

This Month's Cover

THE Hallowe'en-like masks on the cover were made and worn by Iroquois Indians. When first discovered by Europeans, the Iroquois occupied the lake region and Mohawk Valley of northern New York, a fertile territory of considerable size. The five Iroquois nations, or tribes, were Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Mohawk, and Oneida. The Indians who made and used these wooden masks were all members of the False Face Society.

The False Face Society was the most illustrious of a number of Iroquois secret societies that treated disease by spiritual means. This society also knew how to appease the horrible Flying Heads, evil demons without limbs or bodies that were believed to haunt the forests and send disease to the Iroquois.

In addition to the masks the properties of the False Face Society were songs, dances, elaborate rituals, charms, and musical instruments, including rattles made of turtle shells.

Membership in the False Face Society was open to men and women, and was achieved by dreaming of the necessity of joining or by having been cured of illness by the Society.

These masks and other cultural attributes of the Iroquois Indians as they were about a hundred years ago are on exhibit in Hall 5, on the main floor of the Museum.

Smallest Beetles to be Studied

THE National Science Foundation has given Chicago Natural History Museum a grant of \$15,900 for two years to sup-

port research by Henry Dybas, Associate Curator of Insects, on the classification of North American featherwing beetles. These beetles are among the smallest insects known. A dozen of the tiniest of these creatures could rest quite easily on the head of an ordinary straight pin.

Featherwing beetles are common in many moist situations. There may be several hundred, for instance, in one square yard of forest floor; yet they are so tiny that many entomologists have never seen one. Completely unknown species are still turning up in such well-collected regions as the Chicago area.



Curator Dybas collects featherwing beetles from fungi in Panama.

The group has received little study in the past, in spite of the fact that featherwings are of interest to ecologists and soil biologists, as well as entomologists.

Featherwing beetles illustrate some special biological problems in a particularly instructive way. Prominent among these are problems associated with small size. Some featherwings are

less than 1/75th of an inch long, which is smaller than some single-celled organisms. How can so much complexity and organization be packed into such a tiny space? As bits of biological machinery these beetles are miniaturized beyond the wildest dreams of space engineers.

The current study is intended to establish the basic classification needed for further work on problems connected with these smallest of beetles. Most of the financial support will be for technical assistance in making microscope slide preparations needed to study the tiny insects.

Field Work on Ancient Climates

DR. JOHN CLARK, Associate Curator of Sedimentary Petrology, and his assistant, Kenneth Kietzke, returned recently from six eventful weeks in the Badlands of South Dakota. They brought back to the Museum a collection of rock samples, petrified palm wood, fossil alligator bones, and other fossils, which will be most helpful in interpreting ancient climates. (Dr. Clark reviewed his interpretations in the BULLETINS of February and March, 1964.)

The climate of 1964 was not quite so helpful to the researchers as their collecting, however. A succession of violent storms immobilized their Power Wagon for a week, far out in the Badlands; lightning struck within fifty feet of their camp on several occasions. Fortunately, as a result of the storms, mud from the gullies was washed out and deposited in much the same fashion as occurred thirty million years ago; thus the beleaguered campers were able to observe "ancient" stream deposition at first hand. ■



1964. "Field Work on Ancient Climates." *Bulletin* 35(10), 4-4.

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