

# Field Museum News

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## ROOSEVELTS' GIANT PANDA GROUP INSTALLED IN WILLIAM V. KELLEY HALL

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The outstanding feature of the William V. Kelley-Roosevelts Expedition to Eastern Asia for Field Museum was the obtaining of a complete and perfect specimen of the peculiar animal known as the giant panda or great panda. In popular accounts this rare beast has been described as an animal with a face like a raccoon, a body like a bear, and feet like a cat. Although these characterizations are not scientifically accurate, all of them have some basis in fact, and it might even be added that its teeth have certain slight resemblances to those of a pig. It is small wonder then that the animal is of unusual interest, quite aside from its rarity and its striking coloration.

It was discovered some sixty years ago by Père Armand David, a French missionary stationed in the Mouping district of western China. A skin and skull were sent at that time to the Paris Museum of Natural History where they were figured and described under the name *Ailuropus melanoleucus* by the famous zoologist Alphonse Milne-Edwards. In later years, reports of the animal were received occasionally. Natives collected some imperfect skins, mostly without skulls or other bones, and at rare intervals these were shipped out and acquired by a few of the larger museums of the world.

So far as known, up to 1928 the animal had never been successfully hunted by white men. It inhabited a remote region difficult of access, and even in its home grounds it was evidently rare and difficult to find. It was therefore exactly the sort of animal to excite the interest of Colonel Theodore Roosevelt and Kermit Roosevelt when planning their recent expedition through Central Asia. At one of the last

conferences with them at Field Museum while the expedition was being organized, although it was agreed that a giant panda would furnish a most satisfactory climax for their efforts, the chance of getting one was considered so small it was thought best to make no announcement concerning it when they started. There were other less spectacular animals to be hunted, the obtaining of which would be a sufficient measure of success, so the placing of advance emphasis

be superficial, and it was then transferred to the group which includes the raccoons and allies, one of which was the little panda, or common panda, which is also Asiatic in distribution. Still later, an independent position was advocated for it, in which it became the sole living representative of a distinct family of mammals. Preliminary examination of the complete skeleton obtained by the Roosevelts seems to indicate that more careful study will substantiate this last view.

The giant panda is a giant only by comparison with its supposed relative, the little panda, which is long-tailed and about the size of a small fox. The so-called giant is in reality smaller than most bears and probably does not exceed 150 pounds in weight. Skins obtained from natives often are stretched so as to give a false impression of size. The specimen taken by the Roosevelts is a full grown male, and the measurements taken before it was skinned as well as those provided by the skeleton indicate that the animal had a length of about four feet and a shoulder height of twenty-eight inches.

In the group which has just been opened to view in William V.



The Giant Panda (Hall 17)—William V. Kelley-Roosevelts Expedition

on the giant panda would have been to invite an unwarranted public interpretation of failure in case the one great rarity was not secured. The Roosevelts' habit of success, however, did not fail them, and they have brought to Field Museum not the only giant panda specimen in the world, as some accounts have stated, but the only complete and perfect one and the only one killed by white men.

Owing to the lack of complete skeletal material in the past, the exact systematic position of the panda has been somewhat doubtful. It was at first classified with the bears and called the parti-colored bear, but its external resemblance to bears proved to

Kelley Hall (Hall 17) two pandas are shown, one being the specimen killed by the Roosevelts. The other specimen was prepared from a skin obtained by them from natives. The animals are shown in their favorite habitat of bamboo thickets which in western China are found growing at altitudes up to 10,000 feet or more. One of them is seen feeding on the twigs and stalks of bamboo which seem to furnish their principal diet, and for crushing and chewing which their extraordinarily heavy teeth have doubtless been developed. The animals have been skillfully prepared by Taxidermist Julius Friesser, and a background of unusual beauty has been painted by Staff Artist Charles A. Corwin.

### Work Resumed at Kish

Excavations on the site of the ancient city of Kish, near Babylon, have been resumed by the Field Museum-Oxford University Joint Expedition to Mesopotamia, it is reported by Professor Stephen Langdon, director of the expedition. This is the eighth season of the expedition's operations. L. C. Watelin is again in charge of field work. About 300 men will be employed in the excavating work this season.

At the end of the last period of work the diggers had penetrated into strata bearing marks of ancient floods, and had traced the

history of Kish back beyond 4000 B.C. The expedition is financed by Marshall Field on behalf of Field Museum, and by Herbert Weld and others on behalf of Oxford.

### Trustee Markham Is Dead

With deep regret Field Museum records the death of one of its Trustees, Charles H. Markham. Mr. Markham died on November 24, 1930, at his winter home at Altadena, California. He was 69 years old, and had been a member of the Board of Trustees since 1924.

### Komodo Lizard Exhibited

An exhibit of the giant dragon-lizard of Komodo, Dutch East Indies, is now on view in Albert W. Harris Hall (Hall 18). It was prepared from one of the specimens obtained by the Chancellor-Stuart-Field Museum Expedition to the South Pacific, 1929. This is the largest extant species of lizard, and one of the rarest, being found nowhere in the world except in the islands of Komodo and Flores of the Lesser Sunda group, east of Java. A picture of the exhibit, and a more detailed article on it, will appear in a subsequent issue of FIELD MUSEUM NEWS.



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