

COLORADO EXPEDITION UNEARTHES RARE FOSSIL SPECIMENS

A valuable collection of fossil mammals and reptiles has been brought to Field Museum by Bryan Patterson, Assistant in Paleontology in the Department of Geology, who has returned from an expedition conducted under his leadership in western Colorado during the past summer. Mr. Patterson was accompanied by James H. Quinn and Clayton A. Quinn.

Among the specimens obtained are skulls and parts of the skeleton of an animal that has hitherto been one of the rarest of fossil mammals. This creature, known as *Titanoides*, is a representative of the Amblypoda, an extinct order of primitive hoofed mammals. The history of the discovery of the animal is an example of the slow growth of our knowledge of fossil vertebrates, according to Elmer S. Riggs, Associate Curator of Paleontology.

In 1917 *Titanoides* was named on the basis of a fragment of lower jaw from North Dakota. In 1930 other fragments of lower jaw were described from Wyoming. In 1931 there was presented to the Museum, by E. B. Faber of Grand Junction, Colorado, another broken lower jaw which he had found in his vicinity.

As a result of the interest aroused by these specimens, a party from the Museum visited this region in the summer of 1932. The collections obtained, consisting of lower jaws, a distorted skull, and leg and foot bones, added to the knowledge of the animal's structure, but were insufficient to permit an adequate conception of the entire skeleton. With the specimens just secured it is hoped that it will now be possible to add a mounted skeleton of *Titanoides* to the Museum's exhibition series.

BIRDS-OF-PARADISE

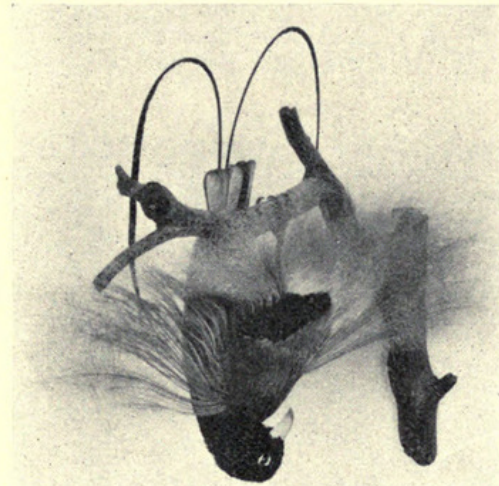
BY RUDYERD BOULTON
Assistant Curator of Birds

It is a far cry from a somberly hued raven to an exotic king bird-of-paradise, yet these two birds are really first cousins. The family of ravens, crows, and jays has a world-wide range, while birds-of-paradise are found only in New Guinea and near-by islands. They are well named, for in many respects they are not exceeded by any other group of birds for sheer beauty and intricate ornamentation. The first specimens of these birds to reach Europe lacked the wings and feet. Legends arose that the beautiful plumes of the flanks supported them in the air, and that they needed no feet for they spent their lives in flight, continually turning their breasts to the sun.

Field Museum has recently placed on exhibition in the systematic series of exotic birds in Hall 21 a screen showing paradise birds together with some of their nearest relatives. Crows and jays, because of their close relationship, are well represented by specimens from every part of their world-wide range. Chickadees, creepers, and nuthatches are families of more distant kinship that fit into the complicated scheme of the evolution of this group of birds. At the other end of the series, orioles from the Old World, drongos from India and cuckoo-shrikes from Malaysia complete the picture of the relationships of these birds. All of them are true song birds, and while they compose the most highly specialized major group, they are relatively low down in the scale of evolution. The most primitive members of the group, larks and swallows, are shown near-by.

While crows and jays have become adapted to living under all sorts of conditions and in all parts of the world, the same tendency towards specialization has caused paradise birds to develop fantastic courtship dances and complicated ornamental plumes. Prince Rudolph's blue bird-of-paradise is shown in courtship display, the delicate form of its nuptial plumes bearing marvelous pastel shades of blue, mauve, lilac, and maroon. During the display, which lasts for several minutes, it swings upside down from a branch, quivering its plumes in an ecstasy of sheer abandon (see accompanying illustration). Other resplendently beautiful specimens are the gorgetted, the king, the superb, the magnificent and the great bird-of-paradise.

Many of Field Museum's expeditions of recent years have contributed specimens to this exhibit. Among them are the Crane



Blue Bird-of-Paradise

This, the most ornate species of all, shown in full nuptial display, hanging upside down on a branch, its habitual position during courtship.

Pacific Expedition, the Kelley-Roosevelts Asiatic Expedition, the Suydam Cutting Sikkim Expedition and the *Chicago Daily News* Abyssinian Expedition.

John W. Moyer of the Museum's taxidermy staff prepared the exhibit.

MUSEUM READY TO DISPOSE OF SURPLUS TOTEMS

Its own exhibited collection complete with some thirty totems displayed in Hall 10, Field Museum is able to offer at this time a rare opportunity to other institutions or private collectors to obtain original totem poles, potlatch figures, and houseposts of the Northwest Coast Indians. The Museum has about a dozen extra examples which, on account of lack of space, cannot be exhibited. As the Canadian government now has an export ban on these objects, the Museum's surplus collection comprises probably all the specimens now obtainable in this country.

These totems have been on exhibition this summer at the American Indian Village at A Century of Progress Exposition. They are all excellent specimens, well preserved, and most of them are probably more than one hundred years old. They range from six and one-half feet to forty-eight feet in height. Among the tribes whose work is represented are the Kwakiutl and Haida.

Negotiations are solicited regarding the disposal of these objects. Any institution or individual desiring further information is invited to communicate with the Director of Field Museum.

LARGE AUSTRALIAN COLLECTION PLACED ON EXHIBITION

BY WILFRID D. HAMBLBY
Assistant Curator of African Ethnology

What is probably the largest and most complete collection in this country representing the ethnology of the aboriginal tribes of Australia has just been placed on exhibition, for the first time, in Hall A1.

The Australian aborigines, numbering about 50,000 people scattered over a continent as large as the United States, are of special interest because they are still living in a stone age state of culture, lacking all knowledge of the use of metals.

The Australian tribes make no pottery, have no musical instruments, wear no clothing, and have no dwelling houses except temporary shelters. However, they show a remarkable ingenuity in manufacturing tools, weapons and ornaments from stone, bone, wood, sinew and gum.

As illustrated in the Museum collection, stone, and even bottle glass when available, are chipped and flaked into spearheads of narrow leaf shape, with small serrations. The flaking of these regular notches, which look like the fine teeth of a saw, calls for the highest skill. For carving wooden spears, some of which are elaborately barbed, stone implements are used, and tools of the same kind are employed for shaping boomerangs, clubs and spear-throwers—wooden devices used to extend the length of the arm and give greater power to the thrust of a spear.

Boomerangs in the exhibit demonstrate that, contrary to popular belief, the well-known returning boomerang, which is made with a twist, is only a plaything, rather than a weapon, whereas the form used in hunting and warfare is of the non-returning variety, which is flat.

Personal ornament is of a simple kind. It consists of opossum and kangaroo sinew, along with shredded bark and human hair, all of which are plaited into objects for wear upon the neck, arms and forehead. Usually these ornaments, and in fact most other objects as well, are rubbed with red ochre. Shells and brightly colored seeds are popular for decoration. Several handsome strings of small blue shells such as were worn by the extinct Tasmanians, are on exhibition.

Magic plays an important part in the lives of Australian aborigines, as is illustrated in the Museum exhibit by a number of "pointing sticks" and "pointing bones" which, when secretly jabbed in the direction of an enemy who is meanwhile cursed, are believed actually to enter his body. Also shown are shoes made of emu feathers, which are believed to be magically potent in leading the wearer on the track of his enemy.

Ghosts are greatly feared, and because the belief prevails that disembodied spirits haunt the living to observe whether the mourning ceremonies are carefully carried out, widows are required to sit for days beside the grave of a deceased husband. As the people are polygamous, several widows may be found at one man's grave. They shave their heads and cover their bodies with white clay. Daily they give a covering of lime to their heads, which in the course of weeks accumulates into a heavy widow's cap, an excellent example of which is shown in the exhibit.

Other features of the exhibit include message sticks carried by messengers to serve as passports when traveling in the territory restricted to tribes other than their own, a totem pole wound around with down and human hair, shields, spears, implements, and other artifacts.



Boulton, Rudyerd. 1933. "Birds- of- Paradise." *Field Museum news* 4(11), 3–3.

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