

* FIELD MUSEUM CURATORS SPEAK OUT

Dr. DONALD COLLIER **Chief Curator of Anthropology:**

"Man has been interacting with his environment for over two million years but only during the past 150 years has he been seriously out of balance with nature. The long view of natural history and the immense perspective of paleoanthropology are essential in the present world crisis—the pollution and degradation of the earth's environment.

Students of natural history welcome the present surge of public concern with our environment but hope that action will extend beyond ameliorating the most spectacular pollution of air and water. The hidden effects of pollution are more deadly and more long-lasting, including genetic damage to all living things. Three-quarters of the world's surface is ocean, but most of us are little aware of this major element in earth's environment or the seriousness of marine pollution. At present a million tons of oil are being dumped into the ocean annually. The effects of this, insecticides, and other serious pollution—everything dumped into streams, lakes and rivers ends up in the ocean—may be irreversible or reversible only in terms of a thousand year period.

Natural history museums have the resources to present to the public the long view, the basic view, the holistic view of man and nature, and now is the time to do it. We hope the Field Museum will be in the forefront of this effort."

To Field Museum's 32-member scientific staff, preservation of natural resources is not a new area of interest.

Historically, Field Museum has been closely concerned with man and his environment for more than 75 years—long before conservation and pollution became household words.

The long-range commitment put into motion by President Nixon's visit must be met if man is to live in harmony with nature. Field Museum's involvement will increase as time goes on with its continuing programs of research, education and exhibition.

The following statements are made by members of Field Museum's curatorial staff in connection with the February 6 conference.

Dr. LOUIS O. WILLIAMS **Chief Curator of Botany:**

"The botanists of Field Museum have been especially interested in the vegetation of Central America and the Andean countries of South America. This interest extends back more than 75 years. The problems of the relationships of man to the plant cover in these regions have been and are of active concern to the botanists here. What happens and is happening to the vegetation of this region seriously affects the food chain that reaches to man. Degradation of the vegetation and consequently of the environment is proceeding at an explosive rate in Central and Andean South America—regions where Museum botanists have considerable competence."

Dr. AUSTIN L. RAND
Chief Curator of Zoology:

"If you stand on Field Museum's front steps and look at the city, you may wonder what it was like before concrete, steel and civilization came to the foot of Lake Michigan. If you do wonder, step back into the Museum exhibit halls and see.

This is one of the contributions that Field Museum is making to present day Chicago and the nation: showing the actual animals that live or did live in our country, some of which are gone beyond recall. Here also are the animals which we can continue to have and enjoy. But, only if we change our emphasis from trying to conquer nature to trying to live with nature, will we then have a fuller life."

Dr. RAINER ZANGERL
Chief Curator of Geology:

"Today, pollution of air, water and land has reached global proportions and has already seriously affected the ecological check and balance system that governs life on our planet. The rapidly deteriorating quality of the environment has received a great deal of attention in the popular press and there is, indeed, good reason for public concern.

Intelligent action on the part of the public, however, requires understanding of the complex problems. With this in mind, Field Museum is planning a series of exhibits designed to provide the scientific background and the historic perspective to the headlines, committee reports and remedial programs that publicize the present environmental crisis."

Dr. RUPERT L. WENZEL
Curator of Insects:

"This important conference underscores the urgency of coping with problems of pollution and alteration of the environment. It is appropriate that it was held in Field Museum. First, because it is located on the edge of Lake Michigan, and the pollution of this great lake is one of the chief concerns of the meeting. But also because of the role of natural history museums. Field Museum's research and educational goals are largely concerned with discovering and making known the things which comprise our environment and the historic processes by which they came about, as well as the ways in which man has adapted to, used and altered the environment. These are things which man must understand if he is to learn to live with nature, without further damaging or even destroying both his environment and himself.

Because of their special knowledge and concern with environmental problems, many of the Museum's scientific staff have been directly involved, as individuals, in conservation, pesticide abatement and other aspects of environmental control and improvement. Some have done this individually, or through local action groups or their national professional organizations, while others have helped determine policy and action as elected or appointed officials of municipalities, abatement districts, and State conservation bodies."

Members of Field Museum's scientific staff. Shown from left to right are Dr. Austin L. Rand, Dr. Donald Collier, Dr. Louis O. Williams, Dr. Rupert L. Wenzel and Dr. Rainer Zangerl.





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