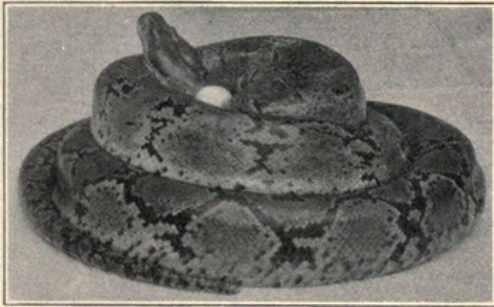


THE RETICULATED PYTHON ADDED TO EXHIBITS

BY KARL P. SCHMIDT
Assistant Curator of Reptiles

The Old World pythons include the largest extant species of snakes, and of them all the reticulated python of the East Indies is much the largest. This form is said to reach a length of thirty-five feet, while specimens twenty-five feet long or more are impressively gigantic snakes. An example twenty-six feet long, collected on the Ogan River in Sumatra by the Chancellor-Stuart-Field Museum Expedition to the South Pacific in 1929, is the subject of an exhibit recently completed and installed in Albert W. Harris Hall (Hall 18) at Field Museum.

The reticulated python is distinctively a forest creature. It lies stretched out on the lower limbs of trees, and captures for food both the tree-dwelling monkeys and the



Reticulated Python

The specimen, when taken, concealed a clutch of 82 eggs in her coils. A few of these are shown in the exhibit.

terrestrial pigs, deer and other forest animals. Like the boas, pythons are powerful constrictors, and kill their prey by the crushing action of their coils.

Unlike the American boa constrictors, which bring forth living young, the pythons are egg-laying snakes. The mother snake coils herself compactly around her eggs and remains with them until they hatch. This habit evidently protects the eggs from marauding egg-eating animals, such as monitor lizards and mongooses, which abound in the Malayan forests. The first of the young snakes to hatch may even return to their eggshells for a few days for shelter until the whole mass is abandoned by the parent snake. Very few other species of snakes care for their eggs in this manner.

The Museum's exhibit is a reproduction in cellulose-acetate of the twenty-six foot specimen obtained by the Chancellor Expedition. The expedition, which was financed and led by Philip M. Chancellor of Santa Barbara, California, brought the Museum a second specimen only slightly shorter than the other. The reproduction was made by Taxidermist Leon L. Walters, who has developed a special process for this type of work.

EXPEDITION TO SOUTHWEST RESUMES OPERATIONS

The Field Museum Expedition to the Southwest, which worked through the summer of 1930 (see FIELD MUSEUM NEWS, June, July, September, November, 1930) has resumed operations for the season of 1931. Led by Dr. Paul S. Martin, Assistant Curator of North American Archaeology, it left Chicago late in May to continue work on the site of the Lowry ruin in southwestern Colorado, upon which extensive excavations were made last year. The expedition is financed from income derived from the Julius and Augusta Rosenwald Fund.

En route to Colorado, Dr. Martin, accompanied by Modeler John G. Prasuhn of the

Department of Anthropology, made a special trip, financed from the Marshall Field Fund, to the Dakota Indian reservation at Pine Ridge, South Dakota. This trip was for the purpose of obtaining casts, sketches, and data to be used in the construction of a projected life-size group for Hall 5, devoted to the Indian Tribes of the Great Plains.

The first few weeks of work on the Lowry ruin will be devoted to the continuation of the preservation of the rooms which were examined last year. The walls of these rooms were found to be in excellent condition, but since the individual stones are held in place by mud mortar only, it is necessary to protect the mortar from weathering and disintegration by capping the top courses of masonry with cement, and to point with cement the lower courses so that the mud will not wash out. Walls cared for in this manner will stand indefinitely, but if left unprotected will tumble down in four or five years. Of course, when the Indians inhabited this large village, they probably applied fresh mud mortar every season. After the abandonment of the site, the wooden roofs, while they lasted, prevented rains and snows from damaging the interiors, while drifting sand soon blew around the exterior of the rooms, thus happily preserving the pueblo for modern study.

When the walls have all been properly cared for, excavations will be resumed. It is hoped this season to continue work in one of the smaller kivas and perhaps in the large kiva. A kiva is a subterranean, ceremonial chamber, wherein many sacred rites were performed, and it is perhaps the most important single portion of any village of the southwest, as its origins may reach back into considerable antiquity.

Likewise, some digging will be done in the secular or living quarters, with a view of gaining more knowledge of the everyday life of the ordinary individual. It is in the living quarters that one is more likely to find wooden roof beams, by the tree rings of which the pueblo may be approximately dated.

One of the most puzzling problems of the Lowry ruin is the fact that no burial ground has yet been discovered. The village must have been occupied for some time, perhaps a century or more, and yet not a single grave has been found. Since it is from burial mounds and rubbish heaps that archaeologists glean most of their knowledge of the past, further search will be made for the burial ground of the Lowry ruin.

Hebrew Educator at Museum

Arrangements for cooperation between the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Field Museum were completed during a visit to the Museum made by Dr. Julius Magnes, president of the university, on May 8. Dr. Magnes consulted with members of the scientific staff, and formulated plans for exchange of specimens and publications between the two institutions.

Lectures for Girl Scouts

A group of Girl Scouts from Oak Park and Berwyn, under the leadership of Mrs. A. J. Kudrna, was given a course of lectures on nature study last month by lecturers of the James Nelson and Anna Louise Raymond Foundation for Public School and Children's Lectures. Classes were held in the Museum on four Saturdays, and talks given covered the birds, trees, wild flowers and mammals of the Chicago area. The course was designed to equip the girls to pass examinations for special scout honors.

RARE IDOL-LIKE FIGURE FROM ILLINOIS MOUND

BY PAUL S. MARTIN

Assistant Curator of North American Archaeology

In 1900, Field Museum purchased, along with some pottery and other archaeological material, a stone "idol," carved from a piece of fluorite. This figure is now on display in Mary D. Sturges Hall (Hall 3). It was excavated in 1873 from an Indian burial mound by Thomas M. Perrine, near Anna, Union County, in southern Illinois. Since then it has become famous and is known as the "Perrine image."

The figure represents the work of the ancient mound builders. Few such elaborately carved pieces have been found by archaeologists in Illinois. The idol represents a human figure, seated with the right knee drawn up by the right hand towards the chin, and the left leg folded under the body. It is twelve inches high, and weighs forty-two pounds.

The carving of the features is executed with remarkable skill, and is quite modern in conception, although it is estimated the figure must have been made about 1,000 years ago, long before any Europeans set foot in America. It is similar in proportions and style to other stone figures and effigy



The "Perrine Image"

Prehistoric figure carved in fluorite, from an Indian burial mound in southern Illinois.

pottery which have been excavated at various places in the Mississippi-Ohio area, and illustrates well the highly developed art of the prehistoric Indians.

Japanese Royalty Visits Museum

Their Imperial Highnesses, Prince and Princess Takamatsu of Japan, attended by their suite, were visitors at Field Museum on May 12. They were received by the Director, and conducted on a tour of some of the most interesting exhibits. Other members of the party were Commander T. Yamagata, Master of Ceremonies; Madame Ochiai, Lady-in-Waiting; S. Kato, Counsellor of the Japanese Embassy at Washington; Dr. T. Sakamoto, physician; Lieutenant-Commander K. Midzuno, Aide-de-Camp; Yoshio Muto, Japanese Consul at Chicago, and Commander Zacharias, United States Navy.



Schmidt, Karl Patterson. 1931. "The Reticulated Python Added to Exhibits."
Field Museum news 2(6), 3–3.

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