

soar to the top of the range with him and repeat the process. The farthest she let him fall was about 150 feet."

There is nothing particularly spectacular or bizarre about the courtship of eagles, but their complete mastery of the air makes the sight very impressive. The two birds circle in intertwining, ever rising spirals, sometimes brushing wings as they pass each other. Then the male will execute a series of "power dives" with half-closed wings, shrieking musically his *joie de vivre*. Eagles



The American Eagle

Also known as the bald eagle. Many people confuse this species, which is used as a national emblem of the United States, with the golden eagle shown in the illustration on page 1. The above specimen is in Field Museum's systematic collection of birds in Hall 21.

probably mate for life, but when one of a couple is killed, the other soon finds another partner and brings it to its established nesting territory.

Golden eagles feed largely on mammals—cottontail rabbits, ground squirrels, domestic and mountain sheep lambs, and even on antelope and deer occasionally. Strangely enough, they are also fond of rattlesnakes. There is an authentic instance of a fox attacking an eagle that was feeding on a rabbit that it had killed. After a fierce struggle, the eagle managed to rise into the air although the fox clung to its breast with clamped jaws. The eagle rose higher and higher and the fox, with nothing but thin air to brace himself against, was at a disadvantage. Eventually he released his hold and was dashed to death on the ground. The eagle escaped, exhausted and weak.

THE BALD EAGLE, OUR NATIONAL BIRD

The bald eagle, which nests from Florida to Alaska, is a strictly American bird unlike its widespread golden cousin. It is therefore appropriate that it should have been chosen as our national symbol by Congress

on June 20, 1782. The habits and bearing of the white-headed bird do not compare, however, with the noble, fearless design for living characteristic of the golden eagle.

The bald eagle is rarely found far from water, for its food consists almost entirely of fish and water birds, although mammals that occur in marshes and along shores are taken. This eagle obtains its food whenever possible by strategy rather than by sheer power and speed. It is perfectly able to catch a full winged duck in the air. However, it is more likely to tire a duck by forcing it to dive repeatedly until the duck is exhausted and becomes an easy victim.

In its behavior towards the osprey or fish hawk, it is one of the most famous of pirates. The osprey, slightly smaller than the eagle, is an expert fisherman and expert he must be, for he often feeds both himself and the eagle. Waiting in majestic pose on the bare top of a dead tree, the eagle spies a heavily laden osprey returning to his nest. The marauder gives chase and though the osprey, if unburdened, might escape, he is eventually forced to drop the fish which the eagle often retrieves in full flight before it reaches the water.

TULIP TIME RECALLS A MANIA OF SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

BY SOPHIA PRIOR

The tulip probably is the most popular of all spring garden flowers. It is a native of China, Japan, Siberia, Asia Minor, Turkey, the Mediterranean countries, and central Asia. Its early history and origin are very obscure. However, records show that it was first introduced into Europe from Turkey in 1554, at which time seeds were brought to Vienna by the Austrian ambassador to Turkey, and soon tulips spread rapidly over Europe. Clusius, a Dutch botanist and horticulturist, developed on a large scale new varieties which he sold. The red and yellow tulip with the narrow pointed segments, a favorite of the Turks, was developed into broad, rounded, petaled forms of unusual color.

This anxiety for new varieties culminated in the year 1634 in the historic craze designated as "tulipomania," and during several subsequent years many Dutch fortunes were invested in bulbs and their culture, and vast sums were lost through speculation. Fabulous prices were paid for bulbs, as much as \$1,000 to \$4,000 each, until the government interfered. Holland nevertheless continued developing varieties for commercial purposes, and its tulips reached such a degree of perfection that to this day the Dutch bulbs are prized among gardeners.

Of interest to Chicagoans is the tulip festival held each spring at Holland, Michigan, a short drive from the city. This Michigan town was founded by Netherlanders and to this day has preserved much characteristic atmosphere of their homeland,

AN ODDITY AMONG MINERALS

BY L. BRYANT MATHER, JR.
ASSISTANT CURATOR OF MINERALOGY

It looks like lard—it feels like butter—it cuts like cheese—yet it is a *mineral* that can't be melted!

The material possessing these striking properties was received at Field Museum as a gift from Mr. Ben Hur Wilson of Joliet, Illinois. Mr. Wilson reports that it came from a locality near Agate on the Union Pacific Railroad, fifty miles from Barstow, California, where it is being worked for use in the ceramics industry. The mineral has locally been called "Eyrite," derived from the name of its discoverer, but preliminary study in the Museum laboratory indicates that it is sufficiently similar to *Saponite* (Dana No. 488) to be classified as a variety of that species. Chemically it is a hydrous silicate of magnesium with about 20 per cent water, and small amounts of lime, fluorine and alumina. When the mineral is heated, the water is given off and the lard-like appearance of the specimen is changed to a chalk-like one. It is distinguished from its distant relative *Sepiolite* (better known as "Meerschaum") from which fine pipes are carved, and which is likewise a hydrous magnesium silicate, by several tests. The most striking of these is its failure to display that characteristic property of *Sepiolite* of adhering to the tongue.

EARLIEST SPRING FLOWERS

Among garden plants the earliest to bloom in the spring are the snowdrop (*Galanthus nivalis*), usually with white flowers, and the squill (*Scilla sibirica* and *Scilla bifolia*), usually with blue flowers. These are dainty low-growing herbs only a few inches in height. Both the snowdrop and the squill are natives of the cooler parts of Europe and Asia Minor, the Siberian squill inhabiting Russia and Asia Minor, while the snowdrop is a native of Europe from the Pyrenees to the Caucasus Mountains. They were introduced into cultivation in the United States by the early New England settlers. In the Chicago region they usually bloom in March and early April.

The crocus also flowers very early, as do the daffodils and jonquils, but these come into bloom somewhat later than the snowdrop and the squill.

—J. A. S.

Sculpture, Inside and Out —by Malvina Hoffman

This, the latest book by the creator of the Races of Mankind sculptures in Field Museum, will be published April 3. The book is copiously illustrated. Regular edition \$3.75. De luxe autographed edition \$7.50. On sale at the BOOK SHOP of FIELD MUSEUM.



Mather, Bryant. 1939. "An Oddity Among Minerals." *Field Museum news* 10(4), 2-2.

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