

## MUSEUM LECTURER JOINS WAVES

Miss Elizabeth Best, Guide-Lecturer on the staff of the Raymond Foundation, has been granted leave of absence for enlistment in the Navy. She has been accepted for the WAVES Officers' Training School at Northampton, Massachusetts, and left Chicago, February 12 for that post. The Museum has already lost 32 of its men to war service; Miss Best is the first woman member of its staff to join up. She has been associated with the Museum since early in 1940, when she joined the staff as a volunteer assistant in zoology. In February, 1941, she was appointed a staff lecturer. She is a graduate of Mount Holyoke College with a bachelor of science degree, and took her master of science degree at the University of Chicago.



ELIZABETH BEST

## Other Staff Notes

The Army has promoted Mr. Rupert L. Wenzel (on leave from his post at Field Museum as Assistant Curator of Insects) from the rank of First Lieutenant to Captain.

Mrs. Ellen T. Smith, Associate in the Division of Birds, who for several months was absent due to the fact that her husband, Mr. Hermon Dunlap Smith, was engaged in war activities in another city, has returned to Chicago. She is now again contributing her highly appreciated services to the Museum.

Mr. Alfred C. Weed, after two months' leave of absence spent in the southeast, returned to the Museum recently.

Dr. Alfred E. Emerson, a professor in the Department of Zoology at the University of Chicago, Dr. Charles H. Seevers, head of the Department of Zoology at the Central Y.M.C.A. College in Chicago, and Mr. Alex K. Wyatt, a specialist in moths and butterflies, have all been appointed to the staff of Field Museum as Research Associates in Entomology. They will aid in various research projects.

Mrs. Roberta Cramer has been appointed a staff lecturer in the James Nelson and Anna Louise Raymond Foundation. Mrs. Cramer was graduated from Grinnell College in Iowa with a bachelor of arts degree. She specialized in archaeology, and engaged in

further studies in anthropology and ethnology at the University of Toronto, later serving in research in these subjects at the Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology in Toronto.

Mr. J. Francis Macbride is spending some months at the Department of Botany, University of California, Los Angeles.

## CONSERVATION BRIEFS

### II. Mammals

BY COLIN CAMPBELL SANBORN  
CURATOR OF MAMMALS

(Now a Lieutenant S. G. in U. S. Navy)

A conservationist trying to explain the aesthetic value of mammals or birds is often confronted by someone who asks: "What good are they?"

People who ask that question should ask themselves, "What good am I?" A little reflection on the answer to the second question might make them more tolerant of other life.

The motive for true conservation is higher than the mere gain of worldly possessions—it cannot be placed on a purely material basis. It recognizes the right to live—even the right of weasels, skunks, foxes and other small carnivores. True conservation is not the policy of saving that which seems at the time to be of most value to material civilizations, but is a policy of noninterference with all life, no matter how small.

Many living forms have a proper and rightful place in the perfect functioning of the laws of nature, and are required to complete the comprehensive outdoors picture. To remove even the smallest of these forms may destroy the balance and leave a blank in the natural picture.

To satisfy material needs, civilization has for years defaced the picture. Fortunately, however, the real value and beauty of the outdoors is at last being realized and efforts either to preserve or to restore natural surroundings are now being made. Concurrently has come understanding of the aesthetic value of some of the birds and of the diurnal mammals that attract the attention and catch the imagination. These are now protected by moral and written laws.

However, many nocturnal mammals, principally the small carnivores, have not as yet gained general approval for their existence and are thought of as enemies of material civilization when in many cases the exact opposite is true. Given sympathetic protection, these mammals could become almost as well known and friendly as many of the diurnal forms that captivate the hearts of their friends.

People guard well their money, jewelry, and other valuable possessions. If left unguarded they are apt to be stolen and the

owner is blamed for his carelessness. On the other hand, if poultry or livestock suffers from the attacks of wild animals it is always upon the wild animals that the blame is fixed, and not upon the owner who was lax in the care of his property.

This is illogical, and most certainly is not fair either to the poultry or the wild animals. Human beings know that it is wrong to rob and to kill, but certain mammals have no other means of existence and cannot distinguish between poultry and wild birds. Furthermore, domestication has removed many of the protective instincts of once wild animals and it is the owners' accepted responsibility to care for all of such domesticated creatures.

Even skunks, to say nothing of weasels, minks, raccoons, and foxes, have their proper place as checks on rodent and insect life which, if uncontrolled, would soon become a plague.

(Next issue:—Conservation of Birds.)

### Artificial Silk Anticipated in 1664

Mr. Charles R. Heath, a Member of Field Museum who often contributes plant material to the Department of Botany, supplies the following interesting extract from an article on textile fibers in an Australian journal (written by Professor W. R. Lang of Geelong, Victoria):

"In 1664, Dr. Robert Hooke in his *Micrographia* made the following curious statement after examining silk fibers: 'Silk is little else than a dried thread of glew (*sic*). I have often thought that probably there might be a way found out to make an artificial glutinous composition much resembling if not full as good, nay better than, that excrement or whatever the substance it be out of which the silkworm draws his glew. I need not mention the use of such an invention, nor the benefit that is likely to accrue to the finder. they being sufficiently obvious. This hint, therefore, may, I hope, give some ingenious person an occasion for making some trials.'

"No such ingenious person arose until 1884, two hundred and twenty years later, when the Frenchman Chardonnet, using the ideas then recently introduced by the Englishman Swan for producing fine carbon filaments for his new electric globes, turned to the deadly explosive nitrocellulose, and the fantastic combination yielded the first artificial fibre from cellulose material."

The dating of many of the American Indian exhibits in Field Museum is based upon the tree-ring method of establishing chronology. In Hall 7 is an exhibit of a master tree-ring calendar illustrating how this method is used.

A Bean Dance altar of colored sand, made by Indians of the Southwest, is exhibited in Hall 7, Case 6.





Sanborn, Colin Campbell. 1943. "Conservation Briefs II. Mammals." *Field Museum news* 14(3), 7-7.

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