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GROUP SHOWS GIANT ORIOLES COLLECTED BY MANDEL GUATEMALA EXPEDITION

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Oropendulas, or giant orioles, belong to the family of blackbirds and orioles so well represented in the United States by meadowlarks, grackles, cowbirds, bobolinks and orioles. They are indeed most closely related to the orioles whose well known pendant type of nest architecture they have improved on tremendously. They are found throughout the forests and clearings of Central and South America, from Southern Mexico to Brazil and Peru. About twelve species belonging to half a dozen genera are known. All of them are relatively large, the size of a small crow, and all are characterized by the fascinating colonial nesting habits illustrated in the accompanying picture.

This photograph represents a group recently installed in Hall 20, showing a portion of a nesting colony of Montezuma's oropendula. It is the gift of Mr. Leon Mandel, and was collected during the Mandel Guatemala Expedition by Messrs. Emmet R. Blake, Assistant Curator of Birds, and Karl P. Schmidt, Curator of Reptiles. The birds were mounted and installed by Staff Taxidermist John W. Moyer, the plant accessories are by Preparator Frank Letl and the scenic background was painted by Mr. Arthur G. Rueckert.

The giant tree in which the colony was found was about one hundred feet high and six feet in diameter. After vainly attempting to climb the straight branchless trunk to the eighty-foot level at which the nests swung, Messrs. Blake and Schmidt resorted to their axes. Five hours of steady chopping brought the tree crashing

to the ground. Although the colony of 138 nests was well populated with birds they were much gratified to discover that only a half dozen were actually occupied, no more than enough to supply the data needed for the construction of the group. One of the intricately woven nests was six feet long and the gourd-shaped nest chamber at the bottom a foot in diameter. In some cases two or three nests closely crowded together had

ing and posturing before each other in characteristic attitudes of courtship, defence and play. An adult is attacking a rice grackle which parasitizes the oropendulas. The female grackles wait for opportunities to slip into the orioles' bag-shaped nests where they lay their eggs, leaving them to be incubated and the young grackles to be raised to maturity by the oropendulas. In this interesting habit the rice grackles resemble our American cowbird and the European cuckoo.

Another bird, the striped flycatcher (*Legatus*), also imposes on the oropendulas. The flycatchers are much smaller than the orioles, but gain their objective by sheer persistence and tenacity of purpose. Eventually they drive a pair of orioles away from their nest and the flycatchers then build their own nest within the larger one, and there raise their own family.

The background shows a savanna, dotted here and there with patches of forest, in the Motagua valley in eastern Guatemala. Man-made clearings in the forest seem to be favorable to the Montezuma oropendulas. The only undisturbed regions in which their nests were found were along river banks where the expanse of water provided them with the same breadth of view and lack of constraint that the savanna clearings seem to do. Because of the exposed situations and

the tremendous isolated trees that the birds prefer, the colonies of the giant orioles are conspicuous features of the landscape wherever they occur in Central and South America, and they are well known to many persons who have traveled in those regions.



Giant Oriole Group in Hall 20

These South American birds, also known as oropendulas, are noted for their long hanging nests, a number of which may be seen in the exhibit. The specimens were collected by Assistant Curator Emmet R. Blake who was ornithologist on an expedition sponsored and led by Mr. Leon Mandel, of Chicago. The group was prepared by Staff Taxidermist John W. Moyer; Mr. Arthur G. Rueckert painted the background, and accessories were made under the supervision of Preparator Frank H. Letl.

been interwoven throughout their length, making a sort of swaying "duplex apartment."

The group shows a section of a colony containing about twelve nests. Eight or ten adults, the males about one and one-half times as large as the females, are busy weav-

Marshall Field Provides Scientific Equipment

Several thousand dollars' worth of scientific equipment, long needed in the various Departments of the Museum for the proper continuation and expansion of many types of research, has recently been provided through the generosity of Mr. Marshall Field, a Trustee of the Museum. For a long time some members of the staff have been hampered in their work through the lack of adequate facilities, and this gift will greatly increase effectiveness of future activities.

Leaflet on Autumn Flowers

With the arrival of September, timely reading for flower enthusiasts is offered in the Field Museum Leaflet *Autumn Flowers and Fruits*. This little book, with thirty pages of text, illustrated with a color plate, two collotype plates, and twenty-eight half-tones, is by J. Francis Macbride, Associate Curator of the Museum Herbarium. At the BOOK SHOP of FIELD MUSEUM—25 cents.

Change in Visiting Hours Begins September 6

Field Museum visiting hours, which have been 9 A.M. to 6 P.M. daily during the summer months, will change to the autumn schedule—9 A.M. to 5 P.M.—on Tuesday, September 6, the day after Labor Day. These hours will continue until October 31. On November 1 the winter hours, 9 A.M. to 4 P.M. will go into effect, continuing until February 28. During the latter period, however, the Museum will be open until 5 P.M. on Sundays.



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