

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.

BIRD MEMO FROM MEXICO

A letter has just been received from Emmet R. Blake, Associate Curator of Birds, who, having finished his *Birds of Mexico, A Guide for Field Identification*, is spending some months conducting further studies on the birds of Mexico.

He writes from Mitla, Oaxaca, a thousand-year-old Indian village that was the seat of the Zapotec empire which fell to the Aztecs a few years before the Spanish Conquest. His room is in a 250-year-old hacienda. Mitla is a typical, sleepy Mexican village where one would think nothing ever happens. Yet, the day before Mr. Blake wrote his letter there was one of the first rains of the year, a fiesta, a funeral, a cold-blooded murder, and a wake for the victim that was sensational by American standards.

During May, Mr. Blake traveled extensively on the Plateau and also in the Caribbean lowlands—Matamoros, Tampico, Tuxpan, Tecolutla, and Nautla. The changes in vegetation, bird life, and other natural features that occur with altitude and latitude variations are most striking. The entire northern part of the country is clearly a continuation of our own Southwest, but from Tampico southward there are remarkable changes that need to be seen to be understood.

"My routine all along has been to have several hours of birding around camp each

morning, take to the road at about 10 A.M., spot-check the bird life at intervals along the highway, and make camp as far from villages as possible at 4 to 5 P.M., for a final two hours of birding before supper and to bed," writes Blake. "Usually cook breakfast and supper, but stop at village or rural cafes for lunch. Occasionally have stopped a day or two in a city or town. In this manner it is possible to travel extensively and still see a great deal of country and its birds.

"The last two weeks were spent in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, which I tried to cross but gave up at midpoint after several days' rugged experience. It is now the height of the rainy season and that makes it difficult.

"My plans include trips to some of the Boreal 'islands' on the higher mountains in the near future.

"I now have a fairly good picture of the country as a whole, the distribution of its bird life at first hand, and definite ideas about what remains to be done—and how. It is clear that regional lists of birds, based on collected specimens, will be needed for many years yet. Distribution, ecological relationships, migration, life histories, and many other aspects of Mexican birds are very far from being properly known. There is certainly room for lots of work yet, including some Museum expeditions.

"I have seen 12 copies of my book, *Birds of Mexico*, actually in the hands of people studying birds in the field. All seemed well pleased with it and naturally I am delighted at this favorable response."

TWO MORE FREE MOVIES AWAIT CHILDREN

The last two free movie programs in the summer series for children presented by the Raymond Foundation will be given on the first and second Thursday mornings in August. There will be two performances of each program, one at 10 A.M. and one at 11 A.M., in the James Simpson Theatre of the Museum. The Theatre and west entrance of the Museum will be open at 9:30 A.M. Dates and titles of the shows are:

August 6—ANIMAL STORIES

"Black Patch" and "Boy and the Eagle"

Also a cartoon

August 13—ZANZABELLE IN PARIS

A puppet-story of a giraffe in Paris and other puppet stories

Also a cartoon

Although the above programs are selected for children, adults are welcome to attend, but adults not accompanying children are requested to give their seats to children if the Theatre is crowded. Leaders of children's groups are requested to remain with their groups and maintain order.

THIS MONTH'S COVER

Even to so purely utilitarian a structure as a small storehouse the highly advanced Polynesians apply their skill in the art of decorative wood carving, as is shown by the example pictured on the cover of this Bulletin. This small building, called a pataka by the Maori tribesmen who erected it in New Zealand, is on stilts to keep the interior and its contents dry. The illustration is one of a series of photographs and objects to be shown in a special exhibit, "Australasian Native Arts," in Stanley Field Hall of the Museum from August 8 to September 28 (see page 3). The exhibit is composed principally of photographs made by Cyrus Townsend Brady, Jr., of Omaha, supplemented with art objects both from his and the Museum's collections.

New Assistant Appointed In Public Relations

Mrs. Alexander (Barbara) Polikoff has been appointed to the Museum staff as Assistant in Public Relations. A graduate (B.A.) of the University of Michigan, Mrs. Polikoff earned a Master of Arts degree in English literature at the University of Chicago. Before coming to the Museum she worked in the offices of the United States Army Engineers, taught English at Von Steuben High School in Chicago, and was an editor for



Barbara Polikoff

the Industrial Relations Center at the University of Chicago. She will work with H. B. Harte, Public Relations Counsel in all phases of newspaper, magazine, radio and television publicity, and in editing the Museum BULLETIN.

Miss Christine Tardy, Associate Public Relations Counsel, employed at the Museum since the latter part of 1951, has resigned to enter another field of publicity activity. She will retain association with the Museum, in volunteer status, to continue a television project.

Three bronze sculptures in the south end of Stanley Field Hall, which illustrate the remarkable ritualized lion-hunting with spears characteristic of certain African tribes, are the work of the late Carl E. Akeley.



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