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# Karl Patterson Schmidt Anniversary Volume

*In Honor of His sixty-fifth Birthday*

FIELDIANA: ZOOLOGY

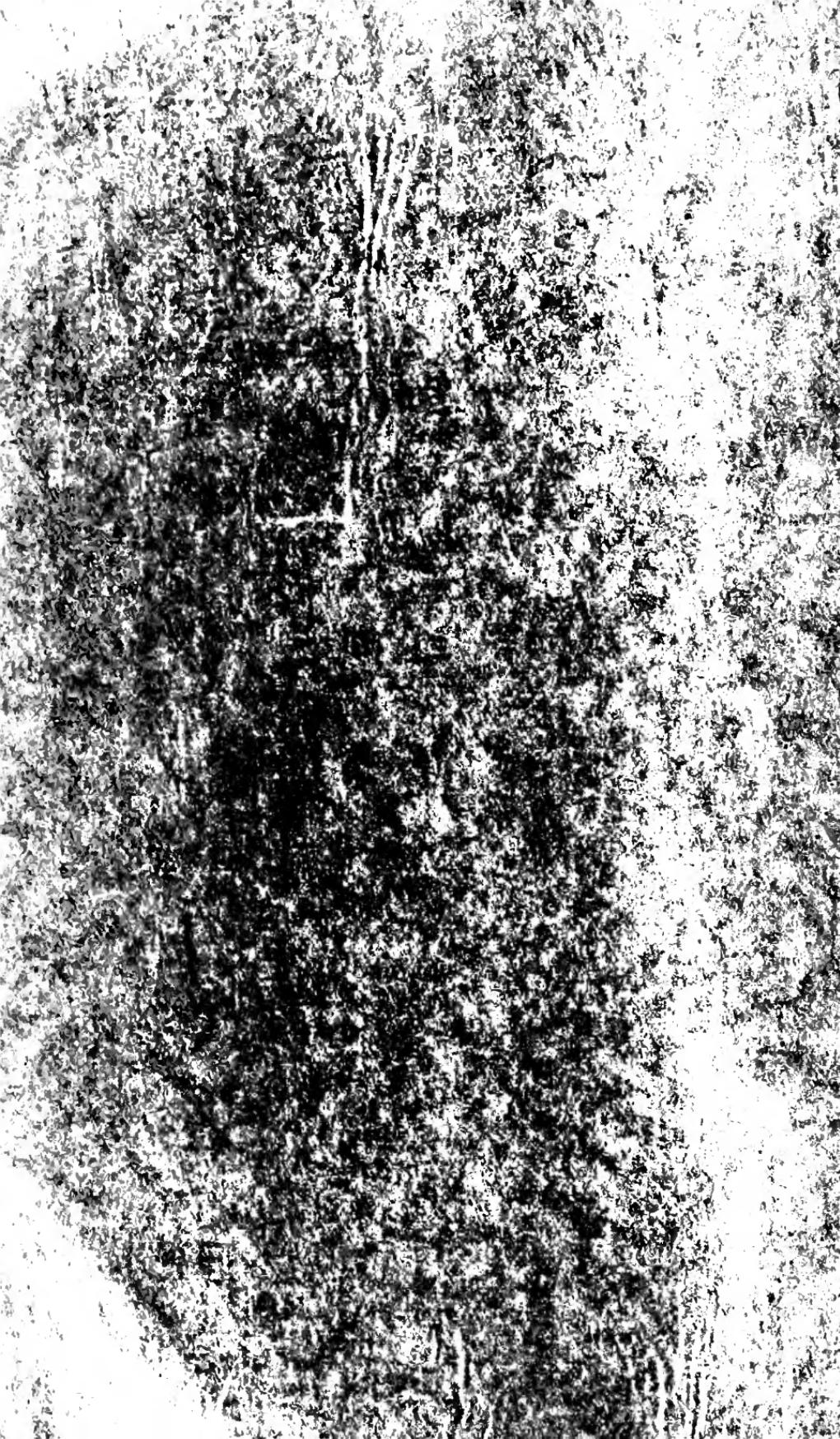
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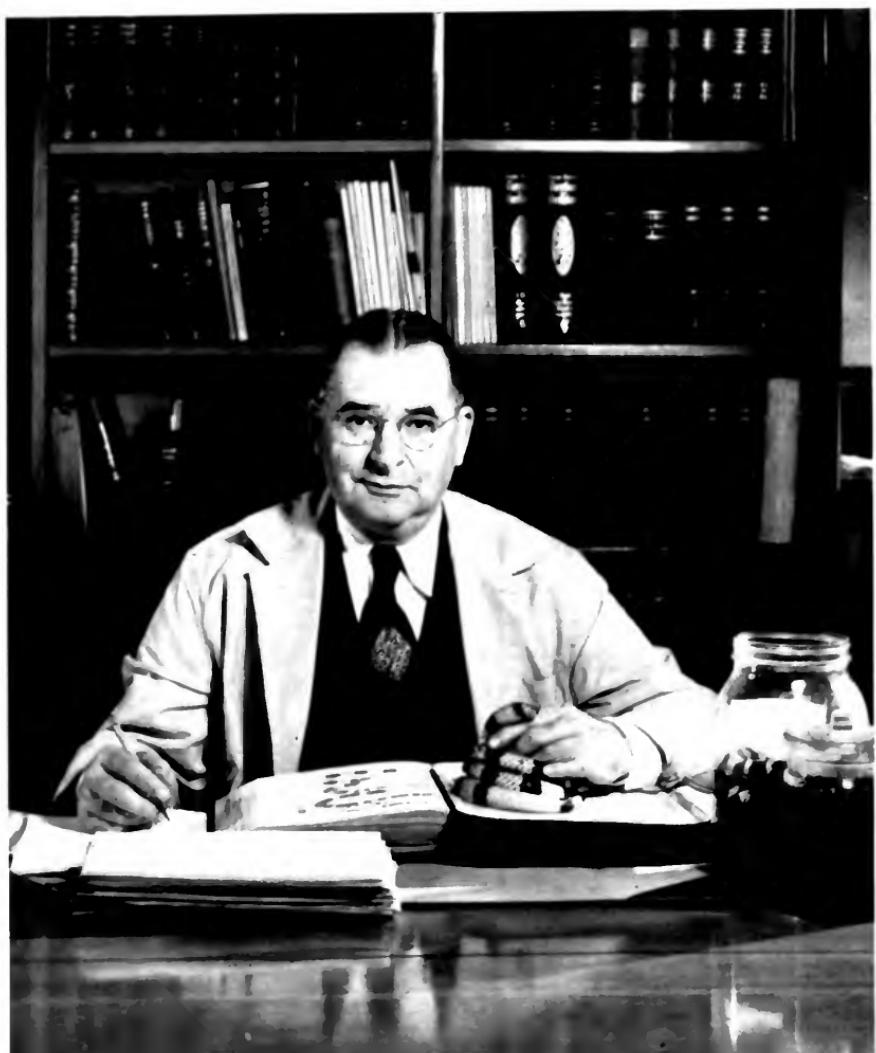
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KARL PATTERSON SCHMIDT

# FIELDIANA: ZOOLOGY

*A Continuation of the*  
ZOOLOGICAL SERIES  
*of*  
FIELD MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

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VOLUME 37



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*Karl Patterson Schmidt  
Anniversary Volume*



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## The Work of Karl Patterson Schmidt

The occasion of his retirement from active administrative duties seems to the Trustees and Scientific Staff of Chicago Natural History Museum an appropriate time to signalize their appreciation of Karl Patterson Schmidt's position in the Museum and in the scientific world. No token of esteem could be more appropriate than a special *Festschrift* in his honor, for his love for and intimate acquaintance with the technical literature of zoology has colored his whole career, and he has often expressed his affectionate regard and admiration for the practice, so common in German scientific circles, of honoring eminent men in this distinctive way.

This testimonial volume carries on the tradition begun in 1941 with the publication of a similar volume honoring his predecessor, Wilfred Hudson Osgood.<sup>1</sup> The Osgood volume was, in fact, Dr. Schmidt's idea.

It was thought at first that contributions should be invited from Dr. Schmidt's extra-mural colleagues, as was done with the Osgood volume, thus limiting the scope to his field of special interest, herpetology. Dr. Schmidt has been so closely associated with so many members of the Scientific Staff of the Museum, as teacher, inspiration, and critic, that it seemed more fitting to recognize this relationship by limiting contributions to members of the Museum's own staff. It is significant that these contributions represent not only the various Divisions of the Department of Zoology but also the Division of Paleontology.

A museum zoologist is a naturalist, and the hallmark of a naturalist is breadth of background and interest. One of the unfortunate results of increasing knowledge is increasing specialization, which often leads to stultifying narrowness of thinking and dangerous narrowness of interpretation, in science as in all other human activities. Certainly one of the primary responsibilities of a natural history museum, and of the men who staff it, is to maintain the broad perspective of nature as a whole that is now so often missing

<sup>1</sup> Field Museum of Natural History, Zoological Series, vol. 27.

from the science departments of our colleges and universities. Dr. Schmidt exemplifies to a high degree the breadth of interest and experience that characterizes the true naturalist. His early work, before coming to Chicago in 1922, dealt with the herpetology of the Belgian Congo, based on the great collection made by Herbert Lang; and with the West Indies, which he visited while still in college. At Chicago Natural History Museum he found the expedition program oriented toward Latin America, and over the next several years he participated in several zoological expeditions to parts of Central and South America. As scientific leader of the Crane Pacific Expedition he visited most of the important islands of the South Pacific in 1928 and 1929. He went to New Zealand as recently as 1949, and to Israel in 1953. Field trips to various parts of the United States, northern Mexico, and Central America provided him with an intimate first-hand knowledge of the geography and biota of our own continent.

A notable feature of all this field work is that Dr. Schmidt has not been merely a collector of amphibians and reptiles. All animal life, invertebrate as well as vertebrate, is of absorbing interest to him, along with the physical geography and the peoples of the areas in which he travels. Thus, he has become an outstanding field ecologist, and the breadth of his ecological knowledge was put to good account in his contribution to the recent monumental *Principles of Animal Ecology*, by Allee, Emerson, Park, Park, and Schmidt.

This first-hand knowledge of five continents was supplemented by his earlier work on the African fauna, and by his studies of the great herpetological collections made in China by the Asiatic expeditions of the American Museum of Natural History and the several Asiatic expeditions of Chicago Natural History Museum. All this is reflected in a consuming interest in zoogeography, a science that can be pursued only by museum methods and one to which Dr. Schmidt has made important contributions. The most notable of these is the translation and thorough revision, with W. C. Allee, of Hesse's *Tiergeographie auf oekologischer Grundlage*.

The translation of Hesse was only the first of several translations of important German scientific works that stemmed from Dr. Schmidt's familiarity with the German language. Still in manuscript are translations of Max Weber's great work on mammals, Hans Böker's *Einführung in die vergleichende biologische Anatomie der Wirbeltiere*, and Adolf Portmann's *Einführung in die vergleichende*

*Morphologie der Wirbeltiere*; still other works are presently being translated. The value of this unique contribution to the diffusion of scientific knowledge cannot be overestimated. Also contributing to the spread of scientific knowledge are the many articles on zoological subjects Dr. Schmidt has contributed to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

As a scientist Dr. Schmidt is first and foremost a herpetologist. He has discovered and named twelve genera and more than two hundred species and subspecies of amphibians and reptiles, including several fossil crocodilians and turtles. Many notable herpetological collections have passed through his hands and have been reported on by him. The magnificent collection of amphibians and reptiles in Chicago Natural History Museum is due almost entirely to his efforts; when he arrived at the Museum the collection numbered only a few thousand specimens.

Dr. Schmidt's love for books led him to begin, at the outset of his career, the systematic accumulation of a library of the technical literature of herpetology. This interest has been pursued relentlessly over the years, and the Schmidt library now numbers some fifteen thousand titles. Most of these items are authors' reprints that cannot be bought but are obtained by exchange with colleagues. It is one of the largest single accumulations of this specialized literature in existence and represents an achievement of which he is justly proud. Since the technical literature is second only to the specimens themselves in scientific research, the Schmidt library adds an important dimension to the Division of Reptiles of Chicago Natural History Museum.

Many editorial and committee duties, usually thankless and time-consuming, have fallen on Dr. Schmidt's shoulders. For many years he was herpetological editor of *Copeia*, the official organ of the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists. He has edited the reptile section of *Biological Abstracts* since it was founded in 1927, and the sections on both amphibians and reptiles since 1941. For many years he has been the herpetological editor of the *American Midland Naturalist*. He has been a delegate to many national and international boards and science congresses, and in 1952 acted as chairman of the sessions on zoological nomenclature at the International Science Congress at Copenhagen. He was appointed to prepare the Sixth Edition of the *Check List of North American Amphibians and Reptiles*, which appeared in 1953.

At the outset of Dr. Schmidt's career the science of taxonomy, which is the most important research activity of natural history museums, was largely isolated from other areas of biological research. It was in bad repute, generally regarded as a game masquerading as science. Taxonomists, for their part, often looked with mistrust and contempt on other biologists. This unfortunate situation has now been largely clarified, and most of the credit goes to those few men on both sides whose understanding and interests were broad enough and flexible enough to bridge the gap. One of these men was Karl Patterson Schmidt, and his contributions in this direction may well turn out to be the most important of his career. Chicago Natural History Museum is proud of being in the forefront of this important *rapprochement* in the person of Karl P. Schmidt.

STANLEY FIELD

*President, Chicago Natural History Museum*

## An Appreciation of Karl Patterson Schmidt

After a friendship of more than twenty-nine years with Karl Schmidt, I consider it a real privilege to be one of those who have co-operated in honoring him through this publication. Thirty-three years have elapsed since Dr. Schmidt joined the staff of this Museum as Assistant Curator of Reptiles. During that time he has been continuously in the service of the institution, becoming Curator of Reptiles in 1937 and Chief Curator of the Department of Zoology in 1941.

We hail as a great boon to science Karl Schmidt's early decision to leave the family farm in Wisconsin and join the ranks of research scientists, but we must not be misled into the thought that mere chance brought about the transition from farmer to scientist. He was reared in the atmosphere of scholarship by his father, who was a college professor, an insatiable reader, and an advocate of intellectual atmosphere in the home. Prior to his service at this Museum, Karl served as Research Assistant at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, beginning his work there immediately after his graduation from Cornell University.

Karl had been at the Museum less than a year when he undertook his first expeditionary work under the auspices of this institution. Since then he has participated in many Museum expeditions that have taken him to the most remote corners of the world.

He is a prolific writer. His reports and other scientific writings make an imposing list, but he does not confine himself to scientific literature. He has written popular books, including *Homes and Habits of Wild Animals*, and *Our Friendly Animals and Whence They Came*, both published by M. A. Donohue and Company of Chicago. Among his close friends he is even known as a poet of no mean ability.

At the Museum, Karl Schmidt, perhaps more than any other scientist on the staff, has interested himself in the training of young men and women for scientific careers. Quite a number of persons have become zoologists or specialists in fields related to zoology

through his interest and advice. Many more, while pursuing careers in other lines, have maintained a deep interest in zoology as an avocation.

His influence, moreover, reaches far beyond the walls of the Museum, and we find him helping out officially or unofficially in scientific and technical societies and in colleges and universities throughout the country. At the University of Chicago, he is a member of the committee charged with determining the fitness of candidates for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in zoology. He has served for almost thirty years as editor of the Section on Amphibia and Reptilia of *Biological Abstracts* and served for many years as herpetological editor of *Copeia*. He was a founder and first treasurer of the Society for the Study of Evolution and has been a very active member in other scientific societies of which he is a member. The Chicago Zoological Society elected him an Honorary Governing Member and also made him a member of its Scientific and Advisory Committee, where his background is a most valuable asset to Brookfield Zoo. He is also a member of the Pacific Science Board.

It is only natural that wide recognition and many honors should come to a man of his attainments. More than twenty years ago, he became a fellow of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. His name has been starred in *American Men of Science* and Earlham College awarded him the degree of Doctor of Science.

My own personal appreciation of Dr. Schmidt is perhaps best evidenced by the many informal conferences I have held with him on matters in no way concerned with his official duties as Chief Curator of the Department of Zoology. His broad human understanding, his knowledge of the literature of his own and allied fields of study, his sincere interest and human sympathy, his genial optimism and his keen sense of humor have been of invaluable assistance in sweeping away many of the difficult and discouraging problems which find their way into the office of a museum director.

I welcome the years ahead in which Karl Schmidt will still be present, not as a Chief Curator burdened with the administrative duties of a great department, but as an emeritus research scientist who is free to continue his contribution to science and to humanity, restricted only by the hours in the day and the limits of his own endurance.

CLIFFORD C. GREGG

*Director, Chicago Natural History Museum*

## A Note From the Contributors

Each of us owes a debt to Karl P. Schmidt. The nature and magnitude of these obligations vary, and none of them can ever be fully repaid. This volume is at once a token payment on our collective debt and an expression of our esteem for an associate and a friend.

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FRITZ HAAS	BRYAN PATTERSON	LOREN P. WOODS
GEORG HAAS	AUSTIN L. RAND	RAINER ZANGERL



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