

## Chicago Natural History Museum

FOUNDED BY MARSHALL FIELD, 1893

Roosevelt Road and Lake Shore Drive, Chicago 5  
TELEPHONE: WABASH 2-9410

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## THE BULLETIN

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

## 'FILE-CABINET ZOO' AIDS RESEARCH

Laura Brodie, Assistant in Zoology, has discovered that there is no such thing as an animal picture that is useless. Someday, someone working on some problem will need just the picture that she was going to discard. Realizing this, it is clear that to accomplish her mammoth task of collecting and classifying animal pictures Miss Brodie has had to resign herself to the certainty of always being behind in her work.

Before Miss Brodie undertook the task of building up the photographic files, the different divisions of the Department of Zoology obtained pictures for reference as they were needed by the taxidermists or scientists. In addition, each individual often kept collections of his own. Now all pictures are kept in one place, classified according to one system, and are collected with an eye to future as well as present needs. The files have steadily grown to include zoological pictures from magazines and newspapers, from other museums, and from zoological societies and conservation departments. They are now a veritable "file-cabinet zoo" with pictures of hundreds of animals in varied poses carefully placed in their own classified pigeonholes.

Among those who make extensive use of the pictures in the files are the anatomists.

D. Dwight Davis, Curator of Vertebrate Anatomy, used them recently in his study of the shoulder architecture of the bear. Curator Davis wanted to determine how a bear uses its legs when it climbs a tree. Because he did not have ready access to the habitat of free-roving bears (bears in zoos rarely get near anything faintly resembling a tree) he had to depend, in part at least, on what he could find out from pictures. There were several illustrations in the photographic files that helped him in completing his work on the Fieldiana publication, *The Shoulder Architecture of Bears and Other Carnivores*.

The photographic files have yielded valuable information to our own Museum artists and taxidermists as well as to sculptors and commercial artists who have come to the Museum on a photograph hunt. Many magazine illustrators are city-bred and, although they have a general idea of what a lion looks like when it runs, they find they need facts, not vague memories, when the taskmaster of paper and pen confronts them. Many of them have set up temporary camp in Miss Brodie's office and have made rough sketches on the basis of the pictures they have been able to find there.

During the course of a day requests for all kinds of pictures may come into Miss Brodie's office by mail or telephone. From the standard request of an encyclopedia or textbook for a certain animal picture there is the completely unorthodox request of an advertising-company artist who would like a picture of a dog with a sheepish expression or a horse slyly winking. Often there will be a letter asking for a picture of the rabbit—and Miss Brodie may have to write an answering letter explaining that in her files alone there are pictures of eight different kinds of rabbits. Which one does the person want?

Miss Brodie has also started work on a supplementary index of pictures that appear in publications available only in libraries and that, consequently, cannot be placed in her file. This is probably the only index of its kind in existence. The photography file itself is probably unique and, like many things in the Museum, its growth has been given impetus by the needs of people who are always in search of facts.

### STAFF NOTES

Three new Field Associates have been appointed to the staff of the Department of Zoology. They are: **Dr. Robert L. Fleming**, who led the Museum's Himalaya Expedition in Nepal; **Dr. Frederick J. Medem**, of Bogotá, Colombia, and **Dr. Georg Haas**, of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel.... **Dr. Margery C. Carlson**, Associate Professor of Botany at

### —THIS MONTH'S COVER—

January being a month of snow and fur coats, we show on our cover a most suitable mammal, the snow leopard. Its fur is two to four inches long, as it lives at altitudes of from 7,000 to 13,000 feet in the high Himalayas. Anyone with a fur coat like that would certainly purr, but the snow leopard, in common with the lion, tiger, leopard, and jaguar, does not purr. This cat is a rare mammal, and its hide is seldom offered for sale. The habitat group in William V. Kelley Hall (Hall 17) of the Museum was prepared by C. J. Albrecht, former staff taxidermist, and the late Charles A. Corwin, former staff artist.

Northwestern University, has been appointed Associate in the Museum's Department of Botany. She has conducted several joint expeditions to Central America for the Museum and the university... **Dr. Karl P. Schmidt**, Chief Curator of Zoology, recently discussed "Zoogeographic Realms and Regions" before the zoology seminar at the University of Michigan and also conferred with herpetological colleagues on the faculty.... **Dr. Theodor Just**, Chief Curator of Botany, participated in a symposium on "The Role of Systematics in Modern Biology" held at Missouri Botanical Garden, St. Louis.... Two young women of the Museum staff—**Mrs. Alexander (Barbara) Polikoff**, Associate Public Relations Counsel, and **Mrs. William D. (Priscilla) Turnbull**, Assistant in Fossil Vertebrates—have resigned because of the demands of motherhood.... **Dr. Donald Collier**, Curator of South American Archaeology and Ethnology, and **George I. Quimby**, Curator of North American Archaeology and Ethnology, attended the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association at Detroit in December. Mr. Quimby participated in a round table discussion on prehistoric culture change in the Great Lakes region.

The world is a poor affair if it does not contain matter for investigation for the whole world in every age. Nature does not reveal all her secrets at once. We imagine we are initiated in her mysteries: we are as yet but hanging around her outer courts.

—Seneca.

The mode of life of the Indians who formerly inhabited the Chicago area is illustrated in exhibits in Mary D. Sturges Hall (Hall 5).





1955. "File Cabinet Zoo' Aids Research." *Bulletin* 26(1), 2-2.

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