

SONG BIRDS OF WORLD IN EXHIBIT SHOWING RELATIONSHIP

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CURATOR OF BIRDS

METALLIC-HUED SUNBIRDS, gaudy tanagers, and brightly colored weaver birds, as well as duller sparrows, grackles, and starlings, a huia from New Zealand, a pepper shrike from South America, and a chipping sparrow from near home are among the song birds that ornament the latest addition to our bird exhibits in Hall 21. Not only does this addition augment our series

family being chosen as our basic unit, partly because popular knowledge has recognized families by giving them vernacular names, like shrikes, sparrows, warblers, tanagers, etc., and partly because it is a convenient unit.

The identity, as to species, of each bird is unimportant in this exhibit. For example, in the present exhibit the bull-finch, the snow bunting, and the crossbill are not there as such but are placed in the group of twelve

shown, also have a plaque to themselves. But just below the shrikes is a small plaque of "Shrike Allies" on which six smaller families—wood shrikes, vangas, wood swallows, pepper shrikes, vireo shrikes, and vireos—are shown by only eight birds. Though the bird family is stressed in this exhibit, we've not ignored the student who may want to know the identity of the species represented. We give beside each family group a list of species with a corresponding letter beside the bird.

The main purpose of a synoptic series of birds is to show birds, and birds should predominate. To reduce the conspicuousness of the perches we thought of making them of transparent plastic or of wiring the birds in place so that their attachment would be practically invisible. But our Museum experience ruled against that. If an obvious but unobtrusive perch is used, the Museum visitor recognizes it and dismisses it from his mind, going on to examine the exhibit. But if no obvious support is to be seen, many a visitor, especially younger ones, set out to solve the mystery, as we've seen them looking for the fine, almost invisible wires that support a flying bird.

So we made the perches mere pegs and painted them the same color as the background. They are there to see, but they are unobtrusive, and we're pleased with the result—a clean, uncluttered case with the birds the things that catch the eye.

The birds in each group are mounted in similar attitudes, facing the same way. This and the reduction of the size of the perches make it possible to group the birds close together, facilitating comparison.

SOME NESTS INCLUDED

We've used some accessories in this exhibit for several reasons. One of course is to tell something about the family. The typical basket-like vireo nest is shown and the cup-nest of the tanagers. There are sketches of the great variety of nests of the American blackbirds, from pendant sac-like structures slung from the tips of branches to nests hidden on the ground. Another sketch shows a weaver bird tying a knot, as these species do in weaving their retort-shaped nests, and another shows starlings, called oxpeckers, climbing about on a cow looking for their usual food of ticks. Another reason, equally powerful, for using accessories was to break up monotony. A uniform exhibit of birds seems to cause fewer visitors to stop and look than does one interrupted with the other related objects. But the accessories, the lists, the group name, and the birds are all arranged so that they form part of the appropriate group.

To a casual glance at a distance, the exhibit presents order and an attractive design. A closer inspection shows that each group in the design represents closely re-

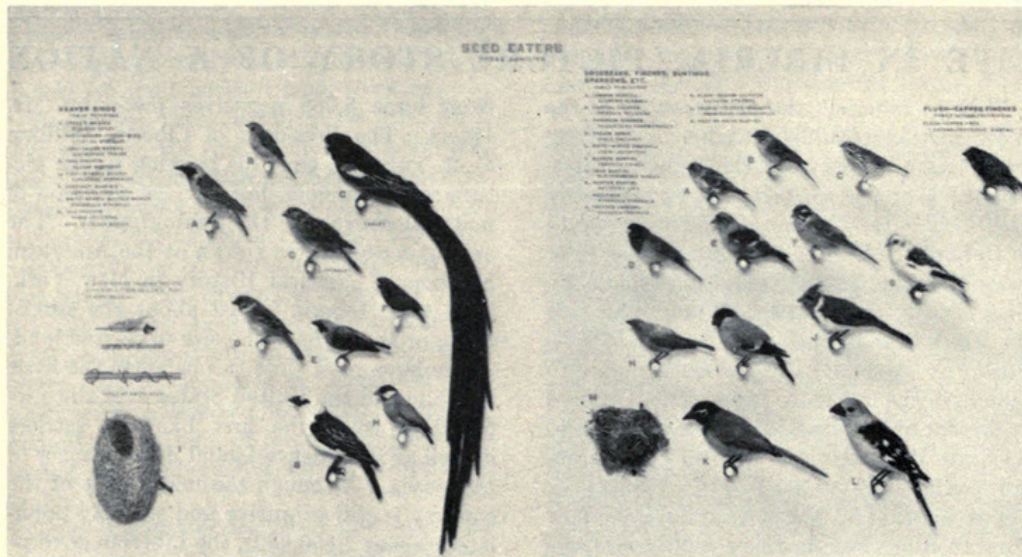


EXHIBIT OF SONG BIRDS INSTALLED IN 1952

The arrangement is by families or family groups, with closest relatives together. Uniform poses facilitate comparisons. The perches reduced to a minimum lessen distracting elements. Supplementary material adds information and relieves the monotony of rows of specimens.

of displays, but several new features make it a distinct advance in our method of exhibition.

This new case is part of our "Birds of the World" exhibit, already partly installed. When the exhibit is completed, some ten cases will show in synoptic series the variation in the bird world, from ostrich to oriole—the range in size, form, color, and pattern. Only a small part of the 9,000 or so bird species that exist can be shown, so that those exhibited were chosen with care.

SYSTEMATIC ARRANGEMENT

The birds in the exhibit are in systematic order with various groups of birds segregated on rectangular raised panels or plaques. This arrangement into groups puts the nearest relatives together. The main purpose of a synoptic series of birds of the world is to show not only the diversity and variation in birds but also the arrangement into order. In classification the species or kinds of birds are arranged for convenience into groups according to their affinities; genera contain closely related species; families, closely related genera; and orders, closely related families; all in the class aves (or birds).

Each family is to be represented, the

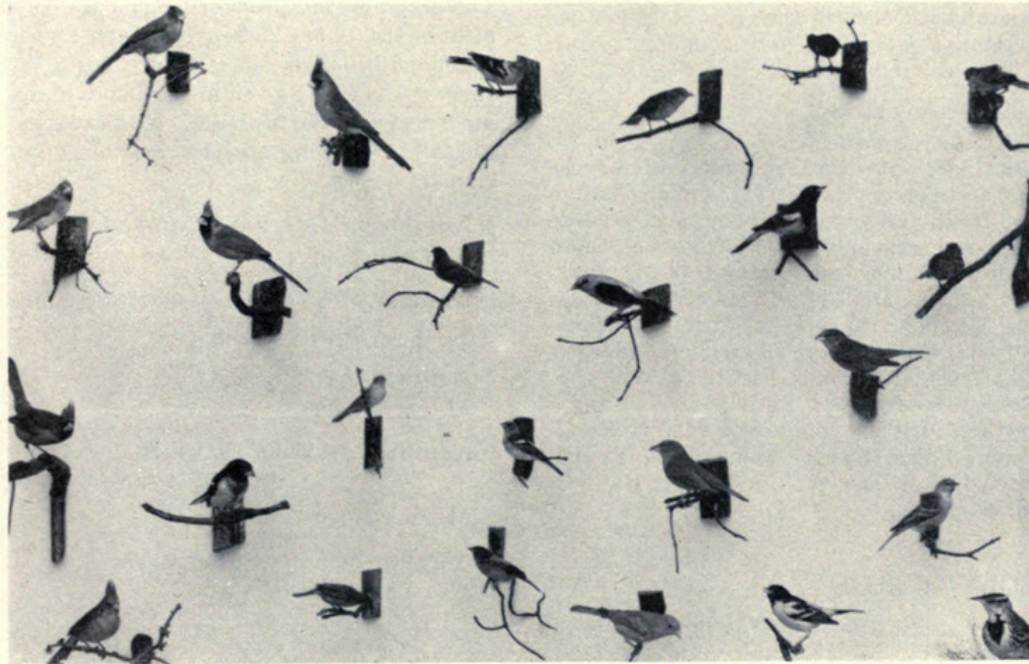
species to show variation in form and color in the sparrow family (Fringillidae). On the same plaque we have also placed, in an adjacent group, the weaver birds of the Old World (family Ploceidae) and the single representative of the South American plush-capped finches (family Catamblyrhynchidae) that all are at least superficially similar in having a conical bill adapted for seed eating; and the whole plaque is headed "Seed Eaters." This is also evident in the plaque above, headed "Old World Flower and Fruit Eaters," where four related families are shown: the metallic plumaged sunbirds (family Nectarinidae) with elongated bills for flower probing; the honey eaters (family Meliphagidae) of the Australian area, many with similar bills; the stubby-billed flower peckers (family Dicaeidae); and white-eyes (family Zosteropidae).

DIVERSITY EMPHASIZED

The number of individuals of a family shown usually bears a relation to the number of species and the diversity of their appearance. The American blackbirds (family Icteridae), with meadowlarks, grackles, orioles, redwings, etc., in all eight species shown occupies a whole plaque. The shrikes (family Laniidae), with six species

lated birds. A student can quickly get an idea of the "spread" of a family without reading more than the name at the head of the group. If he wants to go farther, the list of species is there; and at the bottom of the

mounted in many different poses, each a triumph of taxidermy in itself. But when placed near each other, the birds offset each other's attractiveness. Comparisons, too, were more difficult with different poses.



INSTALLATION TYPICAL OF EARLIER TECHNIQUE

A panel of birds as it was installed in the same hall (Systematic Birds, Hall 21) in the 1930's.

case are short write-ups of each family, with the geographical distribution of each family marked on a map.

To appreciate the advance in exhibition technique, one should compare this new case with earlier ones. The old-time exhibits of the early days of our Museum displayed the birds mounted on polished mahogany T-stands. The richly colored wood was beautiful in itself but it detracted from rather than added to the birds. These T-stands gradually lost popularity, and natural branches became popular as perches for birds on exhibition. Sometimes twigs and leaves and even grass were added. This had a great advantage in showing something about the bird, suggesting the kind of place in which it lived. Often each individual bird, with its accessories, was beautiful in itself. But when many different ones were placed side by side in one big case, the over-all effect was confusing. The first impression was of a case filled with tips of branches, sticks, leaves, and grass, with some birds amongst them.

The birds on the old-time mahogany stands were, of course, placed in rows on shelves, sometimes of glass to reduce shadows. This had the advantage of system, but in quantity it was depressing and made the survey of a group more difficult. The arrangement when bits of habitat were used, fastened directly to the background, was usually to scatter the birds uniformly over the case. No pattern emerged, and each individual bird had equal emphasis. Comparison was more difficult. The birds were

It's to convey information. As such, the main theme is scientific, with arrangements that show variation and relation. But we've used artistry in arrangement to make the exhibit as pleasing and attractive as possible.

After the new case is installed we will continue to check to see how it is being received by our clientele—find how many people look at it and perhaps overhear what they say. But we also have a little-known automatic recorder of the attention each case gets. When people are interested in a case they tend to point with their fingers and touch the glass. Children particularly crowd closer and press their noses against the glass. Each leaves a print on the polished glass. By looking, at the end of a day, at the number of finger and nose prints on the glass we can get an idea of the relative attractiveness of various exhibits.

The synoptic series of birds of the world, of which this exhibit forms a part, has the earlier or more primitive families already installed, from ostriches, penguins, and albatrosses to pheasants and parrots. There still remain five or six cases to install showing the rest of the perching birds, climbing birds, cuckoos, swifts, owls, and their relatives before our aim of a survey of the bird world is completed.

Sometimes we hear this series referred to



OLD-FASHIONED INSTALLATION

A peek into part of the same bird hall (Systematic Birds, Hall 21) as it appeared in the 1920's.

By systematizing and grouping in our bird arrangement, reducing extraneous perch material, and adding supplementary explanatory material, we've increased the educational value and the attractiveness of the exhibit. We've used both science and art.

as the foreign or exotic bird series in contrast with the American series across the hall where all American species are shown. But we don't like the designation. The new exhibit contains exotics, it is true, whether
(Continued on page 8, column 2)

AFRICAN BIRDS BROUGHT IN BY BUCHEN EXPEDITION

The ornithological expedition to East Africa, sponsored and led by Walther Buchen of Winnetka, Illinois, has completed its collecting with notable success, and Mr. and Mrs. Buchen have returned home. Most of the specimens have arrived at the Museum. Work has already begun on preparation of the habitat group representing a papyrus



MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

Members of East African Expedition triumphantly gather around first specimen of whalehead stork obtained for Museum's projected papyrus-marsh bird group. Left to right: Walther Buchen, sponsor and leader of the expedition; Mrs. Buchen; a native boatman, and John Williams, ornithologist.

marsh with its teeming bird inhabitants. The assemblage of material for this group was the primary objective of the expedition.

Mr. and Mrs. Buchen flew to Nairobi in Kenya Colony early in May. There they recruited a British ornithologist to accompany them, and organized a safari to hunt birds in the upper Nile region in Uganda. The entire summer was spent in the field.

The papyrus marsh ecological group will be dominated by specimens, collected by the Buchens, of the large and grotesque whale-headed stork and a group of crowned cranes. Other birds in the group will include pelicans, cormorants, water-hens, herons, plovers, and a great variety of ducks. Preparation of the group will require several months, at least. Museum artists and taxidermists will be guided by photographs and color sketches made by members of the expedition.

GIFTS TO THE MUSEUM IN PAST MONTH

Following is a list of the principal gifts received during the past month:

Department of Anthropology:

Byron Harvey III, Chicago—50 Hopi kachina dolls, 22 baskets and 15 miscellaneous ceremonial objects, various Hopi villages, Arizona; W. T. Knapp, Chicago—9 pieces of Pueblo pottery and a string of bell jingles (Navajo), Rio Grande Pueblos, New Mexico

Department of Botany:

Dr. W. H. Hodge, Beltsville, Md.—18 Peruvian phanerogams, Peru; Floyd Swink, Chicago—72 phanerogams, Illinois and Indi-

ana; Escuela Agricola Panamericana, Tegucigalpa, Honduras—a pentaplaris, Honduras.

Department of Geology:

Jon S. Whitfield, Evanston, Ill.—26 fossil fishes, Eocene, Wyoming; Joseph N. Beck, Ramsen, Iowa—a hair ball, Iowa; John H. Alexander, Colorado Springs, Colo.—a topaz crystal, a microcline and a smoky quartz, Pikes Peak, Colorado.

Department of Zoology:

Chicago Zoological Society, Brookfield, Ill.—an aardvark, a South American tortoise and an alligator; Ralph M. Eiseman, Chicago—2 frogs, Indiana; U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Pascagoula, Miss.—52 lots of fishes, Gulf of Mexico; Instituto de Zoologia, Portugal—99 mammals, Portuguese West Africa; Dr. Rainer Zangerl, Chicago—a snake, Austria; Eugene Ray, Chicago—41 Mordellid beetles, Africa, Asia, Europe; A. Wolffson, British Honduras—4 lizards, 3 snakes, and 5 turtles, British Honduras; Harry Hoogstraal, Cairo, Egypt—7 birdskins, Egypt; Harold A. Dundee, Lawrence, Kan.—a snake, Texas.

SONG BIRDS—

(Continued from page 7)

we use the term simply as contrasted with the word "domestic" to indicate coming from a foreign land or in the sense implying "strangely beautiful and brilliant." We have such birds in the case. But we also have domestic birds—birds from the Chicago area, like the chipping sparrow. The series is of birds—without qualification. To bring out that fact we label it a synoptic series of birds of the world, for it's certainly that if anything.

This exhibit was designed by the Division of Birds. Taxidermy is by Carl W. Cotton, art work is by Douglas E. Tibbitts, and maps are by Margaret G. Bradbury.

FIFTY YEARS AGO AT THE MUSEUM

Compiled by MARGARET J. BAUER

The first publication from the Museum's notable work on the fresh-water fishes of Mexico appeared in 1902 as *A Contribution to the Ichthyology of Mexico*, by S. E. Meek. Dr. Meek was the first ichthyologist to collect in many of the more important Mexican rivers, in some of which every species obtained was new to science.

In the fall of the same year Dr. Meek lectured to the Museum members on "The Fishes of Mexico—A Study in Geographical Distribution."

William J. Gerhard gave an illustrated lecture on "Insects of Southern Peru and Bolivia" based on his own field work some years previously.

FIVE MOVIES FOR CHILDREN ON NOVEMBER SATURDAYS

Of the autumn series of free motion-picture programs for children, five remain to be given on Saturday mornings in November. The programs are presented under the auspices of the James Nelson and Anna Louise Raymond Foundation. They begin at 10:30 A.M. and are given in the James Simpson Theatre of the Museum. No tickets are needed. Following are the remaining programs:

November 1—GETTING READY FOR WINTER
Also a cartoon

November 8—EXPLORING THE EVERGLADES
Story by Murl Deusing

November 15—INDIA
Also a cartoon

**November 22—YOUR FAVORITE
ANIMAL MOVIES**

Also a cartoon

November 29—ANIMAL LEGENDS
Also a cartoon

Geology Expedition Returns

Robert K. Wyant, Curator of Economic Geology, has returned from a successful collecting trip in Utah and Colorado. In addition to obtaining needed ores and rock specimens from various mining localities, several pegmatite minerals were collected.

Visiting Hours Change

Museum hours, which have been 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. in the autumn, change to the winter schedule, 9 A.M. to 4 P.M., November 1 to February 28.

NEW MEMBERS

The following persons became Museum Members from September 12 to October 13:

Contributor

Byron Harvey III

Associate Members

Miss Shirley Conklin, Lyman R. Kirst

Annual Members

J. D. Acosta, Charles F. Biersborn, Frederick H. Bird, Charles C. Blish, Mrs. Oma M. Bradley, Robert Y. Bradshaw, Keith T. Campbell, Dr. Charles B. Congdon, Robert C. Cross, George H. Dapples, Frank O. Frisk, Alfred E. Gebhardt, Miss Alice Hamilton, David E. Henkle, Miss Ruth L. Hoffmann, J. C. Houston, Jr., M. G. Jackson, E. T. Kurzdorfer, Mrs. James D. Kysor, Max Lubig, C. F. McConnell, C. Bouton McDougal, Dr. Michael R. Mizen, Jules Montenier, Richard B. Rush, Vincent D. Sill, Donald Stanley, Harold I. Stickler, John E. Stipp, Fred W. Strassheim, Miss Virginia Terhune, H. Hoyt Thompson, Mrs. Carl H. Weil, North Western



Rand, Austin Loomer. 1952. "Song Birds of the World in Exhibit Showing Relationship." *Bulletin* 23(11), 6–8.

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