

Field Museum of Natural History

FOUNDED BY MARSHALL FIELD, 1893

Roosevelt Road and Field Drive, Chicago

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FIELD MUSEUM NEWS

CLIFFORD C. GREGG, *Director of the Museum*.... Editor

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H. B. HARTE.....	Managing Editor

Members are requested to inform the Museum promptly of changes of address.

BIRD BANDING

The practice of placing metal identification bands on the legs of captured birds, and then releasing them to trace their movements and learn other facts about them, was originated at the turn of the eighteenth century, and was adopted by John James Audubon, who used rings of silver for the purpose. Today many thousands of persons—professional ornithologists, government officials, amateur bird lovers, and others—engage in this practice on a highly organized basis. Bands of aluminum, bearing numbers and the notice: "Notify Biological Survey, Washington, D.C.," are supplied for the purpose by the United States Department of Agriculture.

Bird banders trap birds in cages built in such a way as to attract them in but prevent them from finding their way out. This is accomplished by means which will not injure the captured bird. The traps most commonly used are rectangular wire mesh boxes with a funnel arrangement of wire on top, and bait inside. The bird easily enters through the wide end of the funnel, but the narrow end baffles it when it wishes to make its departure.

As a result of this widespread activity, ornithologists have been able to collect data answering such questions as "How long do birds live?" "When does their plumage change?" "How does their plumage change?" "Do birds return to the same spot for nesting year after year?" and countless other questions which arise in the study of the habits of birds. The percentage of "returns"—that is, individual birds which have been banded and which return and are identified at experimental stations at the proper time (spring or fall) to establish facts about migration—is approximately

2% for most of the smaller birds. It runs as high as 25% on ducks. Birds have been sent by airplane from the east coast to California, and after being released there have found their way home over the Rocky mountains. Sometimes they have even made faster time coming home than a letter mailed simultaneously between the same points.

One oddity revealed by the studies of banded birds is the "scandalous" conduct of some house wrens. The male wrens are not always perfect husbands—it has been discovered in several instances that one male sets up two establishments.

A PROSPECTOR'S TALE

Prospectors from remote mining districts often visit the ore collections in Frederick J. V. Skiff Hall (Hall 37), and show much interest in what they find there. Many years ago a veteran prospector from Alaska told the Chief Curator of Geology of an experience which emphasizes how close a prospector may come to making a strike and yet miss. Whether or not his tale was exact truth, it nevertheless illustrates the point that prospectors often come ever so near to and yet remain far from fortune.

While he was prospecting for gold and silver in the Seward Peninsula, this man built a camp fire and cooked a meal. Later he found in the ashes pellets of a soft white metal which he thought were silver. Believing he had found a mine he submitted the pellets to his assayer in Nome who pronounced them to be tin. The prospector concluded that they were tin melted from some cans he was using, but two years later other prospectors made the first discovery of Alaskan tin ore in that vicinity. It will never be known whether the heat and charcoal of his camp fire smelted the tin from an outcrop of ore, or whether the tin was actually melted from his cans. It is conceivable, although improbable to the *n*th degree, that the tin was melted from the cans, and in the chance in a million that this did occur it forms a most unbelievable coincidence that it should happen over a hitherto unknown outcrop of the ore. It may be well to add that, considering the "tall narrative" proclivities of many prospectors, it would not be surprising if the whole story were apocryphal. —H.W.N.

Distinguished Visitors

Among distinguished visitors recently received at Field Museum were Mr. Jason R. Swallen, specialist on grasses in the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington; Dr. Fred A. Barkley, of the University of Montana, Missoula, monographer of American Anacardiaceae; Dr. Edgar T. Wherry, of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, who is engaged in studies of the genus *Phlox*; Dr. Joseph C. Bequaert, of Harvard Medical School, Boston, and Museum of Comparative Zoology, Cam-

bridge, Massachusetts; Mr. Charles W. Leng, Secretary and Director, Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences, Staten Island, New York; Mr. William H. Phelps, ornithologist from Caracas, Venezuela, and Professor Daniel S. Dye, of West China Union University, Chengtu, Szechwan.

Staff Notes

Mr. Clifford C. Gregg, Director of the Museum, spoke over radio station WJJD on August 13. The subject was "Field Museum and Its Activities," and the program was sponsored by the Adult Education Council.

Mr. John Janacek, an artist who at various times in the past has done considerable work for Field Museum under special arrangements, last month accepted an appointment to the staff as Assistant Illustrator. He will work with Mr. Carl F. Gronemann, for many years the Museum's Illustrator. Expansion of the Museum's activities has increased the demands for drawings, sketches, maps, etc. to be used in publications, on exhibition labels, and elsewhere.

Privacy for Goldfish

In China the goldfish has a more private life than here, it may be judged from a seventeenth century blue and white porcelain goldfish jar from that country, on exhibition in George T. and Frances Gaylord Smith Hall (Hall 24). The jar is opaque, instead of transparent like those traditionally associated with the keeping of these pets in America.

A FEW FACTS ABOUT FIELD MUSEUM

Field Museum is open every day of the year (except Christmas and New Year's Day) during the hours indicated below:

November, December,	January, February	9 A.M. to 4 P.M.
March, April, and	September, October	9 A.M. to 5 P.M.
May, June, July, August	9 A.M. to 6 P.M.	

Admission is free to Members on all days. Other adults are admitted free on Thursdays, Saturdays, and Sundays; non-members pay 25 cents on other days. Children are admitted free on all days. Students and faculty members of educational institutions are admitted free any day upon presentation of credentials.

The Museum's Library is open for reference daily except Saturday afternoon and Sunday.

Traveling exhibits are circulated in the schools of Chicago by the N. W. Harris Public School Extension Department of the Museum.

Lectures at schools, and special entertainments and tours for children at the Museum, are provided by the James Nelson and Anna Louise Raymond Foundation for Public School and Children's Lectures.

Free courses of lectures for adults are presented in the James Simpson Theatre on Saturday afternoons (at 2:30 o'clock) in March, April, October, and November.

A Cafeteria serves visitors. Rooms are available also for those bringing their lunches.

Chicago Motor Coach Company No. 26 busses provide direct transportation to the Museum. Service is offered also by Surface Lines, Rapid Transit Lines (the "L"), interurban electric lines, and Illinois Central trains. There is ample free parking space for automobiles at the Museum.



1940. "Bird Banding." *Field Museum news* 11(9), 6-6.

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