



Museum of Comparative Zoology

NEWSLETTER

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During the winter of 1864-65, Louis Agassiz closed a series of lectures at the Lowell Institute with the suggestion that it would be a contribution of the greatest value if a naturalist were to explore Brazil. Nathaniel Thayer, one of Boston's wealthiest businessmen and a trustee of the museum, offered to defray the expenses of an exploring party. As with all of Agassiz's projects, the undertaking grew enormous overnight, and the planned scientific enterprise took on aspects of an educational and social mission. Agassiz's wife accompanied him, along with assistant naturalists J.A. Allen, ornithologist, J.G. Anthony, conchologist, O. St. John, paleontologist, and C.F. Hartt, geologist, and six Harvard students, including William James.

The Thayer Expedition left New York on 1 April, 1865, and returned on 6 August, 1866. Activities were concentrated for three months in the environs of Rio de Janeiro and for the remainder of the time in the lush tropical jungles and slow-moving streams of the Amazon Valley. Agassiz and his assistants collected over eighty thousand items of natural history. A highly original phase of the expedition was that Agassiz lectured to students and assistants on board the "Colorado" and in camp along the route. In these talks, the professor taught his young disciples how to collect, identify, label and sort materials, and discussed the significance of particular groups of natural objects.

adapted from "Louis Agassiz" by E. Lurie

The Museum celebrated the centennial of the Agassiz-Thayer expedition to Brazil with three lectures by George Sprague Myers, Curator of Fishes and Professor of Biology at Stanford University. The lectures, given on 3, 5, and 6 May, were entitled "Louis Agassiz, Nathaniel Thayer, and the Thayer Expedition," "Amazonian Fishes and their Ways," and "Problems in South American Ichthyology." Following the May 3rd lecture, about 100 guests and the senior staff members with their wives attended a reception in the Sea Serpent room.

In Brazil, the University and the National Museum also commemorated the expedition with a series of lectures, an Agassiz Week, late in April.

Prof. Simpson Honored

George Gaylord Simpson has been awarded the Daniel Giraud Elliot Medal of the National Academy of Sciences. He is the first man to have received the award twice. The Elliot Medal is given in recognition of published works in zoology or paleontology. It was presented to Simpson for his book, "Principles of Animal Taxonomy," published in 1961 by Columbia University Press. He was awarded his first Elliot Medal for "Tempo and Mode in Evolution."

Dr. Whittington Returns from Sabbatical

Dr. Whittington spent his Sabbatical leave, February to September, 1964, doing field work and museum study in Britain, southern France and Czechoslovakia. In Poland he was guest of the Polish Academy of Sciences for a ten day visit to the Geological Institute.

Dr. Levi Just Back from South America

Herbert Levi has just returned after spending three months in South America in pursuit of various appealing invertebrates, especially spiders. In Peru he found entomologists actively interested in spiders as biological controls for insect pests. From the coastal deserts he brought back living specimens of Sicarius, a spider that can dig itself into the fine sand of its habitat. (Plans to rear the species in captivity were abandoned when the female spider ate her intended mate.)

In Chile he had a reunion with Patricio Sánchez, a shaking-up in the recent severe earthquake, and the gratifying experience of having certain specimens come flocking to him -- terrestrial leeches abound in some forests.

In Tucumán he saw the Laurents and in Santiago del Estero, collaborating with Dr. J. Abalos on local black-widow problems, received official thanks from the Department of Public Health.

In Brazil he found the University and the National Museum preparing to celebrate the centennial of the Agassiz-Thayer Expedition. He visited P. Vanzolini and was given royal treatment at the São Paulo Museum, met several arachnological colleagues, and collected in the Organ Mountains with Mr. J. Becker of the National Museum. Coming home in mid-April, he found early spring in New England rather bleak compared to the lush South American summer.

Dr. Turner Surveys Marine Borer Research in India

At the request of the Government of India and through the auspices of the F.A.O., Ruth Turner made a two and one-half month tour of the laboratories concerned with the study of marine boring and fouling organisms and the protection of wood in the sea, for the purpose of advising on the work being done, to aid in the planning of future work and to make recommendations concerning all phases of the work, equipment, and organization of the "Scheme for the Protection of Wood in the Sea." Though a program for protection of timbers against marine borers has been in existence since 1953, the main emphasis has been on the testing and durability of native woods using various types of treatments and untreated controls. The general attitude has been that the species involved were not important, but only the extent of damage and the means to prevent the losses caused. Correct identification of the species found in India is the first problem to be solved. Once this has been done it will be possible to begin biological work on a firm basis, to conduct controlled experiments, and commence anatomical and physiological studies.

Ruth, in hot pursuit of a possible biological control for certain borers, expects to be in Europe this coming summer.

Dr. Deichmann Active in Retirement

Dr. Elisabeth Deichmann was guest of honor at a gathering of echinoderm specialists and MCZ staff and wives on 26 June last year, and was presented with an engraved tray bearing signatures of echinologists throughout the world, representing about twenty countries. United States echinologists came from as far as Miami and Durham, New Hampshire, and messages and cables were received from Holland, Russia, Australia and Japan, expressing good wishes for a happy and productive retirement.

Liska, active as ever, reports on her recent trip: "In the first half of August 1964, I went to Miami and worked at the station there (University of Miami) and went also to the Bahamas to study some sea cucumbers with Carol Mosher.

"Continued by Volkswagen westward to Boulder, Colorado, where I gave a talk about the present status of echinoderm work at a conference held by the AIBS. Being so far west it seemed silly not to go out to the west coast, which I did. Stayed for a while with Capt. Fred Ziesenhenné in Los Angeles and visited former students Phil Adams at California State College and Abraham Fleminger at La Jolla. Took the coastal highway up to Hopkins Marine Station, Pacific Grove, old stamping ground for 40 years, northwards to Dillon Beach to visit Hedgpeth and made calls at Corvallis, Seattle, and Nanaimo, each place being roped in to work on Holothurians. Drove across the Canadian Rockies and back, via Minnesota, arriving home 18 October.

"Headed southward again on 15 December, and flew to Jamaica where I worked with Dr. F.M. Bayer and Dr. Tom Goreau. After Christmas I stayed until 14 February at the station in Miami and worked on Dr. Bayer's new Caribbean Fauna. Carol Mosher came over for a few days from the Bahamas to take part in field trips and go over the Bahamian holothurians with me. Pinch-hitting for Dr. Harding Owre, I gave some of her lectures when one of the viruses struck her. Returned 1 March 1965, and have been busy ever since."

Marine Invertebrates Receives Grant

Dr. Fell's task of refurbishing and equipping the Department of Marine Invertebrates will be greatly expedited by a three year NSF grant, just received, for equipment and travel.

The Fells' fieldwork this past year has been restricted almost entirely to observational studies of the ecology of Homo sapiens in the New England environment. Having found a home they are now vigorously gardening on the weekends. In the evenings and on wet Saturdays, a facelift is being applied to the marine invertebrates area on the 4th floor. Among the projects under way is the installation of a dark-room and histology lab.

A new arrival to the department has been Dr. John H. Dearborn who comes to us on a two-year NSF postdoctoral fellowship to study deepwater and Antarctic echinoderms. He previously took part in Stanford University's Antarctic Program, and has carried out extensive field work in Ross Sea faunas. He and his wife Beth, and son Mark, are now living in Arlington.

The museum staff and students will soon bid farewell to Dr. W. Newman and family, who are returning to the University of California. Bill's activity among the marine invertebrates for the past two years has been a stimulating influence.

Cruise VI of Research Vessel "Anton Bruun"

The Museum has rapidly become one of the few important centers for research in the taxonomy and distribution of bathypelagic fishes. Dr. Giles Mead, who was Chief Scientist for Cruise VI of the R/V "Anton Bruun" (the former presidential yacht "Williamsburg") has provided some details about last summer's cruise. "It was one of two cruises planned as a collaborative effort to study the changes in the bathypelagic fauna of the Indian Ocean as one proceeds from the northern part of the Arabian Sea south to subantarctic waters. The work of the Anton Bruun, supported by the National Science Foundation, is a part of the American Program in Biology, International Indian Ocean Expedition. Accordingly, Dr. Mead proceeded to Bombay via Zanzibar and was joined there by Mr. R.L. Haedrich; Mr. Basil Nafpaktitis joined the vessel in Mauritius. The cruise terminated in Durban in mid-June. The principle objective was the collection of bathypelagic organisms. After preliminary study, much of this material will be permanently deposited in the MCZ.

"Ecological and systematic findings will be forthcoming, and some of the more important results can not now even be predicted. But two catches are of obvious and unique zoological interest. First the capture of a larval stage of a cyematid eel, one that is bright red in color, in contrast to the absolute transparency of all other known eel larvae. The second exciting specimen is a metamorphosing eel, over a meter long, that seems referable to the "giant leptocephalus" caught years ago by the Danish DANA and subject to world-wide public interest.

"Relatively few marine mammals were seen, but the sea birds seen during the second half were numerous and magnificent."

Paleontologists Dig in Argentina

Of his recent trip Dr. Romer writes: "As you know, Arnie Lewis, Jim Jensen, my wife and I have just returned from five months in Argentina. We went to attempt to find a new vertebrate horizon earlier than the rather late Triassic one which we discovered in 1958. After two months of complete failure, we struck it rich, and uncovered a spectacularly good early Triassic fauna, a formation in which we collected more than 150 excellent skulls as well as all sorts of post-cranial material."

Dr. Edinger to Represent Society of Vertebrate Paleontology

In August, Dr. Edinger is to be one of the delegates of the SVP to the 8th International Congress of Anatomists in Wiesbaden, and the World Federation of Neurology's "Symposium on Phylogenesis and Ontogenesis of the Forebrain" in Frankfurt am Main.

At the November meeting of the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology in Gainesville, Florida, only Tilly Edinger of the Society's eight MCZ members was actually present, but Dr. Edinger, then President, opened the "business" session by reading a greetings telegram, just received, from our expedition in Argentina.

Mammalogist in Africa

C.R. Taylor, Associate in Mammalogy, is in East Africa on a four year NIH grant, studying water metabolism of ungulates. He wrote in a recent letter: "I have just returned from the Northern Frontier of Kenya, Karamoja in Uganda and the Southern Sudan. I have been working on Turkana cattle. To the Turkana nothing is as valuable as a cow. Being forewarned, I equipped myself with 95 lbs. of tobacco (even the smallest child chews), a case of beer, and pieces of cloth. The bargaining for the use of the cattle was long and difficult. As soon as one would agree the others would say 'this enemy will kill all your cattle' and we would have to start over again. My help in capturing a murderer greatly improved relations and I was able to get some work done. In the Southern Sudan and northern Turkana there were a good number of people who had never seen auto or white man. The car was a 'cow' and I painted myself."

Further experiences are described in a letter published in the Harvard Alumni Bulletin for 17 April 1965, "An Auto is a Cow with Eyes."

Briefly Noted

Prof. Ernst Mayr was elected this spring to the American Philosophical Society. He is also President elect of the Society of Systematic Zoology.

Prof. Romer is the new President elect of the AAAS. He is introduced to the association members in an appealing sketch by Bryan Patterson in SCIENCE for 19 February 1965.

For the year ending in November, Dr. Whittington is serving as President of the Paleontological Society.

Prof. Simpson will receive an Sc.D. degree on 10 June from Cambridge University, Cambridge, England.

Dr. Levi has been elected Vice-president of the spider society, the Centre International de Documentation Arachnologique.

Dr. Lyman has been appointed to the Physiology Study Section of the National Institutes of Health.

Drs. Clench and Turner were in New Orleans for the meetings of the AMU, as was Dick Johnson. Dr. Clench presented a series of five lectures in Florida in February.

Entomology has New Assistant Curator

Dr. John Francis Lawrence was appointed Assistant Curator of Insects in June 1964. Dr. Lawrence comes to us from the University of California, Berkeley.

Richard Winslow Foster

Richard Winslow Foster, Associate in Mollusks, died in Rome on 3 September 1964, at the age of 45. Associated with the MCZ since 1940, Dick had many friends here.

Horace J. Sawin

Horace J. Sawin, "Hod" to his friends, a vertebrate paleontologist who took his degree in the Museum in the '30's, died suddenly of a heart attack a few weeks ago at his home in Newcastle, Delaware. He had spent the greater part of his career in Texas, and during this time published several important papers on fossil reptiles and amphibians. In his latter years, however, he had turned to administrative work at the University of Houston, and later at the University of Delaware. (A.S. Romer)

Visitors

Dr. K.S.W. Campbell, of the National University of Australia, arrived early in May to work as a Research Fellow under a NSF grant in the Department of Invertebrate Paleontology. He will be with us until December.

Dr. N.D. Newell of the American Museum of Natural History and Columbia University visited the MCZ on Friday, 14 May. Dr. Newell is particularly interested in the problem of extinction and met with members of the MCZ having similar interests for an informal "Bull Session" on the subject.

Prof. Leif Størmer, Director of the Geological Institute, Oslo, Norway, authority on fossil arthropods, will be with us as Visiting Alexander Agassiz Professor from September 1965 until June 1966.

STUDENTS: Present, Past, and Future

Richard Haedrich won the Stoye prize for the best ichthyological paper presented by a student at last summer's national meeting of the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists at Morehead City, N.C. Mr. Haedrich, who expects to finish his Ph.D. work this coming summer, has been awarded a Fulbright Fellowship that will enable him to continue the study of bathypelagic fishes in Denmark, 1965-66.

John Musick has participated in three cruises of the U.S. Bureau of Commercial Fisheries R/V Albatross IV, in connection with his dissertation research.

Invertebrate paleontologist Frederick Shaw took his final examination for the Ph.D. in April and is now teaching at Holyoke.

Miss Amy Levowitz, from Queens College, arrived this semester to begin study and research on sea-stars toward her Ph.D.

Jon Reiskind plans a spider-watching expedition to Costa Rica this summer. Bill Eberhardt has been accepted to graduate school and will continue his promising research into the behavior of orb-weaving spiders. He has been invited by Dr. Peter Witt to spend several weeks at the Upstate Medical Center of the University of New York, in Syracuse, observing the pharmacological experiments with orb-weavers. Joe Beatty, after a year at Duke University, will return for the summer to complete his Ph.D. thesis, and next fall will go to the University of Southern Illinois. Allen Brady is moving from Hope College in Holland, Michigan to Albion College next fall; the Bradys have a new baby: Melinda Louise arrived on 10 January. Jeff Donat, in his work with scorpions, has learned to handle them with bottle forceps: even the docile species know how to use that stinger. We are looking forward to the arrival of Larry Pinter, coming to us from UCLA and Los Angeles State, to continue graduate studies here next fall.

R. Thorington, just returned from South America, is with the Harvard Primates Center. John Hayward, post-doctoral from the University of British Columbia is working with the Mammalogy Dept. Tom Frazzetta is doing post-doctoral investigation of snake feeding. Graduate student George Gorwan is interested in lizard behavior and chromosomes; Allen Greer in skink skulls, viviparity and adaptation. Stanley Rand is now on the staff at Barro Colorado Island. David Norton will leave for his third summer of bird collecting in Ecuador, to be joined in September by R.A. Paynter, Jr. Bob Jenkins, Fred Coyle and Margaret Jones will be doing field work in Costa Rica this summer. Tom Eisner spent a year in Holland working with Dr. DeWilde. Walter Bock is joining the Department of Zoology at Columbia University. Terry Hamilton has spent a year in England. Ira Rubinoff is going to Panama as Zoologist for the Smithsonian Institution Biological Area.

Currently working in the Mollusk department are Barry Wilson, post-doctoral from Australia, Jose Stuardo, special student from Chile, and Michael Ghiselin, post-doctoral from California. Vida Kenk is on the way to Fiji on the TeVega. Joe Rosewater and Bob Robertson have put in some time on the TeVega, and Ken Boss on the Anton Bruun. Arthur Clarke continues his field work in the Hudson Bay drainage system. Ed Michelson is giving a course in medically important mollusks at the Harvard School of Tropical Medicine. Joe Vagvolgyi is now at Brooklyn College in New York. Don McMichael has had a field trip to Swains Reef in the Coral Sea.

William Sill, from Brigham Young, Roger Wood from Princeton, and Eleanor Adam, Radcliffe honors candidate, are working with Prof. Patterson.

Francois Vuilleumier reports in a letter to Dr. Mayr: "I am now completing a short stay in NW Peru, and have found it very rewarding. I was able to visit the isolated Amotape Mountains near the border with Ecuador, and to take a trip into the Andes. This year just happens to be exceedingly wet (fluctuations in the vegetation and bird-life were described by Marchant in Ibis, and by Murphy earlier) -- the rains were prolonged way beyond their normal period. As a result the roads are impassable and the trip across the Andes to Huancabamba and to the dry Marañon impossible. I would have to wait about a month to go there. The pleasant side is that I have been able to compare the conditions in both normal and exceptional years (last year in the Guayaquil region, and this year in NW Peru). The luxuriance of the vegetation in areas that are normally sandy wastes with only a few bushes made it possible for birds to invade vast areas that suddenly became suitable habitats. There is even one bird, a handsome tanager, that apparently breeds on the western slopes of the Andes only in the wet years (i.e. every 7 or 8 years), possibly coming across the Andes from the eastern slope."

Guy Bush writes from the University of Melbourne: "Australia is an entomological paradise. The two major components of the arthropod fauna appear to be spiders and ants. The latter get into your sleeping bag and sting you at every opportunity and the former occur in such huge numbers that they continually mutilate my flies in the net before I can rescue them. I have collected a few but it would take an experienced arachnologist a life-time to make a small dent in this spider fauna."

Library News

Connie Carter, who has been on leave for the past year, has received one of the top awards made annually to library school students -- an internship at the Library of Congress. She will receive her M.A. in Library Science in August from the University of North Carolina and will start immediately at the Library of Congress. Connie, in her generous fashion, says she owes it all to her training at MCZ.

New members of the library staff are Auriel Pilgrim from Barbados West Indies, who attended the University of West Indies, Annelies Zechel of Vienna, who attended the Gymnasium there, and Déla Zitkus who was born in Lithuania and went to the University of Seattle, a Jesuit institution.

Mr. French has joined the library staff as "stack supervisor."

On 12 June, Karen Horn will be married to Ed Dooks, a photographer for the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company, who has just been voted Cameraman of the year by the Boston Press Photographers' Association. Ed and Karen will live in the Cambridge area.

Mrs. MacDonald attended the dedication ceremonies of the Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine, Harvard Medical School, on 27 May.

The Library wishes to remind all graduate students to return their books if they are not going to be in Cambridge during the summer.

BOOKS

Dr. Darlington's "Biogeography of the Southern End of the World" will soon appear, published by Harvard Press.

Dr. Henry Bigelow has published his "Memories of a Long and Active Life." Though slim, the volume is replete with anecdotes, reminiscences, and observations accumulated during his many expeditions and Dr. Bigelow tells us some obscure details about the establishment of the Marine Biological Laboratory at Woods Hole, of which he was the founding director.

Dr. Romer has completed a thorough revision of his "Vertebrate Paleontology," and it is about to go to press.

Dr. Whittington has published his "Trilobites of the Ordovician Table Head Formation, Western Newfoundland," in the Bulletin, vol. 132, pp. 275-442.

A revised edition of "Life, an Introduction to Biology" by Simpson and Beck, has appeared.

From her post behind the counter of the Museum Shop, Mrs. Hall observed that visitors to the exhibits needed a guide, and an illustrated booklet, "About the Exhibits," has been the result of her interest. After a statement about the history and function of the Museum, and a floor plan, the booklet presents brief, nontechnical stories behind some of the rare and historic specimens in the Museum.

