

Chicago Natural History Museum

FOUNDED BY MARSHALL FIELD, 1893

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Members are requested to inform the Museum promptly of changes of address.

ARTHUR GEORGE RUECKERT

1891-1948

The unexpected death of Staff Artist Arthur G. Rueckert on October 28 came as a shock to his friends and associates, by whom he was held in high esteem for his many admirable traits of character and unquestioned ability as



A. G. RUECKERT

artist and museum technician. His death marks the passing of another of the never numerous individuals of a retiring generation who, by reason of their native interest in natural history coupled with a combination of craftsman skills and ability as an artist, were admirably fitted to contribute much to the development of exhibition work in natural history museums.

Mr. Rueckert received early training and practical experience in his chosen vocation, first with a firm of commercial taxidermists, then with the Illinois Department of Agriculture and the Chicago Academy of Sciences. He joined the staff of the Museum in 1923 as taxidermist-preparator in the N. W. Harris Public School Extension. In the division of taxidermy of the Department of Zoology, to which he was soon transferred,

opportunities arose for the fullest development of his many talents as artist and technician, and also as collector on field trips and expeditions, the principal one of which was the Second Rawson-MacMillan Sub-Arctic Expedition of Field Museum in 1927-28.

It was characteristic of Mr. Rueckert to apply himself wholly to the task at hand and first and always to acquaint himself thoroughly with the subject matter of a proposed exhibit before executing plans and beginning construction. All his work was conspicuous for its conscientious attention to detail and the clean-cut accuracy of its portrayal. Taxidermy in all its categories of fish, reptiles, birds, and mammals, the making of sketches of many kinds, were but some of the elements of his versatility.

Mr. Rueckert's talent for drawing and painting, which he developed through schooling at the Art Institute of Chicago, qualified him as an understudy of the late Charles Abel Corwin. In 1939, shortly after the latter's death, Mr. Rueckert was appointed as his successor as Staff Artist. Many of the backgrounds in habitat groups and a number of large mural paintings that were done subsequently by Mr. Rueckert compare favorably with the best of their kind. Always modest, he deprecated his status as an artist and claimed only to be a painter.

The loss to the Museum by his death is great. Valued workers like Mr. Rueckert are the product of a peculiar concomitance of circumstances that are not likely to recur in the history of a museum. The total of their skill is based on native talent and interests nurtured through a variety of experiences over a long period of time and covering a stage in Museum development that, once having passed, will not occur again.

THE NAVAHO—AN ESSAY IN PHOTOGRAPHS

In recent months, the Navahos have been the subject of investigations by certain members of Congress and newspapers and news agencies. A picture-story of the life of the Navahos is presented in a special exhibit to be on view in Stanley Field Hall of the Museum from December 3 to 31, inclusive, under the auspices of *Life Magazine*.

The photographs shown are selected from among hundreds taken by Mr. Leonard McCombe, who was assigned to spend many weeks in studies among this people of the Southwest—a "nation" of some 61,000 persons. The exhibit is divided into three general sections:

1. *Family Life*. The first series of panels is devoted to the Yellowsalt family, a family that lives 161 miles from the nearest white town. There are pictures of herding, butchering, baking, and other scenes of home life.

Then follows a visit to the trading post where all business is transacted.

2. *Ritual*. This sequence includes the impressive puberty ceremony, which lasts five days and in which a young girl prepares for the ceremony that makes her a woman. Also included is a picture of the purification-by-sweating ceremony. The photographs in this latter sequence were made under great difficulties, the only light coming from an intensely hot wood fire in the center of the hogan.

3. *Between Two Worlds*. The young English-speaking Navahos are faced with the painful necessity of choosing between their own culture and that of the whites. The panels in this sequence are concerned with some of the problems of these transitional Americans.

Photo Exhibit Deadline Near

The Nature Camera Club of Chicago calls attention to the fact that the deadline for entries in the Fourth Chicago International Nature Photography Exhibition is January 17. The exhibition will be held in Chicago Natural History Museum from February 1 to 28, inclusive.

Distinguished Foreign Visitors

The Museum was recently visited by Mr. Richard T. M. Pescott, Director of the National Museum of Victoria, at Melbourne, Australia, and Mr. Wang Shih-Hsiang, Curator of the Department of Antiquities, at The National Palace Museum of Peiping.

The results of natural selection in wild pigeons and artificial selection in domestic varieties are shown in an exhibit in Hall 21.

THIS MONTH'S COVER

Winter in the Chicago area is perhaps best typified by the flocks of gulls and certain hardy waterfowl that appear along the lake front with the advent of severe weather. Thousands of gulls, both herring and ring-billed, congregate to scavenge near the water front from September onward. Flocks of mergansers, old-squaw and golden-eye ducks, or other northern visitors commonly form great floating rafts offshore in December and linger beyond the ice floes all winter.

A scene typical of bird life on the Chicago lake front in winter is reproduced in a habitat group in Hall 20 of the Museum, part of which is shown on the cover of this issue of the BULLETIN.



1948. "Arthur George Ruekert 1891--1948." *Bulletin* 19(12), 2-2.

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