

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.

A GLIMPSE OF NEW ZEALAND

Mr. Karl P. Schmidt, Chief Curator of Zoology, makes the following report on his recent trip "down under":

As delegate of Chicago Natural History Museum and of the National Research Council to the Seventh Pacific Science Congress, it was my privilege to journey from the Northern to the Southern Hemisphere, from midwinter to midsummer, and, at the International Date Line, from today to day after tomorrow. Meetings for programs and discussion, both formal and informal, were held at Auckland and Christchurch, New Zealand, February 2 to 22. The occasion was seized by our New Zealand hosts to show off their two great islands to their guests by means of especially instructive inter-sessional and post-sessional tours.

The benefits of such international gatherings, which bring men and women of the most diverse sciences and from varied countries into contact, are largely intangible, and many of these benefits have long-term rather than short-term effects. It is accordingly difficult to assess the values of programs and meetings, discussions and new friendships without some perspective of time. The most immediate impact on New Zealand science was perhaps made by the programs on oceanography and fisheries, by the discussions in the divisional meetings for agriculture on soil erosion, and by the symposia on conservation in general. As for the effect on the visiting delegates, it is my impression that the novelty of the New

Zealand scene in almost every aspect—geological, botanical, zoological, and cultural—by a kind of shock treatment, produced instant widening of mental horizon, quite like that of a first view of the tropics in my own personal experience.

With a few days available before the meetings and nearly two weeks after them, before the departure of my return plane, I was able



A TUATARA

A holdover from the Age of Reptiles, studied by Chief Curator of Zoology Karl P. Schmidt on recent New Zealand journey. Tuataras grow to a length of about two feet. Photograph made at Brothers Island, Cook Strait (courtesy New Zealand Travel Bureau).

to make some studies of New Zealand reptiles and amphibians and to obtain further glimpses of the plants and animals that make New Zealand so much a land of contrast with other temperate regions.

In the vegetation the great preponderance of ferns, especially beautiful tree ferns, is a conspicuous feature. The less conspicuous club mosses include links between major divisions of the plant kingdom. In the animal life, the extraordinary absence of all mammals and snakes, the extreme peculiarity of some of the types of birds, and, among the insects, an unusual proportion of "missing links" (i.e., links missing elsewhere in the world) give the original fauna an extremely archaic and thus extremely interesting character.

The first reaction of both botanist and zoologist to New Zealand may lie in a disappointment at finding so great a proportion of the island denuded of its original vegetation and such vast introductions of foreign plants and animals. The second reaction will be a thankfulness for the preservation of the remnants of original forest and fauna in the national parks and water-supply reserves, and a third lies in the realization of the unique interest of the phenomena of introduction and spread of the acclimatized plants and animals of Australia, Eurasia, and North America.

I was able to see the famous New Zealand tuatara, the lizard-like relic of the Age of Reptiles, on three small off-shore islands, and to form some estimate of the numbers of this remarkable reptile. It now seems certain that it is no longer in danger of extinction, thanks to government protection.

THIS MONTH'S COVER

The greatest of all bears—the Alaska brown bear—as shown in a new habitat group in Hall 16, is depicted on the cover of this BULLETIN. The large male standing erect on its hind feet at the right towers nearly nine feet above the ground.

"These bears, sometimes called fish bears, are not only the largest members of the bear family but also the largest flesh-eating animals in existence today," says Colin C. Sanborn, Curator of Mammals. "When full-grown, they stand over four feet at the shoulder, have a length of eight to nine feet, and may reach a weight of more than 1,500 pounds. During the summer they feed on salmon, which accounts for the name fish bear. At other times they eat kelp, berries, mice, and ground squirrels. Despite their gigantic size, they are shy and cautious and do not attack man unless they are cornered or greatly provoked, when their fury and power may lead them to kill."

An account of the collecting of the bear specimens, by Janice Street, who accompanied her husband, William S. Street, on the expedition that he sponsored and led for the Museum, is on page 3.

Museum Television Program—April 13

"Pride Goes to the Head," a special television sketch with an Easter bonnet motif, will be presented by members of the Museum staff on the "Women's Magazine of the Air," television program on WGN-TV. The presentation will be between 4:00 and 4:30 P.M. on Wednesday, April 13. Using examples of bizarre hats from both primitive and civilized peoples all over the world, selected from collections in the Department of Anthropology, the young women from the Museum will demonstrate that many of these are not much if any more grotesque than some of the creations of Paris, Hollywood, and New York millinery designers. Miss Harriet Smith, Mrs. June Buchwald, and Miss Lorain Farmer collaborated in the script, in which they will take the roles of two millinery designers and a Raymond Foundation staff member. This program is based on stories and materials to be used in a special Easter tour in the Museum on the following Friday, April 15.

Models of the solar system, the interior of the earth, and the visible half of the moon may be seen in Clarence Buckingham Hall.



Schmidt, Karl Patterson. 1949. "A Glimpse of New Zealand." *Bulletin* 20(4), 2-2.

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