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Museum of Comparative Zoology

NEWSLETTER

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The academic year was off to a perfect start with the museum staff and families invited to the Mayr "farm" for a picnic. Highlights of the day were September's bright blue weather, elegant homemade dessert, and pony rides for the children.

During the past summer, the 16th International Congress of Zoology met in Washington, D.C., under the Presidency of Dr. Romer, former Director of the Museum. Our present Director, Dr. Mayr, participated as a Plenary Symposium lecturer, and also organized and lectured to a symposium on the Fauna of North America, Its Origin and Unique Composition. Dr. Edinger presented a paper entitled "Meanings of Midbrain Exposure, Past and Present"; Dr. Mead, a paper on reproduction in deep-sea fishes; and Dr. Levi was occupied with organizing a meeting and dinner for about two dozen arachnologists attending the Congress. The considerable participation of the MCZ staff in the International Congress was in keeping with a tradition begun by Alexander Agassiz, President of the 7th Congress, held in Boston in 1907.

Dr. Romer, instead of relaxing after the Congress, lectured to the Vertebrate Palaeontology Conference at the University of Alberta. This month he will receive an honorary D.Sc. from Lehigh University.

Dr. Simpson, who is making a satisfactory recovery from a slight coronary, has been elected a "Socio Straniero," a foreign member of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, in Rome, the oldest scientific academy in the world. He has also recently become a Corresponding Member of the National Academy of Sciences of Argentina at Cordoba.

Dr. Mayr's long awaited ANIMAL SPECIES AND EVOLUTION, published in the spring, has been enthusiastically received and reviewed. Revision of METHODS AND PRINCIPLES OF SYSTEMATIC ZOOLOGY is now in progress. Dr. Mayr was Chairman of a joint meeting of Japanese and American biologists, held in Japan, May 9-14, as part of the program of U.S.-Japan scientific cooperation initiated in 1961 by Prime Minister Ikeda of Japan and the President of the United States. Projects already activated include the systematics of Pacific area insects and the population genetics and cytogenetics of the genus Trillium. The conference, a report of which will appear in the October issue of the AIBS Bulletin, has cemented the close cooperation between scientists of the two countries, and has established a mechanism for the initiation of more matched research projects. Dr. Mayr will be glad to help anyone interested in participating in this program.

Mr. Harold Coolidge, Associate in Mammalogy, has been awarded the Hutchinson Medal by the Garden Club of America for his role in the field of conservation. He is now in Nairobi for the 8th General Assembly of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.

Bryan Patterson is among 34 scientists and engineers newly elected to the National Academy of Sciences, which has a current membership of 653. Prof. Patterson is now in Africa, and wrote in July: "After a week of Nairobi, lovely as it is, we're getting restless. Little by little all the innumerable things that have to be purchased or arranged seem to have got done, however. Tomorrow we are off to Olduvai for a few days, then back here and, I hope, off to Maralal. I say hope because on my arrival a gloomy letter from Brown, the District Commissioner, was awaiting me. Somalis have been murdering in the east and Abyssinian tribesmen raiding from the north and he was in doubt as to whether he could O.K. us. Apparently he was under the impression that we were going to work in an area that might be dangerous. I have given him the facts and Leakey anticipates no difficulty. We had a very nice day at Ft. Ternan and Soughor with Johnathan Leakey. We picked up a few things at the latter." And in August: "We're now on our way to Turkana, west of Lake Rudolph, to have a look at one or both of the other localities for which we have permits. From what little has been published I expect them to be much better than the Maralal area. Everyone is in good spirits and looking forward to pastures new." Expedition members Arne Lewis and Keith Thomson have already returned and Prof. Patterson is soon expected. They report "nothing spectacular in Tertiary deposits but some nice things in the Pleistocene."

Dr. William A. Newman has been appointed Assistant Curator of Marine Invertebrates and Assistant Professor of Oceanography. "Barnacle Bill" comes to us from Scripps Institute of Oceanography, University of California. In preparation for the arrival of the "new man" a crew of up to four at a time has been going over the marine invertebrate rooms. The result has been enrichment of the vertebrate collections by sundry preparations of preserved birds, platypuses, etc., placed in a case labelled Elasmobranchians and hence shunned by the invertebrate people, who are receiving a bonus of two cabinets to be filled with crustaceans. As a fitting end to the cleaning up of old treasures, a cache of small shipping boxes on top of the cabinets on the fourth floor yielded a package, never opened, addressed to Alexander Agassiz. Mr. Agassiz died in 1910.

Several members of the curatorial staff have been appointed to the Faculty of Arts and Sciences: William J. Clench, Ernest E. Williams, Charles P. Lyman, Howard E. Evans, Herbert W. Levi, Raymond A. Paynter, Jr., and Giles W. Mead.

In recognition of his outstanding contribution to Arctic science, Dr. Henry Bigelow has been elected a Fellow of the Arctic Institute of North America.

Admiral Thomas, Associate in Oceanography of the Museum, has been appointed Assistant Director of the Geophysical Institute of Hawaii, University of Hawaii.

Dr. Robert K. Enders, chairman of the Zoology Department at Swarthmore College, has been appointed to the Visiting Committee of the Museum.

Dr. Darlington, after collecting there last winter, is working on a small biogeography of the southern end of South America. At the beginning of his trip he wrote: "Transportation is so fast now that I spent nearly half of the first week collecting. This included a day working up to 10,000 ft. in the Andes back of Santiago. From Punta Arenas, where the weather is not so bad as I expected, I have gone north about 100 miles by bus to Rio Rubens and collected in a remnant of heavy Nothofagus forest and in a variety of other habitats there. My main plans are working out well.... I expect to sail today on a small steamer, the Navarino, to go through the Straits and up among the islands to Pto. Eden in the 300+ inch rain zone, for a week or more of work. I hope to get into real subantarctic moorland... And finally I hope to cross the "Canal Beagle" and go by land across the main island of Tierra del Fuego slowly, collecting, and noting the change of fauna from Nothofagus woods to grassland."

Dr. Paynter has been elected a fellow of the AOU and appointed to the Editorial Board of the American Midland Naturalist. He reports that Vol. X of the Check-List of Birds of the World, covering Babblers, Thrushes, and Gnatcatchers, is now in press.

Dr. Mead will become Editor-in-Chief of the "Fishes of the Western North Atlantic", following Dr. Bigelow. This past summer, Dr. Mead served as Associate Professor at Stanford University, teaching Ichthyology.

Dr. Norman Marshall of the British Museum gave a series of ten lectures on oceanic ichthyology this spring for staff and students.

Dr. Mead and Mrs. Dick attended the 50th Anniversary meetings of the American Society of Ichthyology and Herpetology in Vancouver.

Dr. Levi spent the summer putting together a small popular guide to spiders, now in the editor's hands, and is hard at work translating Kaestner's invertebrate text into English. A report on Steatoda paykulliana, a black-widow mimic recently discovered to be poisonous, was presented by co-author Z. Maretić at a congress of internal medicine specialists in Ljubljana, Yugoslavia.

Dr. Paolo Tongiorgi, a sensory physiologist from the University of Pisa, is spending a year here looking at spiders from the systematist's point of view.

Dr. Iselin, Research Oceanographer of the Museum, participated in a panel on "Oceanography and Underseas Technology" at the Navy League convention in Boston in September.

WASP FARM, A Scientist's Vivid Account of the Remarkable Lives of Wasps, By Dr. Howard Evans, has just been published by Natural History Press. In his review in the New York Times, Peter Farb describes Wasp Farm as "nature writing of the highest integrity. Even more, it is in the great tradition of the field naturalists - such as Gilbert White, Darwin and Beebe - who went to the living animal for their information."

Drs. Clench and Turner gave a series of lectures to a group of teachers at the University of New Hampshire. They discussed both practical problems and pure research in mollusks. A joint monograph on Western Atlantic-South American Volutidae is now in press. Nine mollusk people spent a week during the summer at St. Andrews, New Brunswick, to do field study, collecting, and to have a look at the Biological Laboratory.

Dr. Turner is convalescing after a back operation, and is reported able to walk a little. She may soon be transferred from Peter Bent Brigham to the University Health Center.

Dr. Fairchild writes from the Canal Zone that the Gorgas Memorial Laboratory is undertaking a survey of the diseases occurring along the route of the Pan-American Highway, "to include the whole relevant fauna - vertebrate hosts and arthropod vectors, both proved and potential - and to be tied in as far as possible with the various vegetation types found under differing conditions of soil, altitude, rainfall..."

With Reed Rollins, Dr. Mayr is giving a course titled "Methods and Principles of Systematic Biology," (Biology 250), which will consider definition and recognition of higher taxa and categories, preparation of classifications, individual and geographic variation, taxonomic characters, keys, and principles of nomenclature. Prerequisite is a course in genetics.

Dr. Elizabeth Pope, of the Australian Museum, Sydney, presented the first Natural History Seminar for this year, an exposé of the "Microfauna of the Intertidal Weed Mat," brilliantly illustrated by the color photography of Justice F.G. Myers, her fellow "aquarium watcher." Such surprises as marine caddis flies and previously unaccounted-for larval stages of echinoderms, have been turned up, among countless new species.

From Santiago, Patricio Sanchez writes: "I received an invitation to participate in a third International Interdisciplinary Conference on Marine Biology, in Princeton, January next, and since they are willing to take me over there, I shall be ready to go." I count on visiting you at the MCZ. Please carry my greetings to our friends at the Museum."

Mrs. Henry Stetson has given the Museum, in memory of her late husband, a diorama of Ordovician invertebrates. Mr. Henry Crosby Stetson, Research Oceanographer and Alexander Agassiz Fellow in Oceanography, died in December 1955, while engaged in a research cruise off the coast of Peru. He was, during the early part of his career, interested in Paleozoic fossil fish, but turned his attention later to marine sediments, and at the time of his death, was a leading authority on submarine geology.

Three ladies of the staff received Harvard chairs and refreshments at a spring program in recognition of 25 years of service: Jessie Bell Mackenzie, Barbara Schevill, and Nelda Wright.

Maxwell French retired during the past summer, after 35 years of indispensable service to the Museum.

Dr. Merrill E. Champion, Associate in Mollusks, died in June after a short illness. He had served, since his retirement in 1935, from the Massachusetts Department of Health, as a volunteer worker and Associate Editor in the Department of Mollusks, devoting himself especially to the extensive collection of North American land mollusks.

Marie Williams went with Mary Dawson on a Carnegie Institute expedition to central Wyoming and Utah, hunting late Eocene rodents, and in Montana, Rosendo Pascual, Perry Smith and Tony Laska worked with Jim Jenson. Perry Smith has returned to his studies at Northeastern.

David Norton spent the summer in Ecuador, collecting birds and making contacts for future work.

Keith Thomson received his Ph.D. in the spring, then joined the East Africa Expedition. He returned in September to marry Linda Price, and after the wedding, the Thomsons left for London, where Keith's address is the British Museum (Natural History).

While anticipating a new wing, we continue to see renovations in the old: new lighting in the library brightens life for everyone, and sinks for the invertebrate department drain off many curatorial problems there.

The Museum Shop offers more and more specimens, and is looking for new sources of material. It also carries the new book by Howard Evans, WASP FARM, and books of biological interest from the Harvard Press.

Everyone is asking "How did we get along without the Xerox machine?"

Michael Dix, Charles Porter and Jon Reiskind drove 4340 miles from Boston to British Honduras in seven days. "For two weeks we collected reptiles, hymenoptera, and spiders in this minute remnant of the British Empire. Then off to Costa Rica via Yucatan and the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and into Central America. Except for some minor difficulties with a landslide in the Guatemalan highlands and numerous 'aduana' (customs) formalities our group safely reached San Jose, which we found under a dense cover of volcanic ash. Here we split up, Charles and Mike staying at the O.A.S. Institute in Turrialba in the cool, agricultural plateau of costal Costa Rica, and I going on to Barro Colorado Island in the hot and humid forest of Panama. Fortunately we all were successful in finding the creatures we were after in addition to learning some Spanish, meeting the natives, and enduring some of the unique experiences that await those who live and eat abroad."

Jon Reiskind

Keep in touch. Write the NEWSLETTER about your activities. Your friends at the Museum will be glad to hear what you're doing.

Lorna Levi, editor

