1900 B. C.

Zimri-Lim corresponded with kings all over Mesopotamia—which was the "Europe" of the early civilized world.

And the letters reveal a political situation as complex as that of today, with kings big and little, from Hammurabi down, frantically pulling wires for power. In the end, Hammurabi swallowed most of them.

This royal correspondence is a discovery that Bible scholars call vastly important for history. Little has been known about this era in Mesopotamia, which was the time of Abraham and other Biblical patriarchs. But here, at last, are historic documents written in that day and age, to help explain the Bible's brief, often cryptic, mention of kings and events.

Commenting enthusiastically on the find, Prof. W. F. Albright of the Johns Hopkins University cites chapter 14 of Genesis, with its reference to a battle of four kings against five. Future attempts to fit this chapter, which is packed with political events, into Asiatic history will be profoundly affected by King Zimri-Lim's correspondence.

New light on Canaanite language and customs is in the letters, too. No wonder Prof. Albright says "prospects of Biblical archaeology were never so bright as they are today."

Science News Letter, October 30, 1937

ANTHROPOLOGY

China's Oldest Inhabitant Called Headhunter-Cannibal

PEKING MAN, China's oldest inhabitant, was a headhunter who dined off the brains of his fellows half a million years ago.

This is the verdict of Dr. George Barbour, University of Cincinnati geologist, from the extraordinary fact that almost all skeletal remains of this ancient Asiatic race so far discovered have turned out to be parts of the head. Absence of leg bones or other parts of the body can only mean, Dr. Barbour reasons, that Peking Man brought heads of his less fortunate fellows into his cave and whacked them open with stone axes to remove the brain.

Pieces of one skull shattered by a sharp pointed instrument were found in one instance, scattered widely and mixed with ashes of the hearth fire—a clue which Dr. Barbour cites as supporting evidence for the theory of Peking Man's head hunting habits.

Dr. Barbour, who was geology professor at Yenching University for 12 years, has been actively engaged in much of the investigation of China's earliest human remains.

Science News Letter, October 30, 1937

PHYSIOLOGY

Bone Conduction Hearing As Good as Normal Hearing

HEARING by means of bone conduction, resorted to by those suffering from a certain sort of impaired hearing, can reach as high a degree of perfection as normal hearing, Dr. N. A. Watson of the University of California at Los Angeles reports (*Journal, Acoustical Society of America*, October).

Many handy suggestions for deaf people using this means of keeping in touch with the audible world were contained in Dr. Watson's report.

Bone conduction, using the bones of the head to conduct sound instead of the air inside the ear as normally occurs, works best if one's mouth is closed and one's teeth are together, but not clenched, he finds. He found that conduction through the bones of one ear gave as good results as simultaneous use of both ears.

Dr. Watson, who used a special sound chamber and test rooms for conducting his experiments, was his own "guinea pig." He conducted the experiments on himself, checking comparative ability to distinguish conversational sounds by ordinary hearing and bone conduction.

Science News Letter, October 30, 1937

ORNITHOLOGY

New Pheasant Genus Discovered in Africa

TWENTY-THREE years ago a brown and black feather plucked from the headdress of a native in the Ituri Forest in Africa started Dr. James B. Chapin on a search that has just successfully ended with the finding of the bird that "fitted the feather."

The strange feather belonged to no known African bird. It came from a species related to the pheasants, which are Asiatic in origin and range. After his long search, Dr. Chapin, associate curator of birds at the American Museum of Natural History, found two mounted but unclassified specimens of a bird with identical feathers in a Belgian Museum.

Recently, in the Congo jungles, Dr. Chapin's hunt was rewarded by the securing of six specimens of this bird for his museum, and an accurate knowledge of its jungle habitat. Dr. Chapin reported the long hunt and final discovery of the "Congo Peacock," as this new bird genus has been named, to the Explorers Club.

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