

readily came to the conclusion that the iodine of the salt was the effective agent in preventing enlarged thyroids.

Furthermore, he noted that those subject to goiter usually lived at high altitudes and drank glacial water. He also claimed that the Indian natives were not subject to goiter.

Not only did Boussingault point out the value of iodized salt, but he also suggested that iodine be added to deficient salt and suggested a test to estimate the amount present in order to avoid a toxic level. Furthermore, he noted that sea salt tended to lose its iodine as it passed through the channels of commerce to the consumer.

Unfortunately, this interesting early contribution was not even mentioned, as far as we can find, by Chatin, who wrote so many papers in this field about the middle of the last century. It seems also to have escaped the notice of such reviewers as Von Fellenberg.<sup>2</sup>

One can only speculate concerning the human suffering that might have been evaded if some eminent physician had noted this contribution of the French chemist at an early date.

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### A NEW COSMIC PHENOMENON

READERS of SCIENCE may be interested in the possible occurrence of a cosmic phenomenon between

October 21 and 25. The phenomenon has evinced itself as a remarkable vagary of radio transmission occurring recently at regular intervals, separated in time by twice the sun's rotation period. It is a world-wide phenomenon, or more accurately semi-worldwide, as it involves all high-frequency radio transmission over the illuminated half of the globe and not the dark half. Depending apparently on some solar emanation lasting only a few minutes, its thorough elucidation appears to call for the study of such cosmic data as solar activity, terrestrial magnetism, atmospheric ionization, aurora, earth currents, etc., as well as high-frequency radio reception.

The radio evidence of the phenomenon is a sudden disappearance of high-frequency long-distance radio signals for several minutes, the complete process of fading out and reappearing occupying about 15 minutes. It occurred on March 20, May 12, July 6 and August 30. The time intervals between these dates are close to 54 days, twice the period of rotation of the sun; the next such occurrence should therefore be around October 21 to 25.

It is suggested to those concerned with observations in the above fields that they make special efforts to make continuous observations on these dates. I would be very glad if any one observing any marked anomalies occurring in a period of a few minutes would communicate with me.

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Chief, Radio Section

NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS

## SCIENTIFIC BOOKS

### AMERICAN BIRDS

*The American Eagle. A Study in Natural and Civil History.* By FRANCIS HOBART HERRICK. xx + 267 pp., 94 figs. D. Appleton-Century Company, New York, 1934. \$3.50.

*Wild Birds at Home.* By FRANCIS HOBART HERRICK. xxiv + 345 pp., 138 figs. D. Appleton-Century Company, New York, 1935. \$4.00.

THESE two books by the same author are very different in scope. The first is, in a sense, a monument to one majestic bird, which is our national emblem. The second is an important contribution to philosophic ornithology presented in popular form.

"The American Eagle" is a study, primarily of the home life, of the bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) made at Vermilion, Ohio, on the shore of Lake Erie. As an observation post an open-work steel tower ninety feet high was erected beside a nest or eyrie, and

by its means a large amount of data and a remarkable and beautiful series of photographs, here reproduced, were obtained from a distance of some thirty-eight feet.

With most wild birds, the nest is merely a cradle for the young, and being built in spring or early summer in the north temperate zone, it is seldom occupied more than two or three weeks. . . . The eagle's eyrie is not only cradle and bed-chamber for the young during the better part of three months, but it is the home and castle of the mated pair, for many years, it may be, or for as long as the eyrie endures. The eagle's union is believed to be a life partnership, and their eyrie is built upon each year until, with many annual increments, it may become an enormous structure. There is the remarkable record of the eagles at Vermilion, Ohio, whose Great Eyrie was occupied thirty-six years without a break and attained an estimated weight of two tons.

For the eaglets the eyrie serves a much wider purpose than that just intimated, for it is also their gymnasium and flying practice-field, to which its great size and par-

<sup>2</sup> Von Fellenberg, *Ergeb. d. Physiol.*, 25: 182, 1926.