

CIVETS AND MONGOOSES ADDED TO MAMMAL EXHIBITS

The most interesting and important members of the civet and mongoose family are shown in a new exhibit in Hall 15. Most famous of the twenty-one animals included is the Indian mongoose, immortalized by Kipling as "Riki-tiki-tavi," and noted for its activities as a killer of poisonous snakes. The Museum specimen is represented attacking a mountain viper. Shown also is an Abyssinian relative which likewise feeds on venomous snakes.

Another animal shown is the "toddy-cat," known more formally as the palm civet, which remains concealed in treetops during the daytime, and comes out to feed at night, according to Dr. Wilfred H. Osgood, Curator of Zoology. It gets its name from its habit of drinking the contents of buckets which natives fasten to the palm trees to collect for a beverage sap from holes they bore in the trunks. Less bibulous palm civets from French Indo-China and the East Indies are also shown.



Snake Killer

Indian mongoose shown attacking mountain viper. One of the new series of civets and mongooses placed on exhibition in Hall 15.

Likewise in the exhibit is the "bear cat" whose name provided the public with a once popular slang expression. This animal, known also as the binturong, is one of the largest species of civet, and is distinguished by a long prehensile tail with which it can climb almost as agilely as a prehensile-tailed monkey.

Several animals shown are rare, notably the cat-like fossa, largest carnivorous mammal of Madagascar. Of interest is the slender-tailed meerkat of Bechuanaland, South Africa, as much a sunlight faddist as any human habitue of our beaches, which spends hours sitting on its haunches or lying on its back to expose its under side to sun rays. Specimens are shown, too, of the large and small Chinese civets, both of which produce from a special gland the civet secretion used as a base in many perfumes. Respected by the coconut growers of French Indo-China is the white-eared palm civet because it is said to be useful in checking the depredations of squirrels upon the coconuts.

Other animals in the exhibit are the small-toothed mongoose and the brown mongoose of Madagascar, the banded civet of the East Indies, the spotted tiger civet of French Indo-China, and the following African species: bushy-tailed meerkat, rusty-spotted genet, banded mongoose, lesser African mongoose, African slender mongoose, two-spotted civet, and water mongoose. These animals, all related, live on a wide range of diets as shown by the exhibited specimens, many of which are seen with their favorite foods. Some eat vegetables and fruits, some eat fish, some eat small rodents, some eat snakes, and some eat crocodile eggs.

Many specimens shown result from the collecting of recent Field Museum expeditions, including the Crane Pacific Expedition, Delacour Indo-Chinese Expedition, William V. Kelley-Roosevelts Asiatic Expedition, C. Suydam Cutting Expedition to Sikkim, Vernay-Lang Kalahari Expedition, Marshall Field Chinese Expedition, Conover-Everard African Expedition, and *Chicago Daily News*-Field Museum Abyssinian Expedition. Taxidermy is by Arthur G. Rueckert, of the Museum's zoological staff.

A PLANT NEW TO CHICAGO AREA PUNCTURES AUTOMOBILE TIRES

BY PAUL C. STANDLEY
Associate Curator of the Herbarium

Automobile owners of the Chicago region may have to contend with a new problem in addition to those already confronting them. The new menace is a small creeping plant of innocent appearance, which hides beneath its leaves hard burs that in some regions already have become a source of continued annoyance and expense to drivers.

Field Museum has received from Miss Nellie V. Haynie of Oak Park specimens of this plant which she discovered recently at Clark, Indiana. Native of the Mediterranean region, this noxious plant was introduced some years ago into the western United States, where it has made itself thoroughly at home, especially along the edges of roads. In the desert areas of the Southwest it spreads with great rapidity, doubtless by the aid of automobiles and passing animals, to which its burs adhere.

These burs, although small, have several projecting spines almost as long and hard as tacks. One of the spines always projects upward when a bur lies on the ground, and it is stiff enough to penetrate tire casings, where it remains and finally punctures the inner tube. The state of California, in which the plant, appropriately called the "puncture vine," is especially abundant, is spending \$150,000 a year in a tardy attempt to exterminate the pest. The puncture vine thrives best in dry regions, and on that account there is less reason to fear it will become thoroughly established about Chicago, although the dunes of Lake Michigan probably afford a favorable place for its growth.

Russian Scientist Is Museum Guest

Dr. N. I. Vavilov, Director of the Institute of Plant Industry in Leningrad, recently spent a day at Field Museum in conference with members of the staff of the Department of Botany. He brought news of great scientific activity in the U.S.S.R., and told of Soviet expeditions to South America seeking plants for introduction into Russia. He also told of a new rubber plant discovered within U.S.S.R. territory. This plant, he says, grows in a temperate climate, yields a large percentage of usable rubber, and may attain commercial importance.

HOW PEANUTS GROW SHOWN IN NEW EXHIBIT

BY B. E. DAHLGREN
Acting Curator, Department of Botany

The peanut is of interest for its habit of maturing its seeds under ground, a peculiarity also of a few other legumes. Its small yellow pea-like flowers are produced like most others in the leaf axils, but after pollination, when the petals are shed, the individual flower stalks elongate, turn downward, and continue to grow, sometimes

enormously, until the tip of each becomes buried. Then the minute ovary in the tip begins to grow, and in time forms the fruit or seed pod which we know as the peanut or ground nut.

The peanut, now cultivated in most warm or mild temperate regions, is originally a South American plant existing in its wild state in Brazil. Introduced into Peru, it developed a distinct variety, which was carried to Mexico by the Spaniards, and to Asia by early European navigators of the Pacific. The peanut of the east coast of South America was carried to Africa by slave traders who found it convenient provender for their human cargoes. The peanuts commonly cultivated in the United States were originally obtained from Mexico and are thus mainly of the Peruvian variety.

The "maní" of the peanut vender's song appears to be a word of negro derivation from the Gold Coast and Angola, where "mane" means foreign. It is now in use in Cuba and in Central America. The term "goober" is likewise of African origin. The Mexicans called it "cacahuatl," earth cacao, and this name, under which it was introduced in Europe, persists, little altered, in French and Spanish.

A reproduction of a peanut plant prepared in the Stanley Field Plant Reproduction Laboratories of the Museum has been placed on exhibition in Hall 25.



Peanut Plant

Exhibit in Hall 25 showing how a popular food product grows. Prepared by Stanley Field Plant Reproduction Laboratories.

DEATH OF OUTRAM BANGS

Museum workers, especially ornithologists, have suffered a severe loss in the death of Outram Bangs, which occurred September 22. Mr. Bangs was for many years Curator of Birds at the Museum of Comparative Zoology, Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he had built up what was admittedly the most comprehensive and well-rounded collection of foreign birds in America. His knowledge of foreign birds was prodigious and his contributions to the subject were many. Owing to his special interest in the birds of Asia, the collections recently made by the William V. Kelley-Roosevelts Expedition to Eastern Asia for Field Museum were submitted to him for study, and reports prepared by him have been published by Field Museum.



Dahlgren, B. E. 1932. "How Peanuts Grow shown in New Exhibit." *Field Museum news* 3(11), 3-3.

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