

EGGS OF ODD SHAPES, SIZES, AND COLORS, EXHIBITED

A temporary exhibit of a selection of some of the world's most interesting birds' eggs has been installed in Stanley Field Hall. Originally placed on view as a special feature for the Easter week-end, it proved so popular among Museum visitors that it was decided not to withdraw it for several weeks. Ultimately, it is planned to substitute a more extensive permanent exhibit of eggs.

EVEN "TRIANGULAR" EGGS!

In the present exhibit are included eggs of various shapes, sizes and colors—eggs of long extinct birds, the smallest known birds' eggs, and a replica of the largest egg known. In addition to those of the familiar oval shape, there are approximately triangular eggs of shore birds, laid in groups of four which fit together in a nest like the pieces of a cut pie; tapered conical eggs of murre, and the round eggs of owls which are almost as spherical as billiard balls. The conical murre's eggs represent an example of Nature's provisions for "safety first." These eggs are not laid in nests, but directly on the rocks on high cliffs in the Arctic wildernesses they inhabit, where high winds blow. The conical shape causes them to roll in a circle when blown by the wind, instead of rolling off the cliffs to disaster.

The eggs in this special exhibit are selected from the Museum's vast study collection which comprises more than 60,000 specimens. The greater part of these were collected and presented by the Hon. R. Magoon Barnes, of Lacon, Illinois, Curator of Birds' Eggs. This collection is one of the largest and most important in America.

Among the eggs shown are those of the South American tinamous, remarkable for their pastel colors and a characteristic glaze that makes them appear as though they were made of glass; and eggs of the mound-builder birds which have a bisque-like texture resembling pottery. The mound-builders' eggs are laid in mounds and abandoned by their parents. Incubation is accomplished by rotting vegetation, and the young birds when thus hatched out are able to shift for themselves from the start, states Mr. Rudyerd Boulton, Curator of Birds.

A NINE-QUART EGG

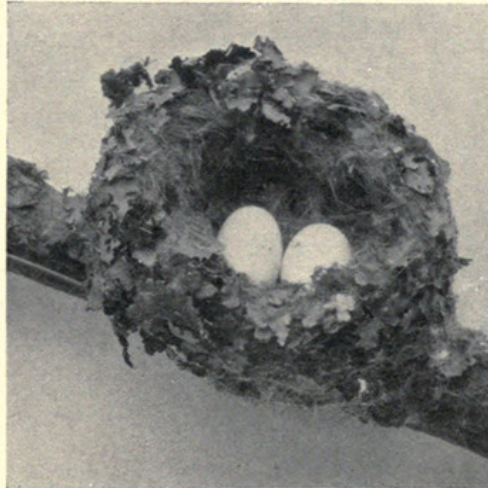
The tiniest eggs shown are those of hummingbirds—scarcely the size of small coffee beans. The largest egg is that of the extinct *Aepyornis*, one of the three largest birds that ever lived. This bird attained statures exceeding eleven feet in height. Its eggs were as much as fifteen inches long, and had a capacity of about one and three-quarters gallons. The specimen exhibited is a replica, cast from a mold made over an original specimen in the possession of the Museum (the original is too rare to risk in an exhibit). Several of these replicas

have been prepared by Mr. James H. Quinn, Assistant in the Museum's paleontological laboratories. The largest eggs of modern birds are those of the ostrich, which average about five and one-half inches in length by five inches in diameter. Cubically measured, one *Aepyornis* egg equals about six ostrich eggs, and about ten dozen hens' eggs.

Aepyornis is probably the inspiration of the many legends about the mythical "roc" (or "ruhk") which figured in the *Arabian Nights*. Rocs were supposed to feed their young on full-grown elephants which they carried to their nests, and to drop heavy boulders on the ships of early traders and sink them. It was in such an "air raid" that Sindbad the Sailor was wrecked, according to the story.

FOUND FLOATING AT SEA

Nests of the *Aepyornis* were made in the sand dunes of southwestern Madagascar. Eggs from these were often washed out by wave action, and then found floating at sea by Arab and Indian mariners. The sailors



Tiny Nest of Hummingbird, and Eggs

Illustration is about actual size. Dimensions of the nest are: $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches in length, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in width, $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches in outside depth, and $\frac{5}{8}$ inch in inside depth.

were naturally led to speculate as to what sort of bird could have laid such large eggs and thus the roc legends arose, according to Curator Boulton.

Rare Books From Colonel Roosevelt

Two beautiful illuminated religious manuscripts from Tibet, written on parchment in the ornate Tibetan script, and bound in elaborate wooden covers, were recently presented to the Library of Field Museum by Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, of New York, a Trustee of the institution.

\$1,250,000 for Glass

The plate glass required for the protection of exhibits in Field Museum runs into notable figures. The total amount used in all Museum cases is approximately 2,100,000 square feet, and represents a value of more than \$1,250,000.

A GEOLOGICAL COLLECTION OF HISTORIC INTEREST

The Department of Geology has received, as a gift from Dr. Henry Field, Curator of Physical Anthropology, a large and valuable collection of minerals and fossils numbering more than 1,500 specimens. The collection derives much of its interest and significance from the fact that the specimens contained in it were collected or acquired more than 120 years ago by the Misses Salisbury of Baggrave Hall, Leicestershire, England. Before their death in the 1820's, these remarkable women had collected minerals and fossils from many of the now "classical" localities both in Great Britain and on the continent, and had acquired mineral specimens from points as distant as California, Siberia, and the East Indies.

Eight hundred of the specimens are invertebrate fossils, including assemblages of forms from the famous English localities of Wenlock, Lyme Regis, and the chalk cliffs, as well as from deposits of many other ages and places. Among the mineral specimens, of which there are more than 600, are representative examples of the varied and, in some cases, rare minerals of Cornwall, Devon, Cumberland and Derbyshire, as well as fine collections from Arendal, Norway, and the Vesuvius region in Italy.

In addition to providing a great deal of material for study, some of it from localities in which such specimens can no longer be obtained, this collection will enhance the exhibits, and will provide some material for educational use by the N. W. Harris Public School Extension. A specimen of Cumberland fluorite from this collection has been added to the fluorescence display between Halls 34 and 35. —L. B. M., Jr.

Higinbotham Portrait Received

A painting of the late Harlow N. Higinbotham, who was the second President of Field Museum, serving in that capacity from 1898 to 1908, has been presented to the Museum by Mrs. Richard T. Crane.

HIGHLY INSTRUCTIVE—

"*Handicraft*, by Lester Griswold, is an exceptionally complete instruction book of applied arts that answers more questions than one would expect from a book of its size," states Dr. Paul S. Martin, Chief Curator of Anthropology at Field Museum. "Scout leaders and other students of Indian crafts will find especially useful the chapters on leather working, weaving, pottery-making, stone-working, and other primitive arts."

Craft Edition (flexible cover) \$2.50;
Library Edition (cloth cover) \$3.50.

On sale at the BOOK SHOP of
FIELD MUSEUM.



1939. "1,250,000 for Glass." *Field Museum news* 10(5), 3-3.

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