

# Field Museum News

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## GROUP OF GUEREZA MONKEYS

BY COLIN CAMPBELL SANBORN  
Curator of Mammals

In the densely forested regions of central and western Africa, especially in Ethiopia, is found a grotesque and interesting species of black and white monkey called the guereza or horse-tailed monkey. A habitat group of one of the most striking varieties of this animal has recently been placed on exhibition in Carl E. Akeley Memorial Hall (Hall 22). The group is composed of specimens collected by the Field Museum—*Chicago Daily News* Abyssinian Expedition, under the leadership of Dr. Wilfred H. Osgood, Chief Curator of Zoology.

Guereza monkeys, in common with American spider monkeys and some others, have only a rudimentary thumb and hence are especially adapted for inhabiting trees, as a fully developed thumb would interfere with the agility required for arboreal life. Their scientific name, *Colobus*, which comes from the Greek and means "mutilated," refers to this greatly reduced digit. On the other hand, their common name, guereza, is the one used by the natives of Ethiopia.

In spite of the brilliantly contrasting colors of their coats, guereza monkeys are not easily seen when they are sitting in the high trees of the thick forest. They are much more apt to catch the eye when moving, for in traveling they often make downward leaps spanning distances of forty to fifty feet from one tree to another. Unlike many other monkeys, they are not attracted by cultivated native gardens. Rather, they shun human settlements, preferring the secluded forests, where they often form troupes of ten to fifteen members.

Guereza monkeys feed to some extent on fruits, and insects, but the main item of their diet is leaves, of which they consume large quantities. They have no cheek pouches for storing food, but they do have exceptionally large stomachs well adapted to holding and digesting large masses of food.

Men and women of various African tribes use the skins of guereza monkeys for ornamental dress and for the decoration of their weapons, especially shields. Moreover, the use of these skins is not confined to Africa. Many guereza skins are exported each year, and they are, in fact, the only African monkey pelts with a commercial value. The exceptionally long hair makes them especially suitable for trimming cloth coats that require narrow strips. In some places hunting has greatly reduced their numbers.

Besides the black and white species there is also a red guereza in Africa.

The group shows an old male and female with two young of different ages in the top of a high tree of their native forest. The taxidermy and accessories are the work of Staff Taxidermist Leon L. Pray.



Guereza Monkeys

A new group placed on exhibition in Carl E. Akeley Memorial Hall. These odd-looking creatures from Ethiopia are extremely agile, making downward leaps of forty to fifty feet from one tree to another. Their fur is valued as a trimming for women's coats.

## Starches

Starch, like sugar, is produced in all green plants, and is mostly found stored in their seeds and root-stocks. It is thus especially abundant in the various grains, such as wheat, rye, barley, oats, and corn; in other seeds, such as peas, beans, acorns and chestnuts; and in numerous tuberous roots and rhizomes including the potato, sweet potato, arrowroot, etc.

The principal commercial starches are: rice, wheat, corn, sago, arrowroot, cassava, and potato. Many other starches are of local importance in the countries where they are produced. Besides its use as food, starch is employed in the textile industries and in the manufacture of paste and glucose.

Among the vegetable food products in Hall 25 there is exhibited a representative series of commercial starches as well as a number of little-known or unusual starches from various parts of the world.

Some of the world's least-known metals, with collections of objects illustrating their use, are exhibited in Frederick J. V. Skiff Hall (Hall 37, Case 39).

## EVOLUTION OF SNAKES

BY KARL P. SCHMIDT  
Curator of Reptiles and Amphibians

Snakes present strong and varied evidences of evolution. Their anatomy shows plainly that they are directly allied to the four-limbed lizards. Within the snake group itself there has been a progressive evolution, accompanied by loss of limbs and the acquisition in some cases of a poison apparatus for obtaining prey. For example, the boas and pythons are entirely non-poisonous, but show strong evidence of their lizard ancestry in having vestiges of the hind limbs and two lungs, while the members of the main group of snakes, composing the family Colubridae, have lost all trace of limbs, have lost one of the lungs, and thus plainly show that they have developed further in the same direction.

Finally the poisonous snakes have perfected an elaborate means of food-getting, the cobras and vipers being two quite distinct types which have developed in this direction. In the cobras and their allies such as the coral snakes, mambas, and kraits, the poison apparatus consists of short fixed fangs at the front of the upper jaw. In the vipers and pit vipers, the very large poison fangs fold back when not in use.

One reason for seeing an evidence of evolution in this development of a poison apparatus lies in the fact that there is a large group of

snakes which are partially or mildly poisonous, with poison conducting teeth at the rear of the jaw. These bridge the gap between the harmless snakes and the truly venomous ones.

Another type of evolution is especially well displayed among the snakes. Some snakes have departed from the normal ground dwelling habit, and become exclusively tree snakes, water snakes, or burrowing snakes, and they have become characteristically modified for each mode of life. Tree snakes are slender and elongate, and frequently green; water snakes have valve-like nostrils, eyes on top of the head, and flattened oar-shaped tails; and burrowing snakes have cylindrical bodies and short tails. Many of the types of snakes mentioned herein are to be seen in the Museum's reptile collections in Albert W. Harris Hall (Hall 18).

Pond scums and sea weeds present an interesting phase of botanical study. A case illustrating the chief facts about them is available for reference in the Hall of Plant Life (Hall 29, Case 803).



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