

YUCATAN EXPEDITION OBTAINS REMARKABLE COLLECTIONS

One of the largest and most comprehensive collections of birds and reptiles ever collected in the states of Yucatan and Campeche, Mexico, has recently been received by Field Museum. The bird collection numbers 731 specimens, including 200 different forms, the majority of which are from southern Campeche, a region but little known ornithologically. The herpetological collection of more than 1,000 specimens, mostly from northern Yucatan, includes some 600 snakes, by far the most comprehensive collection made in that area. Naturally, in a collection of this size, a great many rare forms are included.

These collections are the results of the expedition co-sponsored and conducted by Messrs. Melvin Traylor, Jr. and E. Wylls Andrews during the fall and winter of 1939-40. The two explorers attended the International Congress of Americanists in Mexico City last August, and after completing their preparations there, flew to Yucatan late in September. October and November were spent collecting at Chichen-Itza in northern Yucatan, where work was greatly facilitated by the co-operation of the Carnegie Institution of Washington which made available the use of its *hacienda*.

The party left for southern Campeche early in December. Through the kindness of Mr. Cecil Branson, Manager of the Laguna Corporation, the collectors were able to make their headquarters for a month at Matamoras, the main chicle camp of that company. From there they flew to Pacaitun, on the Candelaria River, where six weeks were spent completing the collections. During the stay in Campeche, Mr. Andrews took several extensive reconnaissance trips, making the first complete archaeological survey of the area.

The expedition returned to Merida, Yucatan, in March, and to Chicago in April.

WPA Exhibit at Museum

A special exhibit illustrating the scope of the work in which Field Museum has been assisted by the Work Projects Administration was held in George M. Pullman Hall, May 20-25. It was part of the national exhibits presented by WPA projects in all parts of the country during what was termed "This Work Pays Your Community Week."

At present the number of WPA workers on the Museum project is 170—as many as 219 have been employed in the past. The work done by these men and women, as was illustrated in the special exhibit, is extremely varied, and includes archaeological restorations, preparation of paleontological specimens, the making of anatomical models, fabrication of accessories for use in habitat groups and dioramas, preparation of botanical models, different types of art work,

photography, printing, and many forms of clerical work. Work actually in progress was demonstrated for the public, and guides conducted tours to point out the parts of various exhibits in the preparation of which WPA workers played an important role.

THINGS YOU MAY HAVE MISSED

The Tasmanian Devil

One of the most vicious faces to be found in the animal kingdom, and an extremely savage temperament in accord with this visage, are presented by the little Tasmanian devil. It is one of the strange marsupials or pouched mammals which are now confined to Australia and the Americas (represented by the common opossum in the United States).

In the exhibit of Australian marsupials in Hall 15 of Field Museum, the Tasmanian devil formerly shown has recently been



His Snarl is Perpetual

Australia's little Tasmanian devil has one of the meanest faces to be found among animals. His disposition is reputed to be likewise extremely unfriendly.

replaced by a much better specimen. This one is a gift to the Museum from the Chicago Zoological Society, and was mounted by Staff Taxidermist W. E. Eigsti.

The Tasmanian devil is a carnivorous burrowing mammal of nocturnal habits, and preys on birds, small wallabys, other small mammals, and even sheep. It also feeds on fish and frogs, and on carrion.

Its normal facial expression suggests a perpetual snarl. In confinement, both in zoos and where individuals have tried to make a pet of it, it has usually proved untamable. It resists human approaches by uttering a low whining growl, and by biting. It attains a size approximating that of a badger. Like most marsupials, it carries its young in an abdominal pouch.

The order of marsupials, which includes, besides the Tasmanian devil and the opossum, such animals as kangaroos, wombats, and koalas among others, was formerly more widely distributed. Those that reached Australia and were there cut off from their northern relatives, and from competition with more modern types, developed a unique variety of structure and habits under their long continued isolation in that "island continent."

Impressive for its large size is the fruit cluster of a raffia palm exhibited in Hall 25.

BOOK ON MISSOURI FLORA BY MUSEUM BOTANIST

A *Spring Flora of Missouri*, by Dr. Julian A. Steyermark, Assistant Curator of the Herbarium of Field Museum, was recently published jointly by the Missouri Botanical Garden, of St. Louis, and Field Museum. It is the most comprehensive spring flora ever issued for any state. Each of the 1,400 species of plants which bloom before June 1 is illustrated by a drawing, and there are more than 400 diagrams for keys to families, genera, and species included in its 582 pages. The book is notable for presenting its data in simple non-technical English, yet with thorough scientific accuracy. Thus it satisfies the needs both of the lay reader and the scientist. The illustrated keys, the use of both metric and English measurements, and a glossary of the English meanings of all the specific scientific names of species, are all departures from the usual style in works of this kind, and increase the book's usefulness for convenient reference.

The contents include extensive information about the wild flowers, trees, and shrubs. Most of the plants described and illustrated are found in Illinois and adjacent states, so the book's value is not limited to Missouri. It is available in paper binding at \$2.75; in cloth, \$3. It may be obtained from The Book Shop of Field Museum (prepaid mail orders will be accepted).

Museum in Recreation Conference

Field Museum was a co-sponsor of the Conference on Nature Recreation and Education held April 24 under the auspices of the Illinois Federation of Women's Clubs, with the Chicago Park District co-operating. The Museum was represented by Mr. John R. Millar, Curator of the N. W. Harris Public School Extension which prepared an exhibit illustrating the educational work of the institution, and Mrs. Leota G. Thomas, of the staff of the James Nelson and Anna Louise Raymond Foundation for Public School and Children's Lectures. Mrs. Thomas was one of the speakers in a symposium on "Opportunities Offered in Nature Education."

The conference was called to bring together and co-ordinate the efforts of organizations in the Chicago area concerned with leisure activities and informal education. Other agencies represented included the University of Illinois, University of Chicago, Adler Planetarium, Chicago Academy of Sciences, Trailside Museum, Morton Arboretum, Forest Preserve District of Cook County, Chicago Recreation Commission, National Park Service, Wild Flower Preservation Society, Catholic Youth Organization, Chicago Board of Education, Chicago Council of Social Agencies, Garden Club of Illinois, Illinois Congress of Parents and Teachers, Izaak Walton League, and Progressive Education Association.



1940. "Books on Missouri Flora by Botanist." *Field Museum news* 11(6), 3-3.

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