

STRANGE PARROTS DISPLAYED

A bird which builds its nests in what might be called apartment house form, several families occupying a single large communal nest divided into sections for each, is included in a new exhibit of parrots and paroquets installed in Hall 21. The exhibit comprises forty-nine species representing the principal forms from all parts of the tropics. Among them are several species which are extremely rare, and some which are extinct or nearly extinct.

The nun parrot of Uruguay, which gets its name from a sort of cowl over its head, is the "apartment dwelling bird." Several pairs of these combine their efforts in the building of a communal nest, and then occupy it jointly, each pair having a separate compartment in which to lay its eggs and rear its young, according to Rudyerd Boulton, Assistant Curator of Birds.

The Carolina paroquet, the only bird of this kind ever to have inhabited eastern North America, is represented in the exhibit. This bird was found in the south up to about 1906 when it became extinct. Prior to about 1850 it was seen even as far north as Illinois.

The kea of New Zealand, a meat-eating parrot whose carnivorous habits have made it a problem to sheepherders, is another unusual species shown. There are nine species of South Sea island lory, which are of note for their gaudily colored and varied plumage in bright reds, yellows, greens and blues, and half a dozen species of cockatoo from Australia and New Guinea. The species which can be best trained to talk is the African gray parrot with red tail, an

example of which is exhibited. The outstanding beauty in the collection is the hyacinthine macaw of South America, plumed in light purplish blue. The specimens were mounted by John Moyer of the Museum's taxidermy staff.

Pink Bloodroot Near Chicago

In a region so thoroughly explored as the Chicago area, it would be almost impossible to discover a new species of plant. Industrious botanists, however, often happen upon newly introduced weeds never reported for Cook County, and it is possible to find well marked varieties and forms of interest that have escaped earlier workers.

H. C. Benke, local botanist, has sent to Field Museum flowers of a peculiar phase of the common bloodroot, one of the most beautiful of spring flowers. Plants of this unique form, discovered near Crystal Lake, Illinois, by Earl L. Colby, have vivid rose-pink blossoms that look very unlike the pure-white flowers of normal bloodroot plants. The pink bloodroot is exceptionally handsome, and well worthy of perpetuation in gardens.—P.C.S.

Visit of Brazilian Museum Official

Miss Bertha Lutz, Secretary of the National Museum of Brazil at Rio de Janeiro, was a visitor at Field Museum for several days last month. Miss Lutz is making a tour of the United States, studying the methods of American institutions, many of which may be found applicable for work in the museum she represents.

FUR-BEARING ANIMALS SHOWN

An exhibit of the principal fur-bearing animals of the world has been installed in Hall 15, devoted to systematic collections of mammals. The animals shown, including various species of martens, sables, weasels, mink, skunks, ferrets, beavers, otters and their relatives and allies, are of vast economic importance as the mainstay of the fur trade.

They are of scientific interest, states Dr. Wilfred H. Osgood, Curator of Zoology, because of the important role they play in maintaining the balance of nature, being highly predacious and destructive carnivores. In this capacity they are both a nuisance and a boon to man, and it is hard to determine whether the harm they do outweighs their good services, or vice versa. For on the one hand they are pests which prey seriously upon live stock and poultry, but on the other hand their regular food consists of rats, mice, rabbits and other animals which are destructive to grain and other crops.

The animals shown all belong to the family Mustelidae. A number of the specimens were obtained by the Kelley-Roosevelts Expedition to Eastern Asia, and the various Marshall Field expeditions to South America. While most of them are from the northern countries of Asia and North America, there are also a number from South Africa, South America, and southern Asia. The specimens were prepared for exhibition by Staff Taxidermist Arthur G. Rueckert.

Various types of industrial plants and mines are represented by models in the Department of Geology.

AMERICAN ALLIGATOR WITH NEST OF EGGS PLACED ON EXHIBITION IN HARRIS HALL

BY KARL P. SCHMIDT

Assistant Curator of Reptiles

The American alligator is found only in the southeastern United States from North Carolina to Texas. Its former vast abundance in the streams, lakes and swamps of the south, combined with the widespread use of its skin for an attractive leather, has made it one of the most widely known American reptiles. It is the largest American reptile, and its closest relative (the only other true alligator) is found in eastern China. Other relatives, the crocodiles and gavials, are confined to the tropics.

All of these forms make up a compact group known as the crocodilians. Crocodiles are so similar to alligators in structure and outward appearance that the name alligator is misapplied to many broad-snouted crocodiles, while others with slender snouts are erroneously known as gavials.

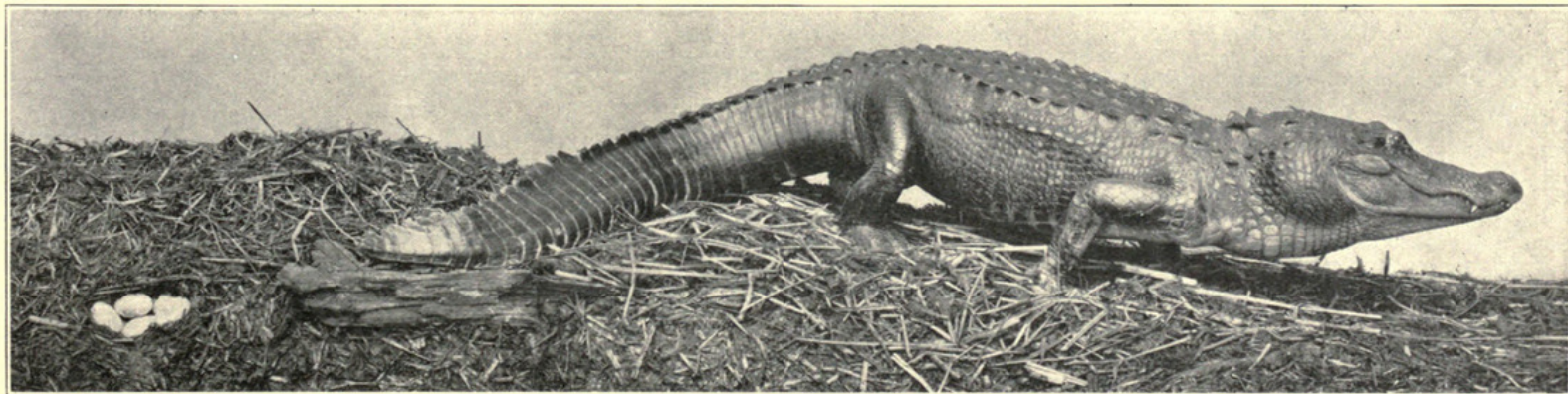
The remarkable nest-building habit which is characteristic of the American alligator is shown in Field Museum's exhibit of this species, recently installed in Albert W. Harris Hall (Hall 18). This exhibit includes a cellulose-acetate reproduction of an adult female alligator with a reconstructed nest which is broken at one side to show the large, hard-shelled eggs.

Materials, photographs, notes and specimens of alligators were obtained for this purpose by Leon L. Walters, Staff Taxidermist, with the aid of the well-known naturalist, H. L. Stoddard (formerly a member of the Museum's staff), in southern Georgia. The largest nest found contained seventy-five eggs, the record number for a single nest. The nests are made by the female alligator by piling together cat-tails, sedge, and other vegetation and debris into a mound like the muskrat nests of our northern swamps.

The female alligator remains in the neighborhood of the nest, and is said to guard it and to aid the young to escape through the matted vegetation when the eggs hatch. Whether or not this is true, the loud cry of the young can be heard just before hatching.

The warmth of the nest is entirely depended upon for the incubation of the eggs. The growth of the alligator is relatively rapid. When first hatched it is about eight inches long, and some full-grown ones attain a length of more than twelve feet by the end of the fifteenth year, studies of captive specimens have revealed. The sizes at maturity vary widely, however, being directly dependent upon the amount of food available.

The exhibit was prepared by Taxidermist Walters, assisted by Edgar G. Laybourne. Available for comparison is the American crocodile shown in a habitat group which occupies an alcove adjacent to Harris Hall.



On Guard

Female of American alligator, alert to protect her nest of eggs, as shown in new exhibit in Albert W. Harris Hall.



Engel, Michael S. 1932. "American Alligator With Nest of Eggs Placed on Exhibition in Harris Hall." *Field Museum news* 3(6), 3-3.

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