

feathers of the rump and lower back. The eastern varieties have deep rich chestnut colored tips to the feathers. The farther south and west one goes, the lighter these become until they are almost white in Mexico. From this character one can be sure that our domesticated turkeys are derived wholly from the Mexican birds that were taken to Europe by the conquistadores. The darker and larger wild turkey of the eastern states was not much involved in the development of the various kinds of domesticated turkeys. The most common variety is the bronze turkey. Buff, black, white, and steel gray varieties are also propagated.

On the average, none of the domesticated varieties are as large as the eastern wild turkey. An old gobbler of the latter form frequently weighs as much as thirty pounds. It might be expected that such heavy birds would not be strong fliers. Yet, of their own free will, they always roost in trees to which, of course, they must fly. When alarmed, a turkey's first method of escape is by running, but when closely pressed and really frightened it readily takes to the wing and flies across wide rivers and mountain valleys with ease.

Few birds are more alert and wary than a wild turkey. Their sight and hearing are especially keen, and at the slightest suspicion of danger they take themselves to safer places. For this reason, if for no other, turkey hunting probably requires more skill and woodcraft than any other kind of hunting in North America. Turkeys are sometimes shot at dusk or dawn while they are roosting. That, of course, can hardly be called hunting in the true sense of the word. Any hunter who successfully stalks a wild turkey, or who knows enough "turkey talk" to succeed in having one respond to his call, must be regarded as an especially qualified woodsman.

The voice of a turkey, aside from the "gobble" of the cocks during the strutting season, is quite disproportionate to its size and noble bearing. It is quite a plaintive "peeping" that can be readily imitated by a piece of slate on a hardwood box, a whistle made from a turkey's hollow wing bone, or even by a blade of grass. The nuances of tone, inflection and timing are as obvious to the turkey's ear as the various American dialects are to our ears. The slightest false note gives the deception away and the turkey stealthily vanishes.

The habitat group of wild turkeys in Hall 20 was prepared by Staff Taxidermist Julius Friesser, and has a background painted by the late Charles A. Corwin, former Staff Artist. Field Museum's Zoological Leaflet No. 6, *The Wild Turkey*, by Mr. John T. Zimmer, formerly Assistant Curator of Birds, gives many interesting details of turkey history, turkey lore, and turkey habits that limited space prevents discussing here.

## SATURDAY LECTURES FOR ADULTS CONTINUE THROUGH NOVEMBER

Four more lectures in Field Museum's free Autumn Course for adults remain to be given on Saturday afternoons during November. All are to be illustrated with motion pictures or stereopticon slides. The lectures are given in the James Simpson Theatre of the Museum, and all begin at 2:30 P.M. Admission is restricted to adults. Following are dates, subjects and speakers:

### November 4—Wonders of Plant Life

Arthur C. Pillsbury, Berkeley, California

### November 11—What is Biblical Archaeology and Why?

Dr. Nelson Glueck, Director of American School of Oriental Research, Jerusalem

### November 18—The Tundra Speaks

Dr. Arthur C. Twomey, Carnegie Museum

### November 25—Stratosphere Exploration

Major Chester L. Fordney, Great Lakes, Illinois

No tickets are necessary for admission to these lectures. A section of the Theatre is reserved for Members of the Museum, each of whom is entitled to two reserved seats on request. Requests for these seats may be made in advance by telephone (Wabash 9410) or in writing, and seats will be held in the Member's name until 2:30 o'clock of the lecture day. Seats not claimed by 2:30 will be made available to the public.

## "ALCOHOL" WAS ONCE THE NAME OF A SOLID MINERAL

By L. BRYANT MATHER, JR.  
ASSISTANT CURATOR OF MINERALOGY

To say that the name *alcohol* was once properly used only for a mineral species may sound very strange—indeed, some question may be raised as to the writer's personal familiarity with the substance that has now usurped that name. Yet, when the word came to Europe in the sixteenth century, from the Arabic, it was as a mineral name. The mineral thus designated is now known as *stibnite*, and fine specimens of it are to be seen at Field Museum in Hall 34 (Cases 7 and 11).

This mineral, long known, has been used as a cosmetic since ancient times. Stone receptacles and bronze applicators for this substance were used by the Egyptians (2000 B.C.—300 A.D.). Examples of these objects, known as *kohl jars* and *kohl sticks*, may be seen in Hall J (Archaeology of Egypt, Case 32). Among the Greeks it was known as πλατυοφθαλμον from πλατυς meaning *wide* and οφθαλμος meaning *eye*, since the powdered mineral was used to increase the apparent size of the eye. Among the Arabs it was known as *kohl*, from *kahala*, meaning to color or to stain. In the theatrical profession the black powder used for blackening the eyelids is still called *kohl*, perhaps the only vestige in contemporary language of the original Arabic usage. The earliest use of the word *al-kohl* (*kohl* with

the definite article *al*) seems to have been in 1623 by Minshew, who wrote: "Alcohol is a drug, sometimes called antimonium, used to color the eyebrows." Francis Bacon in 1626 wrote: "The Turkes have a Black Powder, made from a Mineral called Alcohol, which, with a fine long pencil they lay under the Eyelids." Thus, as a mineral name, the word "alcohol" was introduced into Europe.

Before the science of mineralogy, and its nomenclature, became systematized, the word had changed in meaning and, in effect, the mineral had lost its name. Alcohol became a general term for all sublimed powders and later for all distillates. In these stages of the evolution of the word we find phrases such as "alcohol of sulphur" and "alcohol of wine" being used for sublimates and distillates. In the last century the use of the word has again been restricted by chemists, not to a mineral species, but to a class of organic compounds containing the hydroxyl group (OH). The best known of these are methyl (wood) alcohol CH<sub>3</sub>OH, and ethyl (grain) alcohol C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>5</sub>OH.

What then, we may ask, happened to the mineral after its name had been lost through these devious changes? Among the Greeks there seem to have been other names that were applied both to the mineral and to the metal antimony extracted from it. These names were *στιβι* (*stibi*) and *στιμμι* (*stimmi*). The Latin language took over *στιβι* and made it *stibium*, as a name for the metal antimony, from which term we derive the present chemical symbol of the element—Sb. Thus when F. S. Beudant, the French mineralogist, in 1832, was looking for a new name for the mineral he decided to call it *stibine*. The English name *stibnite* was given by J. D. Dana, the American mineralogist, in 1854, as a modification of Beudant's name.

## THIS MONTH AT THE MUSEUM

From various schedules which will be found in this issue of FIELD MUSEUM NEWS, it will be seen that there are special events scheduled for the entertainment and instruction of Museum visitors every day during November. On Saturdays, in the morning there will be the Raymond Foundation motion picture programs for children, and in the afternoon the illustrated lectures on science and travel for adults, both presented in the James Simpson Theatre. On Sunday afternoons there will be the lectures and tours conducted by Mr. Paul G. Dallwig, the Layman Lecturer. Daily from Monday to Friday inclusive there will be presented guide-lecture tours conducted by members of the Museum staff.





Mather, Bryant. 1939. "'Alcohol" was Once the Name of a Solid Mineral." *Field Museum news* 10(11), 2-2.

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