

WOODPECKERS AS SOURCE OF INSURANCE CLAIMS

By AUSTIN L. RAND
CHIEF CURATOR OF ZOOLOGY

RECENTLY a telephone call came to the Museum's Division of Birds from an insurance adjuster. An insured party was trying to recover for woodpecker damage to his home. The adjuster had not yet seen the house, but from the account he'd heard, it was badly damaged. The insured party, anticipating difficulty in collecting, was anxious to have woodpecker-damage coverage for next year. "What were the chances of continuing damage next year?" the adjuster wanted to know, "Will the parents and the young woodpeckers all come back and continue eating on the house until it's wrecked?"

Naturally, estimating insurance risks is out of our line but woodpecker habits are not; so we provided woodpecker information. Woodpeckers, properly speaking, do not eat

several holes in a row under the eaves right through the wall and the birds still had no nest.

As to the birds bringing their young back next year to the same house, that is contrary to woodpeckers' custom. When the young become full-grown and independent, sometime in the summer, they usually scatter out. Many live solitary lives all winter, when they chisel out sleeping homes for themselves. In the spring each pair of woodpeckers stakes out a territory for itself from which it excludes others of its kind.

It is not only by chiseling out wood that woodpeckers cause annoyance to householders, but the tapping they do on houses sometimes disturbs timid folks. One morning last spring a telephone call came from a worried lady whose baby was being kept awake by the drumming of a woodpecker outside the window. She wasn't at all satisfied by my assurance that the spring-time mating, of which the drumming was a part, would soon be over and that the woodpecker with a mate and young of his own would soon be too busy raising a family to indulge in noisy tapping on her roof.

FEARS HAVE LITTLE BASIS

Trouble from spring drumming on and chiseling into houses must be very rare and damage slight. If we lived farther west, out on the edge of the prairie, the story might be slightly different, but here about Chicago there are lots of trees for woodpeckers to work on. I wonder if most of the concern we hear about in the Museum is not over what damage woodpeckers *may* do rather than what they do cause. May it not be the concern of newcomers from the city to suburban and country areas over trespassers that they cannot control or order off and that they fear may cause damage?

The people who do have trouble with woodpeckers are the people who have to maintain electric light and telephone poles in certain districts. I've heard of trouble from woodpeckers in Florida, in Wisconsin, and in Pennsylvania, but know of it best in Florida, where the rural electrification project has put lines of poles along scantily wooded country and on the prairies. The stout poles evidently seem to the woodpeckers better for their homes than any of the nearby dead tree-trunks, and they chisel out their nest cavities in them. Only a shell of wood is left around the cavity to support the pole and wires when the winds blow and when linemen have to climb. The cost of pole-replacement is sometimes considerable, but fortunately the research on this problem has turned not to ways of exterminating woodpeckers but to ways of making the poles woodpecker-repellent. Up to date the research has not produced an economically feasible answer, but it is still going on. Perhaps it will provide a synthetic pole that woodpeckers can't use and so will leave more tall trees in the forest.

TRIBUTE TO E. E. HAND, SHELL COLLECTOR

By FRITZ HAAS
CURATOR OF LOWER INVERTEBRATES

IN 1937 a man whose influence upon the scientific exploration of the Chicago region was never duly known and appreciated passed away in Long Beach, California. Now, almost twenty years after his death, he has become newly and inseparably associated with this city's scientific endeavors.

Edwin Ellsworth Hand, the distinguished man of whom I write, was born in Centralia, Illinois, on June 3, 1862. He graduated from Shurtleff College, Upper Alton, Illinois, and became a teacher.

After serving as a school principal in Paducah, Kentucky, for some time, he came to Chicago where he taught, among other subjects, natural history at Wendell Phillips and Hyde Park high schools. During this Chicago period, Mr. Hand became an ardent student of malacology and collected in many Chicago-area localities that since have been swallowed by the ever-expanding city. He became a friend of James H. Ferriss of Joliet, Illinois, whose fine shell collection was turned over to Chicago Natural History Museum some years ago. With Ferriss, Hand made extensive collecting trips in the Joliet area as well as in the then almost unexplored western expanse of the United States. The fruits of these excursions are preserved in Hand's collection.

In later life, Mr. Hand and his family moved to Long Beach, where a new phase of his malacological career began. Formerly he had restricted himself almost entirely to the collecting of land and fresh-water mollusks, but in California his interest turned to marine shells. Both alone and in the company of Herbert N. Lowe, also of Long Beach, Hand collected these abundantly. A trip to Cuba with D. L. Emory of St. Petersburg, Florida, resulted in an excellent collection of shells and two short papers about them.

ADDED FOREIGN SPECIMENS

Not satisfied with his personal field-collecting activities, Mr. Hand also began to exchange shells with noted malacologists all over the world, notably with Philippe Dautzenberg of Paris. He thus added material from a wide range of foreign countries to his shell collection. He also often bought shells that attracted his attention, and as a result his collection is especially rich in perfect specimens of the

(Continued on page 7, column 1)



Cartoon by Ruth Andris

wood but rather feed by chiseling into wood in search of wood-boring insects. They also excavate nest sites and sleeping places in solid wood, usually in a tree.

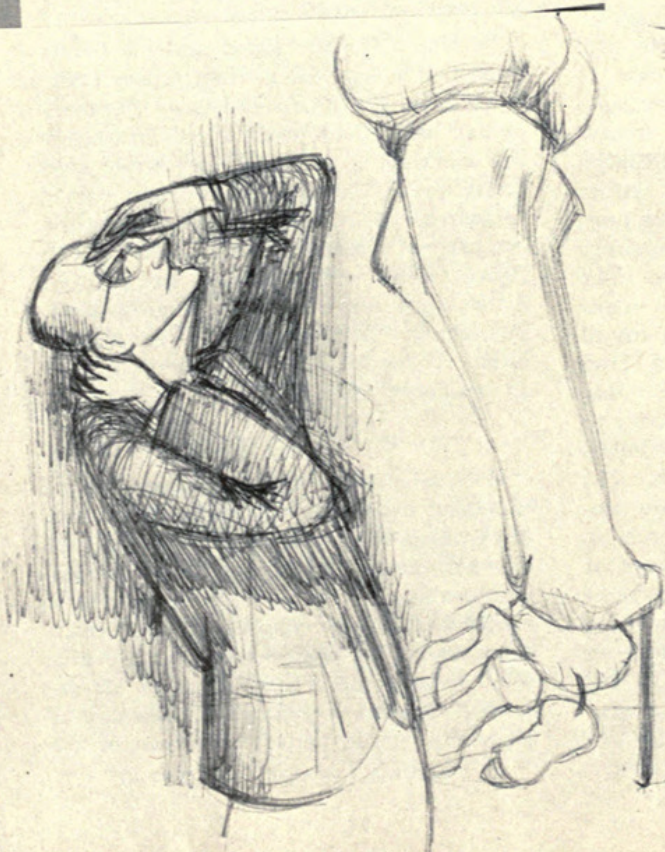
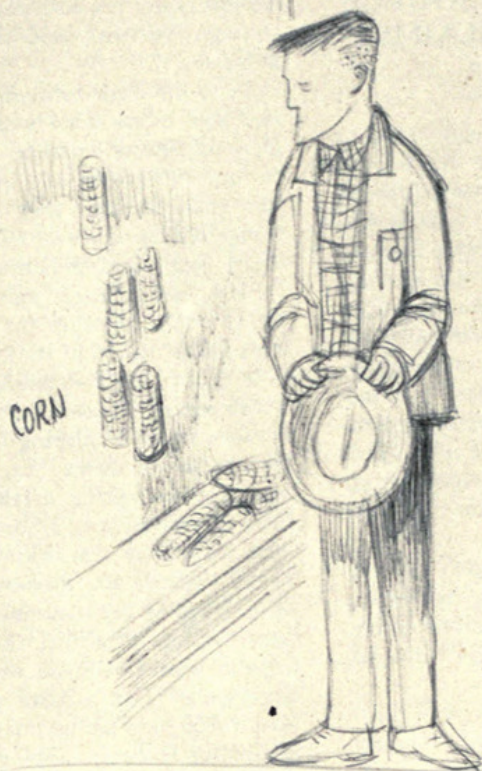
FINE EXAMPLES OF PERSISTENCY

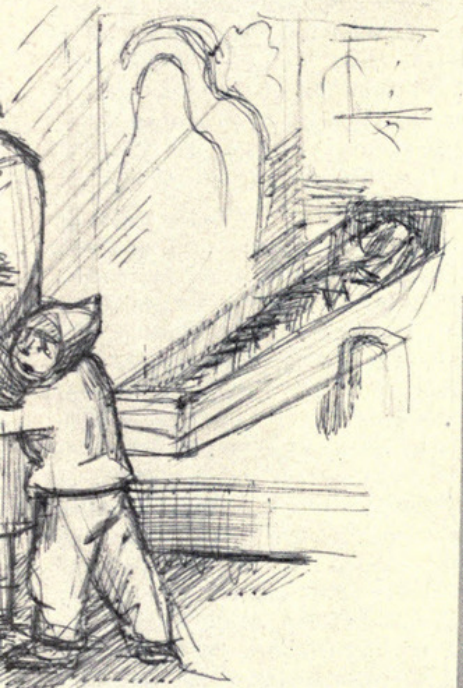
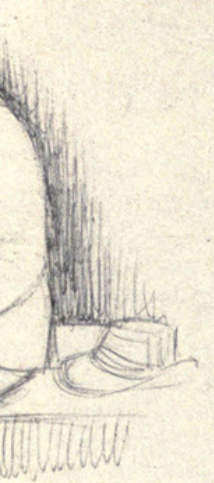
It is extremely improbable that any house about Chicago would have insects enough in its walls to attract a woodpecker year after year. Any chiseling into houses would probably be for a nest or sleeping place. Woodpeckers have been known to drill holes through the walls of buildings, and a flicker once made a hole through the wall of a barn into the hay inside where it made its nest. But most times a hole through a wall would reveal a cavity quite unsuited for woodpeckers' use.

However, you can't count on a bird not doing something just because it's illogical. A pair of motmots, very distant relatives of the woodpeckers in Central America, drilled a hole through the mud wall of a house and came out into the house. Undismayed, the birds tried again and again until there were



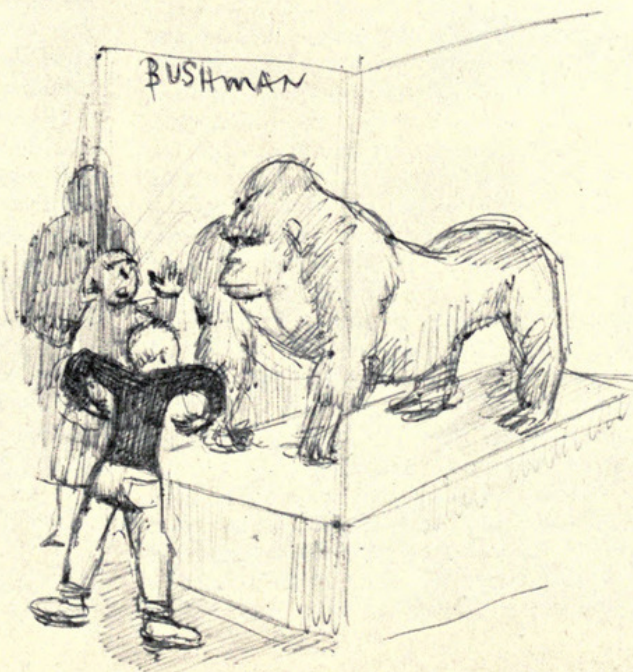
Edwin E. Hand





MUSEUM VIEWS and viewpoints

by MARION PAHL
MUSEUM ILLUSTRATOR



CLIMBING TO THE FLAMING CRATER OF IZALCO

BY SHARAT KUMAR ROY
CHIEF CURATOR OF GEOLOGY

A RECENT ARTICLE in the *New York Times* (December 8, 1956), under the heading "Erupting Volcano in Salvador Filmed Up Close by Scientists," reminded me of my participation in the climbing of the same volcano six years ago and prompted me to draft a letter to the editor as follows:

Dear Sir:

Referring to the opening paragraph of your report: "For the first time in memory, the active volcano of Izalco, in western Salvador, has been scaled and its flaming

through one of the lesser fumarolic areas of El Salvador (base of volcano San Vicente). Within a matter of seconds, notwithstanding shoes and socks, it was so severely burnt that I had to be carried away. I, therefore, believe that Tazieff and his five companions have accomplished a singular feat, all the more because the party climbed the volcano after midnight in the darkness of a waning last-quarter moon. I made my ascent from the northeast flank, N 10° E, shortly after sunrise, in broad daylight, which gave me the advantage of avoiding loose rocks and fumaroles. The going, especially the last 100 meters, became so steep that I had to

Tazieff and the entire group for a well-nigh unparalleled achievement.

Very sincerely,
Sharat K. Roy
Chief Curator of Geology

In connection with my attempts to climb Izalco and my final success I wrote to the Director of the Museum from San Salvador on July 27, 1951:

Since writing to you last I have made three attempts to climb the Izalco, each time from a different direction with little success. Day before yesterday (Wednesday) I approached it from the southwest side under the protection of an adventitious cone and reached 4,830', but that's all. Next Sunday I shall make my last attempt from the NE side. I am leaving tomorrow morning to spend the night at Las Brumas in a finca, which is about three miles from the base of the volcano, then start out to climb at dawn. I doubt if I shall make it; it is a formidable task. If the volcano were quiet, I wouldn't be so doubtful. She is throwing up all sorts of obnoxious junk, two or three times an hour, and it is impossible to predict where the debris will fall.

Sunday 9:30 p.m.

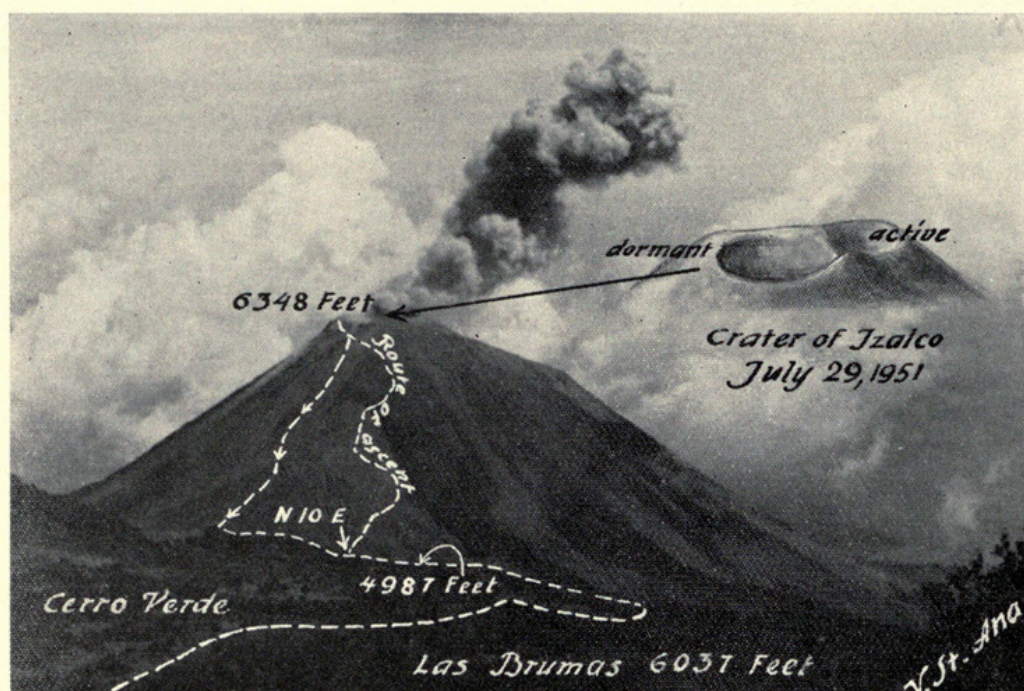
Well, Sir, I did it. Came back at about 6:15 P.M. and I have been talking to the fellows ever since. It's a grand and satisfying feeling. I made a trial climb as soon as I got to Las Brumas at about 3:15 P.M., and I knew then that I would do it, but I was so tense that I did not have a wink of sleep. In retrospect, it is not as formidable as I was given to understand, or as I myself thought it to be. I had a couple of bad moments, but that was to be expected and I was prepared for it. Only two real casualties: lost the barometer and my leather gloves that I inherited from Uncle Sam during my sojourn in Greenland, serving not in the Infantry, but the more envied U.S.A.A.F.!

I am really much too tired to write more about it. Actually, I did not have to scale it. I had all the essential data of the volcano. It's the mule in me that kept on urging me to have a peep into the crater.

It's raining harder than ever. The abandoned house at the finca where I slept last night had numerous pigeons cooing from the eaves of the tile roof; chickens and pigs coming in and out at will as a matter of curiosity; rats having their usual family reunions; and lastly, a dead pup was lying a couple of feet from my hammock. I did not know his state until morning. All these in one room, which did not have any window, but the door was kept open either for ventilation, or for the convenience of the guests I have just recounted.

With kind regards
Most sincerely,
Sharat

P.S. Rand [Dr. Austin Rand, Chief Curator of Zoology] will be interested in the



VOLCAN IZALCO IN WESTERN EL SALVADOR

Dr. Sharat K. Roy ascended this volcano, which is the most active in the Western Hemisphere, on July 29, 1951, by the route indicated above. On reaching the summit, he found two craters separated by a low wall. One of the craters was dormant, the other active. The latter was a frightening, bottomless pit in which swirled masses of black clouds, burning gases, and liquid lava that rose and fell and spattered.

crater observed and photographed at close range," I may take the liberty to say that I scaled Izalco on July 29, 1951. The eruptive activity of the volcano, at that time, was very much the same as it is today except that there were fewer fumarolic areas around and below the crater-rim than today. This I know from personal experience. I have made numerous trips to Izalco since 1950. My last one was barely eight weeks ago, October 19, 1956. From what I observed then, I did not believe that it was physically possible to reach the crater, much less spend twenty minutes on its rim, as did Haroun Tazieff and his party. It appeared to me that the numerous steaming and glowing cracks all around the northeast-northwest side of the crater and its approaches created a temperature condition that no living being could withstand.

Only three years ago, my right foot broke

sit down with my back to the volcano and push myself upward with my feet. It took me an hour and forty-five minutes to reach the edge of the dormant crater. There I stretched my neck over its rim and saw the active crater to my right—a hissing, swirling mass of black clouds tinged with flaming gases and spattering lava. It was a frightening spectacle and I was terrified. I turned and went down by a shorter route, a gully-like cut filled with pyroclastics of varying size. Izalco erupted once when I had covered about a fourth of the distance and twice during my descent, but I was far enough down then to enable me to avoid falling rocks except the ashes.

It was a challenge that I wanted to take. I learned only a little, but I did see an active crater, the condition of which changes at frequent intervals. Once again I wish to express my admiration and congratulate

Izalco trip. We, rather I, used to pester him about it.

S.R.

The Director was away on vacation when my letter arrived. I received the following answer from the Deputy Director:

Muy Estimado Señor Doctor Roy:

Your letter to Colonel Gregg arrived after he had left on vacation at the end of the month. However, I shall send it on to him at Maple Knoll Farm, where he will be until the seventeenth of August. The news of your spectacular climb is spreading. Rand was delighted to learn of your accomplishment. From my point of view, living at the finca you describe was a greater feat than climbing Izalco! . . .

Sincerely,
John R. Millar
Deputy Director

E. E. HAND—

(Continued from page 3)

Japanese shell fauna that had become known to science in its fullness only in recent times through the efforts of that able and indefatigable collector, Yoichiro Hirase in Kyoto.

Miss LaVerne Hand, daughter of our collector, recently wrote me that her father was "a family man and seemed never happier than when arranging a group of shells for mounting in small boxes or watch cases." Indeed, a great portion of his collection was brilliantly arranged, the shells being displayed so well that they were safe from touch and yet all their interesting features as well as their intrinsic beauty were perfectly visible.

After Mr. Hand's death on March 30, 1937, his daughter brought the collection back to Chicago and stored it until, in the spring of 1956, she planned to move to Grant's Pass, Oregon. She then decided that Chicago Natural History Museum was the most logical place to assure the usefulness of her father's shells. Thus, through Miss Hand's perspicacity, this Museum has come into possession of an extremely rich and important collection.

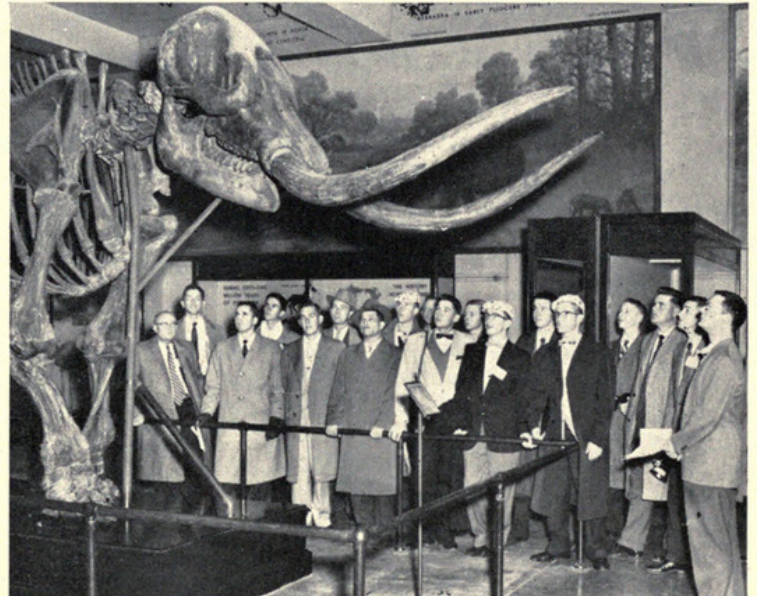
A BIG JOB

When the forty large boxes containing the collection arrived in the Museum, a task of real magnitude began. The thousands and thousands of individual lots had to be unpacked as cautiously as Miss Hand had packed them. Each lot, when unwrapped, had to be transferred into the Museum's standard types of boxes, vials, and other containers. Miss Hand had spent several weeks in preparing her father's collection for transport, and now it took the Museum crew several months to process the treasures for reference use. The contents of the forty crates included some 6,500 lots of valuable material, aggregating about 150,000 indi-

BOYS AND GIRLS OF 4-H ON MUSEUM VISIT



Above: Alighting from buses that brought them to Museum for their annual visit is the first group of approximately 300 girls, delegates from all over the United States and Canada to the National 4-H Club Congress recently held in Chicago. Right: A group of 4-H boys and their leaders pause to study a mastodon while touring the Museum during their Chicago visit. David Techter (extreme right), Assistant in Fossil Vertebrates, had charge of 600 4-H boys.



vidual shells. Many of the species in the Hand collection were new to us, but even those already represented in the Museum are of special interest because of the localities whence they came.

Some of the Chicago-area localities in which Mr. Hand collected have changed to such an extent that now they are almost destitute of mollusk life. Therefore many of Hand's specimens possess historical value.

The Joliet region is well covered by the Hand collection, providing thus another Illinois area that has been adequately studied with respect to its mollusk fauna. While traveling in Colorado, Hand and Ferriss discovered a land snail that sub-

sequently was described as *Oreohelix handi* by Henry Augustus Pilsbry and Ferriss. Specimens of this rare species are included in the Museum's new acquisition.

This sketch indicates the scientific importance of the Hand collection. Chicago Natural History Museum is indeed indebted to Miss LaVerne Hand, who so wisely has made possible the use for research of her father's valuable assemblage of shells. The Museum will make this treasured collection available to laymen as well as to scientists. In recognition of her notable gift, the Museum's Board of Trustees has elected Miss Hand a Contributor—special Membership classification for outstanding donors.



Haas, Fritz. 1957. "Tribute to E.E. Hand, Shell Collector." *Bulletin* 28(1), 3–7.

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