

Museum Expeditions and Gifts

Expeditions

The expeditions sent out by the Museum may be divided into two classes. The first were almost entirely for the collecting of material for the use of the systematic zoologists; in the second class, a broader view was taken, and material collected was for exhibition purposes as well as for study.

In 1890 Professor Nutting and Professor Calvin made one of the earliest Museum expeditions — to the Bay of Fundy. There they collected sea birds, seals, and marine invertebrates.

Early in 1891 Professor A. G. Smith and Frank Russell, a graduate student, planned a trip to the northern shores of Lake Winnipeg, Manitoba, to collect birds. After the trip was arranged, Professor Nutting decided to go along and take charge. While on this trip, Frank Russell met an ornithologist who had lived in the north country for years, and from this man's description of the field as a collecting ground, Russell became very enthusiastic about making a trip to the Far North. Professor Nutting placed the plans before the Board of Regents of the University. The Board approved sending Russell on the expedition, but no money was appropriated. President Charles A.

Schaeffer kindly advanced the money from his own pocket. In all, Frank Russell spent three years (1892-1894) on this trip. He brought back specimens of musk-ox, caribou, moose, a grizzly bear new to science, and many birds and small mammals. In addition, he collected a number of ethnological specimens including some fine carved ivory.

Other expeditions attracted much attention. In 1893 Professors Nutting, Houser, and Wickham organized a party of twenty-one members, including many senior students of zoology, for a trip to the Bahama and Dry Tortugas islands. A carload of material was collected, consisting almost entirely of marine invertebrates. Some 1,300 marine hydroids, Professor Nutting's specialty, were also brought back. The Barbados-Antigua Expedition, sent out under Nutting's direction in 1918, found more material to fill out the marine group; while another very large collection was obtained in 1922, when Professors Nutting, Stoner, Wylie, and Thomas visited New Zealand and the Fiji Islands.

Through the financial help of Mr. E. M. Brown of Des Moines, three successful expeditions were sent out in 1920 and 1924 under the direction of the author. The first expedition, in June and July of 1920, visited the Hawaiian Islands for the express purpose of collecting fishes for the University Museum and for Mr. Brown's private museum at Des Moines. Over two hundred specimens of highly colored fishes were collected and preserved

in a new preserving fluid invented by the author. The results of this trip may be seen in the fish exhibit at the Museum. In September of that same year Mr. Brown financed an expedition to the Cascade Mountains in Washington for the purpose of collecting mountain goats. With the assistance of Robert Brown, Russell Hendee, C. J. Albrecht, and B. E. Manville, a fine series of goats was collected. Birds and small mammals were also brought back. In the spring of 1924 Mr. Brown sponsored a third expedition, this time to Mazatlan and Guaymas, Mexico, to collect the fish which come up from the south as far as the Gulf of California. Hundreds of fine specimens were taken, also some sea birds.

In 1926 Mr. T. A. Wanerus suggested to the author that he come out to his Wyoming ranch and collect some antelope for the Museum. Mr. C. H. Fishburn financed this trip. The fine animals which adorn the antelope group in the Museum were secured on this expedition.

Gifts

Over the years the Museum has received so many gifts that no attempt will be made to describe them all, since they have all been recorded in the Museum catalog. There are some, however, that have played an important part in building up the collections, and also are especially interesting to Iowans.

Without doubt one of the finest gifts ever received by the Museum is the wonderful collection of mounted birds and mammals from all over the world, collected and presented by the late Dr. Wm. T. Hornaday in 1886. Outstanding in this collection are the marsupial mammals from Australia, including a number of kangaroos, phalangers, echidna, platipus, and even a number of koala bears, which are almost extinct. One of the conditions under which this collection was presented was that it should be kept in a separate room known as the Hornaday Room. When the Museum was moved to the new building in 1908, Dr. Hornaday gave his permission to have the material put into the general collection. During the early days these specimens formed the backbone of the Museum.

Among some of the larger gifts presented in 1887 was the D. H. Talbot collection of bird skins, numbering several thousand specimens. Perhaps the most valuable in this lot was a series of Carolina parakeets and a number of whooping cranes. In 1931 T. W. Dewing of New York City gave the writer his collection of North American birds' eggs, numbering over one thousand sets. This collection was presented to the Museum. In 1925 a set of Alaskan sea birds was given to the Museum by two former students, Alfred M. Bailey and Russell W. Hendee. This material was used in making the Bering Sea exhibit.

Through the efforts of the late President George T. Baker of the Board of Education, the bird collection of the Rev. C. M. Jones of Boston, Massachusetts, was presented to the Museum in 1928. President Jessup sent the author to Boston to interview the members of the Jones family, and after some months of delay, the collection was finally sent to the Museum. In it was a very extensive and complete series of New England birds, also a set of field notes which were printed and placed in the Museum library.

One of the unique and interesting gifts to the Museum was a set of clothing and hunting and fishing equipment of the Blond Eskimos. This material was collected and presented by Vilhjalmur Stefansson, the Arctic explorer, an alumnus of the University.

In the lower corridor of the Museum there is one case filled with Javanese Batik, carvings, beadwork, and silver from Java. This beautiful collection was presented by Mrs. Sarah Huftalen.

In 1904, at the time of the World's Fair at St. Louis, a commission was sent to the Philippines to get material for an exhibit at the Fair. After the Fair was over, this material, consisting of native clothing, baskets, beadwork, carvings, and models of huts, boats, fish-traps, as well as native spears, bows, and arrows, was given to the Museum.

While the Museum is rich in its collections of bird skins, numbering many thousands, it also has

quite a number of extinct and nearly extinct birds, a series of which makes a special exhibit in one of the corridor cases. In this case there is a replica of a dodo, made by the author from bones, data, casts, and drawings obtained from the American Museum in New York, the Chicago Museum, and even from Aberdeen, Scotland, where the only outer parts of the dodo were ever saved. There is also a replica of the Labrador duck, the Great Auk, and mounted specimens of the heath-hen, whooping crane, Eskimo curlew, ivory-billed woodpecker, Laysan teal, honey-eater, miller bird, and Carolina parakeet.

The great naturalist, Dr. Wm. T. Hornaday, was so much impressed that he wrote the following legend especially for this exhibit:

During the past 100 years, many valuable species of birds and mammals have been exterminated, and many more have been nearly extinguished. . . . The most important North American birds that have been exterminated either wholly or nearly so, are represented in this collection. . . . It is high time that all lovers of wild life should seriously consider the progressive extinction of valuable species, and the good citizen's duty to help preserve them.