

Field Museum of Natural History

Founded by Marshall Field, 1893

Roosevelt Road and Lake Michigan, Chicago

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FIELD MUSEUM NEWS

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Field Museum is open every day of the year during the hours indicated below:

November, December, January 9 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.
 February, March, April, October 9 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.
 May, June, July, August, September 9 A.M. to 6:00 P.M.

Admission is free to Members on all days. Other adults are admitted free on Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays; non-members pay 25 cents on other days. Children are admitted free on all days. Students and faculty members of educational institutions are admitted free any day upon presentation of credentials.

The Library of the Museum, containing some 92,000 volumes on natural history subjects, is open for reference daily except Sunday.

Traveling exhibits are circulated in the schools of Chicago by the Museum's Department of the N. W. Harris Public School Extension.

Lectures for school classrooms and assemblies, and special entertainments and lecture tours for children at the Museum, are provided by the James Nelson and Anna Louise Raymond Foundation for Public School and Children's Lectures.

Announcements of courses of free illustrated lectures on science and travel for the public, and special lectures for Members of the Museum, will appear in FIELD MUSEUM NEWS.

There is a cafeteria in the Museum where luncheon is served for visitors. Other rooms are provided for those bringing their lunches.

Busses of the Chicago Motor Coach Company (Jackson Boulevard Line, No. 26) provide service direct to the Museum. Free transfers are available to and from other lines of the company.

Members are requested to inform the Museum promptly of changes of address.

GENTIANAS

By PAUL C. STANDLEY

Associate Curator of the Herbarium

Those who enjoy great masses of brilliant color in the landscape find no season equal in beauty to the autumn. Early frosts set the woods ablaze with crimson and gold of foliage that is soon to disappear. No other season provides such gorgeous displays of flower color, furnished chiefly by the yellow of goldenrod, and the blue, pink, purple, and white of innumerable asters.

Most beloved of autumn flowers, however, are the gentians, perhaps because their glorious colors are displayed more modestly. Gentians probably will not be with us indefinitely, for they are unable to withstand cultivation of land, and they are so mistreated by thoughtless vandals that even those growing in protected places are threatened with extermination.

In September and October gentians are at their best. Late in August Dr. H. C.

Worthington of Oak Park brought to Field Museum two luxuriant stalks of the white gentian, one of the rarest of the local species. It is a tall plant, often two feet high or more. Its flowers, of the closed or "bottle" type, are pure white with shadings of bright green, and always surprise persons who have assumed that all gentians are blue.

At least six other gentians grow in the Chicago region. Most celebrated and most richly colored of them all is the fringed gentian, which still grows in considerable abundance in secluded places near Lake Michigan. The wide-open flowers have fringed lobes; when picked the flowers close, not to open again, so that most of their beauty is lost. A field of them, sometimes a solid sheet of royal blue, is almost breathtaking in the intensity of its beauty.

The chaste and somewhat frosty blue and purple of the closed or bottle gentians are quite in keeping with the chilly autumn mornings and evenings when they bloom. There are three species of them, two that grow in woodlands and in moist places among the dunes, the other on the prairies. They form small clumps a foot high or more, each stiff wiry stem bearing several of the handsome blossoms, that seem to be just on the point of opening. In October fine colonies of them may be seen in the Indiana State Park at Tremont; the prairie gentian thrives in the Morton Arboretum at Lisle.

The two other gentians of the Chicago region, one a fringed gentian differing little from the common one, the other the five-leaved gentian with inconspicuous small flowers, are of infrequent occurrence. In spite of the continued encroachment of cultivation and building operations, it is surprising to see how many gentians may still be found in areas close to Chicago. It will be fortunate if in such places as the Forest Preserves and the Indiana State Park they may be protected to permit future dwellers about Lake Michigan to see some of the finest of the flowers that formerly grew so profusely in the woods and prairies.

SPECIAL NOTICE

All Members of Field Museum who have changed their residences or are planning to do so are earnestly urged to notify the Museum at once of their new addresses, so that copies of FIELD MUSEUM NEWS and all other communications from the Museum may reach them promptly.

OSTRICHES AND THEIR ALLIES ADDED TO HALL OF BIRDS

By RUDYERD BOULTON

Assistant Curator of Birds

"To hide one's head in the sand like an ostrich," is a saying in almost universal use, yet it has no basis of fact. An ostrich does hide, but it has a far more clever and efficient method. The long neck provides an effective periscope and by standing behind a bush or small tree, the bird can look over the top without exposing its body.

An exhibit of ostriches and their allies has just been added to the bird collections in Hall 21 at Field Museum. Those included are Mantell's kiwi from the South Sea islands which is becoming extremely rare; the elegant, rufous, and gray-headed tinamous, all from South America; the North African and South African ostriches; the southern rhea from South America; the

Moluccan cassowary from the South Sea islands; and the emu from Australia.

These represent the six families of birds which form the most primitive of the two groups into which all living birds are divided. They are confined to the southern hemisphere, and are remnants of a large fauna which flourished in prehistoric times as evidenced by many fossils.

With the exception of the South American tinamous, all of these birds have lost the power of flight. Their wings are much reduced in size, and the breastbone which supports them is ill-designed to stand strain.

The ostrich, which is confined to Africa and Arabia, is frequently found in association with herds of big game. An ostrich is given a wide berth even by large animals, for the bird's temper is conditioned by its sense of dignity, and a kick from its powerful foot may do considerable damage. An ostrich's nest is merely a hollow scraped in the ground. Fifteen to twenty eggs about six inches in diameter are laid. Occasionally unattached females attempt to lay in an occupied nest, but, generally speaking, ostriches are monogamous. The female, which is gray and brown, incubates by day, while the black male incubates by night. The call of the ostrich, given only by the male, resembles a lion's roar.

Rheas are sometimes called South American ostriches, but they are very distinct and belong to a separate family. Their habits are much the same, however. They have three toes, like emus and cassowaries, whereas ostriches have only two. Emus are found only in Australia. They resemble ostriches more than any of the others.

Cassowaries are practically restricted to New Guinea. Each wing has a curious feather without any fluffy barbs, about the size and shape of a pen holder. They are strictly forest birds.

The strangest of this group is the kiwi, or apteryx. Its wings are more reduced in size than those of the others. It has no tail and its feathers superficially resemble fur. The nostrils are situated at the very tip of its bill. Kiwis occur only in New Zealand. They formerly had a more extensive range, for fossils are found in Australia.

The tinamous of South America are in many ways the least degenerate of these six families. Some of them are forest birds while others live in savannas. Their eggs are very curious, being glossy as though highly polished. They vary from pale green to dark brown. There is a strange reversal of the sexes, for the female is larger than the male, and, after the eggs are laid, leaves the business of incubation and care of the young to her mate.

BEQUESTS AND ENDOWMENTS

Bequests to Field Museum of Natural History may be made in securities, money, books or collections. They may, if desired, take the form of a memorial to a person or cause, named by the giver. For those desiring to make bequests, the following form is suggested:

FORM OF BEQUEST

I do hereby give and bequeath to Field Museum of Natural History of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois,

Cash contributions made within the taxable year to Field Museum not exceeding 15 per cent of the taxpayer's net income are allowable as deductions in computing net income under Article 251 of Regulation 69 relating to the income tax under the Revenue Act of 1926.

Endowments may be made to the Museum with the provision that an annuity be paid to the patron for life. These annuities are tax-free and are guaranteed against fluctuation in amount.



Standley, Paul Carpenter. 1932. "Gentians." *Field Museum news* 3(10), 2-2.

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