

BIRDS OF PREY RECEIVED

Trustee Leslie Wheeler has recently acquired for the Museum a number of birds of prey of great interest. One hundred and twenty-one specimens of hawks and owls from all parts of the world were carefully selected from a dealer's collection in London to fill gaps in the Museum's already notable collection. Fifty-nine species of hawks, represented by ninety-nine specimens, form a part of this recent acquisition. Among these, there are fifteen species and twenty-three geographical races not previously represented in the study collections, ranging from a pair of spotted eagles from the Balkans and a sea eagle from Japan to a pygmy falcon from east Africa.

The prizes of the collection are a pair of rare falcons, *Spizapteryx*, meaning "sparrow-winged," from Argentina, which add a genus not previously in Field Museum's collections. There are also twenty-two owls belonging to twelve species, of which four species and five geographical races are new to the collection. Many rare birds from Madagascar, eastern Asia, Africa and South America are also included. —R.B.

MISTLETOE

By B. E. DAHLGREN

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Thanks to an old English custom, deriving apparently from ancient Druid or Norse mythology, everyone is familiar with mistletoe which, like holly, is used at Christmas as a special festive decoration for the house. The mistle employed for this purpose in Europe differs from any American species but is sufficiently similar in general appearance to be instantly recognized as mistletoe. The jointed green stem, the pale or yellowish green thick leaves in alternating pairs, the clusters of small waxy white berries in the axils, suffice to make most of the northern mistles unmistakable, though in various particulars the species differ considerably from each other, some even being leafless or having the leaves reduced to small scales.

It would be a mistake, however, to assume, on the strength of this, that the mistles of other parts of the world are equally similar in appearance. More than 800 species are known and many of them, especially in the tropics where they are most numerous, present a very different aspect. Some have clusters of showy flowers, up to several inches in length, orange yellow to bright red in color, and violet-black or purple fruit, in some instances as large as olives.

A branch of a tropical species of mistle has recently been added to the exhibits in the Hall of Plant Life (Hall 29). This new addition is a faithful reproduction of a specimen obtained by the Marshall Field Botanical Expedition to the Amazon (1929) at a locality not far from the Ford Rubber Plantation on the Tapajoz River in Brazil. At the time of collection it was in flower and fruit as shown in the accompanying photograph. It was one of many clumps of mistle providing the major part of green foliage on a rather small tree, apparently greatly hampered in its growth by its bright-flowered parasitic inhabitants.

The parasitic habit is shared by almost all known species of mistletoe. Their berries are eaten by birds which, in cleaning their bills or otherwise, lodge the sticky seeds on the branches of trees. There germination takes place and the young plants attach themselves, either by a special disk or by sending penetrating root-like

suckers through the bark. Various vernacular names meaning "bird-plant" and "bird-graft" have reference to this well-known mode of dissemination. In places where a wire fence exists near a mistletoe-laden tree, rows of seedlings may often be seen sprouting on the wire where they can have but a short existence. Normally the young mistletoe plant is assured from the beginning a favorable perch and a quota of nourishment from the sap of the host.

Though parasitic, the mistles are, however, never completely dependent on their host. As indicated by their green leaves they are only semi-parasites and manufacture for themselves a great part of their food, which is to their credit but does not prevent them from becoming in many



Brazilian Mistletoe

This, like other tropical species, differs greatly from the familiar Christmas mistletoe. Exhibited in the Hall of Plant Life.

places a serious pest. Northern species growing on conifers produce the abnormal formations called "witch's broom." One tropical species with long vine-like branches, commonly called "bird-vine" or "priest-vine," is a well-known, formidable nuisance on chocolate plantations.

A few of the mistles do not share the perching habit of their kind but grow on the ground where, at least in their adult stage, they are independent. Some tropical American and Australian species grow as trees reaching thirty feet or more in height. One of these, flowering with a profusion of bloom at Christmas time, is used in Australia as a Christmas tree.

Museum Open 9 to 5 in April

From April 1 to 30 visiting hours at Field Museum will be from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. instead of 4:30. From May 1 to September 2 (Labor Day) the hours will be 9 A.M. to 6 P.M.

Director's Report Goes to Press

The 1934 Annual Report of the Director of Field Museum to the Board of Trustees is now in process of printing by Field Museum Press. Distribution of copies to Members of the Museum may be expected to begin at an early date. The detailed review of the activities of the Museum for the year, by Director Stephen C. Simms, makes a book of 144 pages. It is illustrated with twelve photogravure plates.

ANIMALS FROM BARBADOS

Stewart J. Walpole, of Park Ridge, Illinois, has presented to Field Museum some interesting specimens of bats, frogs, and lizards which he collected during a recent visit to the island of Barbados, West Indies.

Of ten bats, one represents a species very rare in collections, and confined in distribution to this island. Another bat is related to a widespread West Indian form never before found on Barbados. Mr. Walpole reports that these bats do considerable damage to small orchards.

One of the lizards represents another animal new to the fauna of Barbados. It is remarkable to find in this collection two animals new to the island, as the fauna of Barbados is fairly well known. —C.C.S.

ANCIENT PERUVIAN "MUMMIES" AND GRAVES SHOWN

An exhibit of so-called "mummies," and reproductions of two opened graves of ancient Peru, was recently completed in the hall of South American archaeology (Hall 9). The mummies, which differ greatly from those of Egypt, are more accurately described as desiccated bodies. These were packed in bundles which were found buried at a depth of several feet in the famous necropolis or burying ground of Ancon, Peru.

Two of the mummy packs have been opened, revealing the bodies inside. They are in a good state of preservation, which is attributed by J. Eric Thompson, former Assistant Curator of Central and South American Archaeology, to the extreme aridity of the coastal plains of Peru where they were buried. The majority of Peruvian mummies were not artificially preserved, but in some cases the bodies were eviscerated, while in others resin was applied as a preservative. On the forehead of one of those in the exhibit traces of red paint or powder can be seen.

The graves which have been reproduced in the Museum date to the period about A.D. 1250. One contains three mummy bundles, apparently two women and a small child. The sex of the two adults is indicated by women's work baskets which were buried with them, and which appear among the contents of the grave as now exhibited. Bags of coca leaves, which the ancient Peruvians chewed as a stimulant, silver ornaments, spindles, and other objects are also included in the grave.

The second grave was covered by a roof two feet below the surface of the ground. This roof, now shown in the exhibit, was elaborately constructed, and is among the best preserved ones found at Ancon. It consists of three inches of hard white clay, beneath which are a layer of plant leaves, two mats of reeds, and rafters of algarroba wood. The grave contains a large mummy wrapped in fine garments, with a false head. Sacks, painted tablets, and clay and gourd vessels are arranged around the body in the positions in which they were found when the grave was opened. Most of the bodies in Ancon graves are buried in a flexed position so that the knees almost touch the chin. Mummy-packs with false heads usually contained the remains of persons who were regarded as important during life.

Skeletons of the extinct European cave bear and the sabertooth tiger, two of the most formidable natural enemies of primitive man, are on exhibition in Ernest R. Graham Hall (Hall 38).



Dahlgren, B. E. 1935. "Mistletoe." *Field Museum news* 6(4), 3–3.

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