

Field Museum News

Published Monthly by Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago

Vol. 1

NOVEMBER, 1930

No. 11

THE VERNAY-LANG EXPEDITION RETURNS FROM KALAHARI

Bringing collections remarkable for their size, variety and value, the Vernay-Lang Kalahari Expedition for Field Museum returned to this country in October. Its record of achievement places it among the most successful zoological expeditions ever sent to Africa.

The expedition, which was financed and led by Arthur S. Vernay of New York and London, with Herbert Lang, noted mammalogist, as co-leader, had been in Africa since the early part of the year. It brought back some 800 specimens of 90 species of mammals; 1,500 specimens of birds (330 species); 500 fish specimens; 1,000 lower invertebrates, and 25,000 insects. In addition, important collections of botanical specimens and ethnological material were obtained. Sharing with Field Museum in some of the results are the American Museum of Natural History, New York; the British Museum (Natural History), London; and the South African Museum, Pretoria, Union of South Africa.

Many of the specimens obtained represent exceedingly rare species, and when the collections have been fully checked over it is probable that numerous new species will be found. Much of the zoological material will be suitable for the preparation of groups. One item which Field Museum will receive consists of seven giraffes including a skeleton of a magnificent bull and an adult cow. Among other outstanding specimens are those of blesbok, black wildebeeste, brindled wildebeeste, red hartebeeste, gemsbok, springbok, steinbok, eland, sassaby, Ngamiland lechwe, impala, brown hyena, reedbuck, sable, Burchell's zebra, Duiker, roan, kudu, aardvark, leopard, lion, puku, serval, wild dog, and wart hog.

The personnel of the expedition, in addition to Messrs. Vernay and Lang, included some thirty men, among them Allan Chapman; Dr. A. W. Rogers, Director of the Union Geological Survey of South Africa; and scientists from the Pretoria Museum. Valuable assistance and cooperation were extended by Captain B. E. H. Clifford, Imperial Secretary at Pretoria, and various other resident officials.

The expedition in the course of its work crossed the Kalahari Desert, and hunted along the Botletle River in the British protectorate of Bechuanaland. Mr. Lang and some other members of the expedition re-

mained in Africa for further work after the departure of Mr. Vernay.

Wood Distillation Products

The Department of Botany has placed on exhibition in Hall 28, devoted to plant economics, a series of the products obtained by the destructive distillation of hard woods (such as beech, birch, maple) and of soft woods (such as pine), and also those obtained by the steam distillation of soft woods.

CAPTAIN WHITE, MAJOR COATS OBTAIN BONGO GROUP

Five specimens of the bongo, one of Africa's rarest antelopes, have been secured for Field Museum, according to cabled information received last month from Captain Harold A. White. The bongo is a giant beast of reddish brown color with numerous vertical white stripes on its body. The specimens obtained will be used in the preparation of a large habitat group in Akeley Memorial Hall.

Captain White, well-known sportsman of New York, is in central Africa with Major John Coats of Ayrshire, Scotland, on an expedition organized to hunt only certain extremely rare animals for the Museum. Messrs. White and Coats were co-leaders of a previous Field Museum expedition to Abyssinia.

The bongo group was the most important objective of the present expedition, and the success reported is extremely gratifying. For years the Museum has desired specimens of this animal, and many of the zoological expeditions it has dispatched to Africa have had the bongo on their lists of desiderata, but were unable to secure it. Captain White cabled that before the animals were shot he managed to make the first photographs, still and motion, ever made of the living bongo. One of the five specimens is a huge bull near to the record size, he reports.

Hunting the bongo is an extremely difficult task, according to Dr. Wilfred H. Osgood, Curator of Zoology. Hunters tracking it usually must crawl on hands and knees for long distances through the dense wet forest areas on the higher mountains in the central part of the continent. Mount Kenya and neighboring mountains as well as the great West African rain forest are included in the animal's habitat.

Full-grown bongos weigh from 400 to 600 pounds. Their coloring is beautiful and striking. The conspicuous white stripes on the bright tawny body are somewhat wider spaced than those of a zebra. The bongo has black feet, and spirally curved black horns with white tips.

The expedition is now continuing its hunt for other unusual animals, Captain White's cablegram stated.

There are eighty-four models of Chinese pagodas on exhibition in the South Gallery overlooking Stanley Field Hall. They were made by Chinese orphans in the Jesuit Institution of Sicawei.

THANKSGIVING BIRDS IN THE WILD



This habitat group of wild turkeys, in Hall 20 of the Museum, represents a scene once common in many parts of the United States, but now restricted to limited areas as the wild turkey is rapidly vanishing from our forests. Once these birds flourished in the Chicago area and throughout the eastern and southern parts of this country. Their disappearance points a lesson in conservation (see editorial on page 2). The group is a gift to the Museum from President Stanley Field.

UNLABELED FOSSILS

By H. W. NICHOLS
Associate Curator of Geology

The floor of Stanley Field Hall and the treads of the stairways to the second floor of Field Museum are tiled with marble from Carthage, Missouri. This marble was formed in a sea of Mississippian age, more than 300,000,000 years ago. Numerous fossils of the animals that lived in that sea appear on the face of the tiles. Most of them are shells, somewhat obscurely displayed as they have nearly the same color as the marble, but very distinct when once seen.

A less numerous group of fossils is more plainly seen, as their white color contrasts with the darker marble. These are thin rods with thin wide flanges wound spirally around them after the manner of screw-threads. They are the skeletons of colonies of minute animals (Bryozoa) which, for some unknown reason, always grew in this spiral form. These fossils have been named Archimedes after the Greek philosopher who first used such a screw form for raising water.



Nichols, Henry W. 1930. "Unlabeled Fossils." *Field Museum news* 1(11), 1-1.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/25724>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/329527>

Holding Institution

Field Museum of Natural History Library

Sponsored by

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: In copyright. Digitized with the permission of the Chicago Field Museum.

For information contact dcc@library.uiuc.edu.

Rights Holder: Field Museum of Natural History

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.