

## BOTANIST RETURNS WITH PLANTS AND FOSSILS FROM GUATEMALA

After nearly a year of field work in Guatemala, Dr. Julian A. Steyermark, Assistant Curator of the Herbarium, returned to the Museum November 16. He traveled in many of the most remote parts of Guatemala and brought back thirty boxes containing 30,000 specimens of plants and wood specimens for study in connection with the *Flora of Guatemala* upon which he is collaborating with Curator Paul C. Standley. Dr. Steyermark was assisted on the expedition by Mr. Albert Vatter, Jr., of Glenview, Illinois, who acted as plant photographer and zoological collector. Many specimens of birds and mammal skins, as well as preserved material of reptiles, amphibians, fishes, and insects, were brought back by the expedition.

Dr. Steyermark was probably the last person to bring cargo across the Rio Suchiate (the international boundary between Mexico and Guatemala) in what has been the usual manner. This necessitated transferring all the boxed material by ox-drawn carts from the Guatemalan railroad station to the river, across which it was hauled in small boats, and then again transferred to the railroad station in Suchiate, Mexico, by other ox-drawn carts. About a week later the new international railroad bridge over the Suchiate river was officially opened to facilitate transportation between the United States, Mexico, and Central America, and it thus has become an aid to science as well as to commerce.

Dr. Steyermark traveled on the same train in which the specimens were shipped, throughout the length of Mexico, in order to see to the safe transport of the boxes to the United States border.

The shipment also included eighteen boxes of paleontological specimens, consisting in part of skeletons of rare Pliocene and Pleistocene mammals, many of them now known for the first time from Central America. These had been collected in Honduras during the latter part of 1941 and early 1942 by an expedition led by Dr. Paul O. McGrew, Assistant Curator of Paleontology. The specimens had been stored in Guatemala City since that time, because it had been thought then that it would not be practicable to obtain transit facilities for them until after the war.

A more complete account of Dr. Steyermark's expedition will appear in a later issue of *FIELD MUSEUM NEWS*.

## Sea Shells Used at Hospital in Occupational Therapy

All museums accumulate specimens of little or no value. Sea shells without clue to their origin are especially likely to gravitate to museum collections. Such specimens are of no use to the geographic and variation studies made in museums, and are often discarded. Fortunately, how-

ever, Dr. Merrill Moore, of the Fitzsimons General Hospital in Denver (now a Major in the Army Medical Corps), has recently found use for such shells as objects of interest that can be studied and classified, thus forming a kind of occupational therapy for bedridden and convalescing patients. Major Moore has found this method so effective in speeding recoveries by improving the patients' mental outlook that he has published an article on the subject in the *American Journal of Psychiatry*.

Field Museum has recently contributed a considerable collection of this sort for such use in the Denver Hospital. —K.P.S.

## A COLOR PICTURE BOOK OF MUSEUM EXHIBITS

A little booklet entitled *Exploring Field Museum*, just published, contains color pictures of some of the most attractive exhibits. Included are more than 40 reproductions of outstanding selections from the albums of Mr. Clarence B. Mitchell. On the staff as a Research Associate in Photography, Mr. Mitchell maintained a studio in the Museum and contributed his time and effort for many months to making the pictures. He also made a generous contribution of funds for purchase of the four-color printing plates, thus making it possible to distribute the book at far less than the actual cost of production.

Exhibits from all departments of the Museum—Anthropology, Botany, Geology and Zoology—are included in the pictures. Opposite each one is brief descriptive text prepared by members of the scientific staff. Among the subjects reproduced are: the famous Theodore-Kermit Roosevelt habitat group of giant pandas (containing the first specimens of this popular animal ever to reach America); a restoration of a Coal Age forest of 250,000,000 years ago; several of the cave man dioramas from the Hall of the Stone Age; elaborate Egyptian mummy cases; a habitat group of emperor penguins for which the specimens were collected in Little America by an expedition led by Admiral Byrd; several of noted Chicago artist Julius Moessel's murals depicting the production, gathering, and distribution of food plants all over the world; the habitat group of an African water hole and its animal visitors, one of the largest and most elaborate natural history groups in any museum; and especially colorful specimens of primitive pottery, animals, birds, flowers, fruits, and minerals.

The book is on sale at the Museum Book Shop (60 cents).

Fresco paintings of the first century A.D., from Boscoreale, a village north of Pompeii, form a noteworthy item among the exhibits in Edward E. and Emma B. Ayer Hall (Hall 2) devoted to the archaeology of Etruria and Rome.

## THINGS YOU MAY HAVE MISSED

### A Maize-Cloaked God of Ancient Peru

Among the prehistoric farming Indians of the New World, maize was the staple crop, and it was from Indian maize that our modern varieties of corn were derived. Since maize was such an important Indian



EARS OF CORN DECORATE ANCIENT GOD

food, it is not surprising that the plant played an important part in the religion and ceremonies of the agricultural Indians.

In Case 12, Hall 25 (the Hall of Food Plants) may be seen many varieties of Indian corn, as well as an ancient Peruvian representation of the god of fertility, clothed in a cloak of maize. Other examples of the Peruvian maize god, more than 1,000 years old, are shown in Case 21, Hall 9 (Archaeology and Ethnology of South America). Stone statues of the Aztec maize goddess are shown in Cases 2 and 5 of Hall 8 (Mexico and Central America). In Hall 7 (Archaeology and Ethnology of southwestern United States), Cases 5, 6, 23, and 28 are life-size models of Hopi altars showing the use of corn ears and sacred corn meal in various religious ceremonies. —D.C.

### Exhibit Demonstrates the Difference Between Crocodiles and Alligators

One of the most familiar questions asked of naturalists concerns the difference between crocodiles and alligators. The difference in question, largely in the broader snout and overhanging teeth of the alligator, is well shown by a skeleton in Hall 19, where, with the addition of a gavial, these three living types of the crocodile group may be comparatively studied.





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