

outdoors

Big fish can see better, eat more

By Lem Moscoe
outdoors writer

"Those who have, get" is more than a law of politics. It's a law of nature. Just ask a bluegill.

"Bigger fish have more neurons, or nerve cells, in their eyes," according to a team of researchers from the universities of Michigan and Rhode Island. They report these nerve cells help big fish spot tiny prey at a greater distance.

That's how the big fish beats the little fish to a meal. And how the big fish gets bigger.

CREDIT FOR this discovery goes to Prof. Stephen S. Easter of the University of Michigan and zoologists Nelson G. Hairston Jr. and Kao T. Li of Rhode Island.

They put hungry bluegills of various sizes into a 10-gallon drum baited with a daphnia, which is a crustacean about one-millimeter long. The aquarium was video-taped from above.

"We found that the larger fish could spot the daphnia when it was farther away," said Easter. "We think that both large and small fish will capture a prey if only they can see it."

"The fact that larger ones see it at a greater distance makes them better predators, because they will see the food before the smaller competitors."

AFTER THEIR laboratory meals, the bluegills wound up in the dissecting lab. The results, according to Easter:

"We discovered that the larger fish have more receptors than the smaller ones. The cones in the larger fish were packed more tightly than in the smaller fish, and this tight packing is thought to be responsible for the improved vision."

Anglers might dispute such a finding, particularly on a warm day when they catch a thousand four-inch panfish when they know full well the big ones are lurking somewhere. But who is an angler to dispute a scientist?

How did the zoologists get into this subject? Their work was supported by the federal government's National Eye Institute. It is part of a long-term study of the growth of the nervous systems of all animals.

If you think perhaps your eyes will get better with age, like a bluegill's, think again. "Most vertebrates cease to enlarge their nervous system beyond the embryo stage," said Easter, "but fish retinas continue to grow by adding on new neurons as the fish grow. Scientists have been puzzled as to why fish seem to be the exception to the rule."

So are fishermen.

INDEPENDENCE OAKS County Park has two nature programs the next two Saturdays.

"This Land Is Your Land," 10-11:30 March 19, allows families to explore county parks and learn about protected federal and state areas. Each family will receive a packet of materials to take home.

"Eggs-actly Right," 10-11:30 a.m. March 26, is a program on decorating Easter eggs with dyes made from natural materials. Candy Garbacz will demonstrate the technique. This is one of the few Oakland parks programs for which there is a fee — \$1.

Independence Oaks is on Sashabaw

Road 2½ miles north of I-75 near Clarkston. There is a vehicle admission charge of \$2.50 for Oakland residents. Preregister by calling the parks office at 858-0903 weekdays during business hours.

Metroparks programs are free. There is a \$2 vehicle admission at the gate, and the annual permit is \$7.



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EXHIBITION: Thursday, March 17 — 10 A.M. to 4 P.M.
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Sci-fi fans
to convene

The science fiction reviewer for the Chicago Sun-Times will be guest of honor at a science fiction convention Saturday and Sunday, March 26 and 27, in the Oakland Center of Oakland University, Avon Township.

Roland Green, who also wrote the "Wander" trilogy and co-authored "Janissaries Clan and Crown," will attend.

Sponsored by the student organization Order of Leibowitz, the convention will be held from 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. March 26 and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. March 27. Displays, movies, animation features, a masquerade ball and demonstrations are planned.

Hearing impaired
supported

Detroit Area Support for the Hard of Hearing (DASHH) is a self-help organization for all hearing-impaired persons. An afternoon and an evening meeting is scheduled each month in Livonia Senior Citizens Center to reach as many people as possible.

Membership is open to all hearing impaired and any persons interested in the welfare of the hearing impaired.

Inquiries are taken by Ann Fogle, 474-7659.

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Kids Enter Northland's SESAME STREET contest

Who's your favorite Sesame Street character? Is it Big Bird? Or maybe Oscar the Grouch?

Draw a picture of your favorite in the space below and enter it in our contest. You can use pencil, pen, crayons, paint or whatever. Our judges—members of the Sesarab Club—will award \$100, \$50 and \$25 Northland gift

certificates to the best pictures in each of three age groups: Up to 4 years old, 5, 6 and 7-year-olds and 8, 9 and 10-year-olds.

PLUS all those winners and a parent will get to attend a special party with Maria of Sesame Street.

AND—in a random drawing—20 more young artists will be picked to come to the party with a parent.

Bring your entry to Northland Center's office or mail it to the address shown.

ENTRIES MUST BE RECEIVED BY

APRIL 1, 1983.

Winning entries will be on display at Northland. Come see them...and meet Maria when she visits the Center April 6-8.

Appearances at 11:30, 3:30 and 6:30 each day.

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