

Chicago Natural History Museum

FOUNDED BY MARSHALL FIELD, 1893

Roosevelt Road and Lake Shore Drive, Chicago 5

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THE BULLETIN

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

'BIG GAME' HUNTING AND NATURAL HISTORY

Natural history museums everywhere have always had the support of hunters and fishermen, and many museums have had their origin in the interest of hunters of large or small game. Chicago Natural History Museum is no exception in this respect; it owes many fine habitat groups to special expeditions made for the Museum by big-game hunters, and many especially fine examples of large mammals have been acquired through individual gifts or private hunting trips. Indeed, there is an important relation between big-game hunting, the development of modern methods in taxidermy, and the rise of the great natural history museums. This is an interesting chapter in the history of museums that remains to be written. However, the gifts of heads of game animals, taken as trophies, would have been so numerous during the growth of the then Field Museum that it was realized at an early date that, as general Museum policy, even finely mounted game heads must be refused.

The existence of the Museum's study collections and of what is in effect an "Institute for Systematic Zoology" for their study is still not widely understood, in spite of the long series of publications in which we take as justifiable pride as in the exhibition halls. The recent gift to the Museum of a series of skulls of larger American carnivores, by Mr. S. H. Shirk,

of Peru, Indiana, points to the possibility of additions to the study collections from members and friends of the Museum.

The Museum staff is always willing to consult with and advise hunters of small or large game who may wish to make their interest in the Museum's work tangible in such specimens. The "study specimen" of a mammal consists of its skin and skull. Skulls alone of the larger mammals form valued additions to the collections, making possible the accurate mapping of animal distributions and the study of their variations. Such skulls often form a by-product of a hunting expedition that can be acquired for the Museum with little additional expense or trouble. With a little more effort, skeletons (which need merely be "roughed out" and dried) can be obtained. It is perhaps not easy to realize how many gaps remain to be filled in the Museum's collections. An ideal reference collection with all known forms of life represented is beyond actual attainment, but the staff is in fact indefatigably engaged in the addition of missing forms and in the addition of materials especially desired for study. Not long ago, in connection with the identification of animal bones for archaeologists, it was realized that the Museum did not have a single complete skeleton for study (except a mounted one on exhibition) of the common Virginia deer.

It is thought that other members of the Museum besides Mr. Shirk (who has been a member for more than twenty years) may be encouraged to consult the Museum staff as to gaps in the collections and as to desired specimens. It is perhaps not necessary to add that the enlistment of active interest in the Museum on the part of its members and patrons still represents a major need of the institution.

—K.P.S.

Expedition Collects Plants in Central America

Mr. Paul C. Standley, Curator of the Herbarium, reports that the expedition he has been conducting in Nicaragua and Honduras has located a large number of plants previously unrecorded from those countries. He has been collecting recently in parts of Nicaragua where the rainfall attains 225 inches annually. Among the interesting trees found by him in Nicaragua are a rare Costa Rican species *Lecythis costaricensis* of the monkey-pot family and a species of hackberry (*Celtis*) related to one in the United States but previously not known south of Guatemala. At present he is in Honduras.

Harris Extension Gets New Trucks

The N. W. Harris Public School Extension recently retired the two trucks that have carried its traveling exhibition cases to the schools of Chicago for the last thirteen years

—THIS MONTH'S COVER—

An exhibit of which the Museum is especially proud is the restoration of a luxuriant forest of the Coal Age (250 million years ago) in Ernest R. Graham Hall of Historical Geology (Hall 38). Our cover shows only a part of this large diorama; another part appears in an illustration on page 3. The scene represents an area now known as Mazon Creek, Illinois, near Morris, about 65 miles south and west of Chicago. The reconstructions of trees, plants, and animal life of the Pennsylvanian era are based on fossils. The giant dragonfly in the center of the picture had a wing spread of about two feet. The exhibit was prepared some years ago under the supervision of Dr. B. E. Dahlgren, then Chief Curator of the Department of Botany (now Curator Emeritus). Technicians in the Museum's Plant Reproduction Laboratories worked several years on the diorama, the background was contributed by the late Staff Artist Charles A. Corwin, and co-operation was extended by scientists in the Museum's Department of Geology, the University of Chicago, the United States National Museum, the American Museum of Natural History, and other institutions.

(The cover picture is copyrighted by the Museum.)

and replaced them with two new one-half-ton panel models. Special body interiors, with tiers of shelves for efficient handling of the Harris Extension cases, are being built in the trucks by Museum carpenters. The old trucks each had approximately 70,000 miles of service on the school circuits at the time of their retirement.

NEW MEMBERS

(June 16 to July 15)

Associate Members

John Albert Appleton, Harold L. Hoefman

Annual Members

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Schmidt, Karl Patterson. 1949. "Big Game Hunting and Natural History."
Bulletin 20(8), 2-2.

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