

Chicago Natural History Museum

FOUNDED BY MARSHALL FIELD, 1893

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

NOTED CHINESE SCHOLAR HONORED BY MUSEUM

By KARL P. SCHMIDT
CHIEF CURATOR OF ZOOLOGY

Dr. Ch'eng-chao Liu, Professor of Zoology at West China Union University, Chengtu, China, was recently appointed Research Associate in the Museum's Division of Reptiles, in recognition of his outstanding work on the amphibians and reptiles of China and of his now long-continued association and co-operation with the Museum.

Dr. Liu's personal and scientific history is most interesting, and presents perhaps an almost typical example of the impact of war on Chinese scholarship and of the Chinese reaction to the misfortunes of war. Dr. Liu, on his graduation from Yenching University (Peiping) in 1931, took a teaching position at the University of Mukden. He had already become one of the best students of amphibians and reptiles in China, and had begun to accumulate a library of herpetology and to collect actively in Manchuria. The Japanese invasion in 1931 (regarded by many as the actual



DR. C. C. LIU

beginning of World War II) forced Dr. Liu to flee to China; his collections were destroyed and his library was dispersed.

To make a new start, after a conference with his teachers at Yenching, Dr. Liu applied to the Rockefeller Institution for a fellowship for graduate study in the United States and spent the years 1933 and 1934 at Cornell University, receiving the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. During this period he spent the two summers in study in the Division of Reptiles at the Museum, and an extensive paper on the secondary sex characters of frogs, one of the results of his work, was published by the Museum.

CAUGHT IN ANOTHER INVASION

With the aid of a growing number of American friends, Dr. Liu again built up a personal library in his field of interest, this time by far the best in China. On his return to China he took up teaching at Suchow University, where he was again caught in a Japanese invasion in 1937 and again forced to flee, with the total loss of his now extremely valuable library and of his new collections. He became one of the refugees among the Chinese scholars who made the long and circuitous journey to western China, and at Chengtu found refuge (except for recurrent bombings) from the Japanese armies and opportunity to continue teaching and research.

The West China post proved most favorable to collecting, and the transplanted scholar spent every summer season in active field work, at his own expense, in the mountains that border the Tibetan plateau. He visited the dangerous country inhabited by the wild Lolo tribes, the Tibetan plateau itself, and the Mupin region (the country of the giant panda); and he repeatedly collected on Mt. Omei, famous in China as a sacred mountain.

His collecting and field study were focused on the remarkable life histories of frogs, with the adaptations of both adults and tadpoles to mountain torrents and to lowland quiet streams and pools. It soon became evident that he had found a rich fauna in which the description of numerous new species of salamanders and frogs was a necessary preliminary to the study of life histories.

The good fortune of a grant from the Cultural Division of the State Department brought Dr. Liu to the United States in September, 1946, and he brought collections and manuscripts direct to Chicago Natural History Museum, where he was certain of welcome from his colleagues in Chinese herpetological studies, Curator Clifford H. Pope and the writer, and where he felt that his projected account of the *Amphibians of West China* could best be completed.

During the succeeding year, a large manuscript, based on collections turned over to the Museum and on the remarkable series of illustrations and water color paintings accumulated in the eight years in West

China, was prepared for publication. With it, Dr. Liu takes his place as the principal authority in the world on the systematics and habits of Chinese amphibians.

BIRD GUIDEBOOK

The Museum switchboard is a busy instrument. People from all over Chicago and its suburbs call to ask questions of all kinds or to verify the accuracy of information obtained elsewhere. Probably most of the questions are directed to the Department of Zoology, and the Division of Birds receives the largest number of these.

So many questions relate to bird nesting and bird migration that it is obvious that the general public is unaware of the excellent 50-cent pamphlet, *Birds of the Chicago Region*, by Edward R. Ford, Colin C. Sanborn, and C. Blair Coursen, published in 1934 by the Chicago Academy of Sciences and obtainable at the Museum Book Shop. This pamphlet gives the migration and nesting dates—early, average, and late—of the birds that occur within a 50-mile radius of Chicago. It also gives the specific localities in which many of the common birds are likely to be seen, and tells where rare birds have occurred.

Although this work is thirteen years old, it is still authentic, because the migration and nesting habits of few species change appreciably. Interested persons would find in it the answers to questions that have been puzzling them and keeping the Museum switchboard busy.

—E.T.S.

War-Delayed Journals

The backbone of any research library consists of serial publications such as journals, transactions, reports, and proceedings. In a recent month the Library accessioned 531 volumes, of which roughly 80 per cent would fall into this category.

Journals delayed by the war continue to arrive in blocks at a gratifying pace. Even so, it will probably take years before all the gaps can be filled. Examples of this type of material recently received are:

Société des Africanistes. *Journal*. V. 10-14 (1940-1944)

Royal Geographical Society of Australasia. South Australian Branch. *Proceedings*. V. 39-46 (1939-1945)

Société Linéenne de Lyon. *Bulletin mensuel*. V. 11-14 (1942-1945)

Odd Number of Rows on Corn Ears

Ordinary corn practically always has an even number of rows of grain. In lowland Bolivia, however, there is a small area where ears of corn with an odd number of rows of grain are as common as ears with an even number. Some of the first ears to be collected in this area are shown in the small case next to Case 32 of Hall 25.



1947. "Bird Guidebook." *Bulletin* 18(12), 6–6.

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