

EXHIBIT OF EXTINCT NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS POINTS LESSON ON CONSERVATION NEED

BY RUDYERD BOULTON
Assistant Curator of Birds

The animal population of the world normally undergoes a slow and gradual change. Species that are unadaptable to



Exterminated in 1932

The heath hen, one of the first birds known to the American colonists. Its recent extinction is an example of the need of active conservation measures.

changed conditions die off and other more plastic forms evolve to fill the environmental niche that they have vacated. With the dominance of the Mechanical Age on the earth, man has become a potent factor in the extinction of certain wild animals.

An exhibit of extinct North American birds, recently installed in Hall 21, graphically demonstrates this tendency. Eight of the twelve species of birds known to have become extinct in historic times are shown. The great auk, which is represented in the

exhibit by a replica (of which a photograph appeared in the December, 1934, issue of FIELD MUSEUM NEWS), disappeared in 1844 as a result of persecution by fishermen. They used the eggs for food, boiled the bodies for their oil, and used the flesh for codfish bait. The great auk was flightless and was perfectly adapted to a very specialized routine of life. It avoided potential natural enemies by the simple device of nesting only on isolated rocky islands. It was not adapted to resist continued persecution by man.

The Labrador duck is represented by a splendid male formerly in the collection of the late Mr. Charles B. Cory, once Curator of Birds at Field Museum. This species became extinct in 1878 for reasons that have never definitely been determined. From the form of its bill, it obviously had very specialized feeding habits. It had a restricted winter range along the New England coast, and was undoubtedly one of the first species to suffer from excessive hunting.

The other ten extinct species, of which six are shown in the exhibit, existed until the turn of the twentieth century. The Carolina parakeet was last seen in Florida in 1904. It disappeared due to an excessive demand for caged birds.

The heath hen, for more than a century limited to a small colony on the island of Martha's Vineyard, formerly ranged over most of the northern Atlantic coastal plain. It became extinct in 1932. It is interesting to note that, one year after the close of the American Revolution, a law was passed on Long Island protecting the heath hen during its nesting season. After several years of effort, the protective committee was dissolved because the law was flagrantly disregarded. The difficulty of enforcing game laws was discouraging 150 years ago even as it is now.

The passenger pigeon, last seen in 1907, the Guadalupe flicker and the Guadalupe petrel, which disappeared in 1906, and the Eskimo curlew, exterminated in 1925, are the other four unfortunate birds which complete the exhibit. Their extinction affords examples which, if sufficient heed be taken, may have the effect of saving others whose existence is threatened.

The remaining four extinct birds of North America, not shown in the exhibit, are the Guadalupe caracara, the Guadalupe wren,



Wiped Out by Pet Market

The Carolina parakeet. This bird, and its close relative, the Louisiana parakeet, were the only parrots native to the United States. Demand for caged birds brought their extinction by 1904.

the Bermuda petrel and the Louisiana parakeet. The exhibit was installed by Staff Taxidermist Ashley Hine, to whose talent was entrusted the difficult task of preparing these old and priceless specimens.

SOUTH AMERICA ANTHROPOLOGY EXHIBITS COMPLETED

Reinstallation of the exhibits in Hall 9, the hall of South American archaeology and ethnology, was recently completed. Much new material has been added to this hall illustrating the lives of the principal Indian tribes of South America, both those of the past and those of the present time.

Among the important collections representing present-day tribes are those from the Chaco Indians and the Jivaro, the latter of whom inhabit the forests of eastern Ecuador and are noted for their practice of shrinking the heads of their enemies. Several such shrunken human heads are exhibited. There is also a large exhibit pertaining to the culture of the tribes of the northwest Amazon, Orinoco Basin, and Guiana regions. Of special interest are exhibits showing the preparation of food from the poisonous mandioca tuber, and the sacred trumpets used in initiation rites.

The archaeological exhibits demonstrate the high culture of the inhabitants of the west coast of South America before Columbus reached this hemisphere. The civilization of the aboriginals of Colombia is well illustrated by collections of gold, pottery, shell and stone work. There are several cases of artistic pottery dating from pre-Inca times, dug up in the Chimu district on the Peruvian coast. Noteworthy are a number of so-called "mummies" or desiccated bodies and reproductions of graves in which they were found. Another section of the

hall is devoted to the little-known Diaguita culture which flourished in early times in northwestern Argentina, and the adjacent cultures of pre-Hispanic Chile.

SKULLS OF RARE BATS ARE FOUND IN ETHNOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS

BY COLIN C. SANBORN
Assistant Curator of Mammals

It is a custom of many tribes in various parts of the world to save the skulls of animals which they kill for food. These are usually hung to the ceilings of their houses where they become blackened by the smoke of the cooking fires. The smaller skulls are fastened in rows on short sticks. The skulls are saved, not only to show the ability of the hunter, but because it is believed that they will aid him in killing more of the animals.

Three such sticks holding bats' skulls were collected in Luzon in 1909 by Director Stephen C. Simms (then Assistant Curator of Ethnology), while he was leader of the Robert F. Cummings Expedition to the Philippines. A recent examination of these skulls by the Division of Mammals shows that five kinds of bats are represented, including six specimens of the very rare Jagor's Bat (*Ptenochirus jagori* Peters). This bat was discovered in 1861 in south Luzon by Mr. F. Jagor. It has since been found in other islands of the Philippines but never in any numbers and has always been rare in collections, especially in this country.

The skull of another rare bat was found decorating the head of a lime spatula collected in 1908 in New Guinea by the late Dr. George A. Dorsey, then Curator of Anthropology. This skull represents a bat known from one specimen collected on the Cornelius Crane Pacific Expedition, which became the type of a new species (*Pteropus sepikensis* Sanborn). It is a very large fruit eating bat, often called flying fox, with a wing spread of more than five feet.

These skulls have been transferred from the Department of Anthropology to the Department of Zoology.

TEAPOTS THAT FUNCTION LIKE THERMOS BOTTLES

Some examples of the Chinese equivalent of thermos bottles are included in an exhibit recently added to Hall 32 (West Gallery). These consist of wickerware baskets with heavily padded interiors, fitted with porcelain teapots. It is said that they are as efficient in keeping tea or other liquids hot as the vacuum bottles used in this country. The spout of the teapot projects through a perforation in the lock of the basket, making it possible to pour without removing the pot. The baskets are fastened with a brass hook in the form of a fish, the tail of which fits into a loop. Although the thermos bottle was invented in England, as recently as 1907, the Chinese have had their hot teapots for the use of travelers for hundreds of years.



Sanborn, Colin Campbell. 1935. "Skulls of Rare Bats are Found in Ethnographic Collections." *Field Museum news* 6(5), 3-3.

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