

## BUSINESS MANAGER

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continue to report directly to the Director. Thus the creation of the position of Business Manager is essentially a restructuring of the Director's office, which will allow the Director more time to devote to institutional planning and development.

To his new position Mr. Nelson brings wide administrative experience as corporate executive and financial officer. He was associated with the Cherry-Burrell Corporation of Chicago and Cedar Rapids, Iowa, beginning as a clerk after graduation from college and rising through a number of positions to become Vice President-Finance and a

member of the Board of Directors. He has also been an officer and director of associated companies manufacturing food packaging and processing machinery, both in the United States and Mexico.

Mr. Nelson was born in Stambaugh, Michigan. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in Commerce from Northwestern University in 1937, and in 1944 was licensed as a Certified Public Accountant by the State of Illinois.

He is married and the father of three sons. The Nelson family particularly enjoy the outdoors, and have camped in most of the national parks of the country. Mr. Nelson's avocation is music, and he has been active in organizing and directing several choral groups. ■

## STAFF APPOINTMENTS

THE FOLLOWING staff appointments and changes have also been announced by the Director.

### Department of Zoology

Hyman Marx, *Associate Curator, Reptiles*

### Library

Chih-wei Pan, *Cataloger;*

*Supervisor East Asian Library*

### N. W. Harris Public School Extension

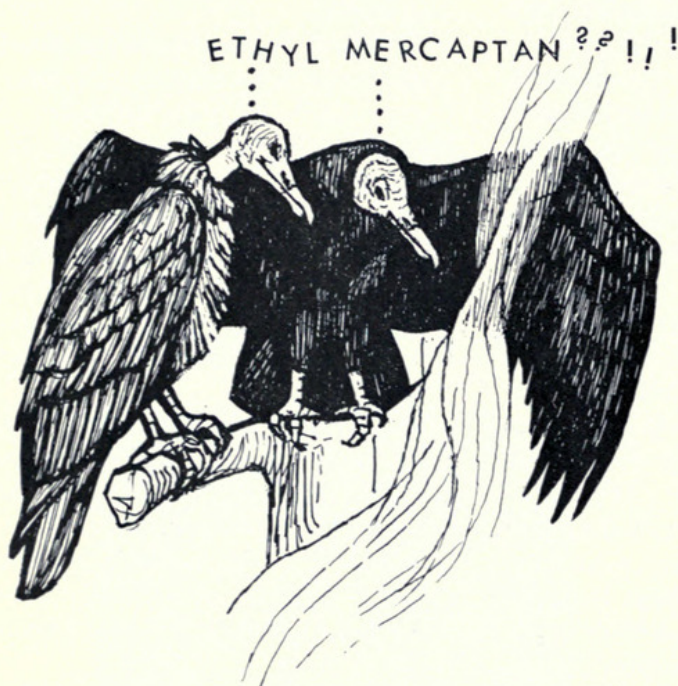
Lido Lucchesi, *Preparator*

### Division of Photography

Homer Holdren, *Associate Photographer*

### Guard

George Lamoreux, *Captain*



## THE TURKEY VULTURE'S SENSE OF SMELL

Austin L. Rand  
Chief Curator, Zoology

VULTURES are part of Nature's sanitary corps, which also includes mammals, such as hyenas; insects, such as some flies and beetles; and bacteria. These help to remove the bodies of animals that have died in field and forest. In more primitive human societies, vultures may help remove garbage from villages.

In man's more highly organized societies, the vulture as

a sanitary aide is passé. Yet Dr. Kenneth E. Stager of Los Angeles County Museum has brought to our attention a new way in which vultures have been useful to modern man. The turkey vulture in recent years has helped the field engineers of the Union Oil Company of California locate leaks in their large natural gas lines. When a leak was suspected in a pipeline in rough country where patrolling was difficult, a high concentration of the odoriferous ethyl mercaptan, attractive to turkey vultures, was introduced into the line. Subsequent patrols noted where turkey vultures concentrated along the line, went there, and found the leak.

This took advantage of the turkey vulture's sense of smell, and focuses attention on the fact that most birds are thought to have little or no ability along these lines. Whether or not the turkey vulture was an exception had been debated for over a century. Experiments had been reported that were claimed to show that turkey vultures had no sense of smell while others were reported that showed it did have one.

Obviously there was a discrepancy to be searched out. This Curator Stager has done and reported the results in a paper published in 1964 and entitled "The Role of Olfaction in Food Location by the Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*).". The answer proved a very simple one. There is more than one kind of vulture. In the United States there is the black vulture and the turkey vulture. Curator Stager demonstrated very convincingly that the black vulture has no useful sense of smell and finds its food entirely by sight. On the other hand, the turkey vulture does have a sense of smell and uses it to aid its eyes in finding food. Those who reported that the turkey vulture had no sense of smell were using the wrong species in their experiments.

Curator Stager has given us another example of the importance of museum-type attention to the species and its correct taxonomy. It is basic to other fields of biological research. ■





Rand, Austin Loomer. 1965. "The Turkey Vulture's Sense of Smell." *Bulletin* 36(3), 8–8.

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