STAFF NOTES

Harry E. Changnon, Curator of Geology Exhibits, conducted a lecture and laboratory exercise at the Chicago Academy of Science on the identification of minerals, for teachers and students of the Chicago area.

Dr. Donald Collier, Curator of South American Archaeology and Ethnology, has been appointed a member of the International Committee of the *Centre International d'Etude Ethnographique de la Maison dans le Monde*, in Brussels. The Committee will study the domestic architecture of the world from a cultural and anthropological point of view, to determine the relation of each country's housing to its physical environment and social organization.

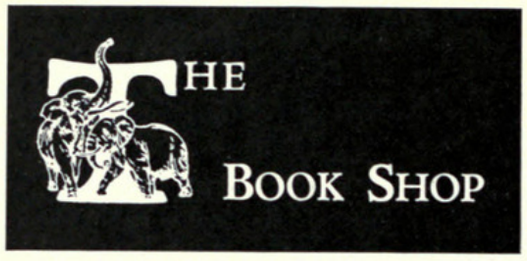
"Archaeological Exploration in New Mexico" was discussed by Allen Liss, Custodian of Collections, Department of Anthropology, at a recent meeting of the Earth Science Club of Northern, Illinois.

Dr. Paul S. Martin, Chief Curator of Anthropology, and Mr. George Quimby, Curator of North American Archaeology and Ethnology, attended the annual meetings of the Society for American Archaeology at Tucson. Mr. Quimby was chairman of a session on the archaeology of the eastern United States, while Dr. Martin chaired a session on southwestern archaeology.

Mr. George Quimby, Curator of North American Archaeology and Ethnology, has been appointed Collaborator of the National Park Service, Region One. In this consultative capacity, he recently inspected salvage archaeological operations at Ocmulgee National Monument, Georgia.

Mr. E. Leland Webber, Director, attended the Conference of Directors of Systematic Collections held in Washington, D. C., in March.

Loren P. Woods, Curator of Fishes, and Robert F. Inger, Curator of Amphibians and Reptiles, traveled to Washington, D. C., last month to attend the 42nd Annual Meeting of the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists. Both are members of the society's board of governors and Dr. Inger is herpetological editor of its quarterly publication, *Copeia*.



Sea Shells of the World

A Golden Nature Guide, by R. Tucker Abbott. Golden Press: New York. In de luxe hard cover library edition, $3.50; limp-bound edition, $1.00.

There are many books dealing with the better-known and more spectacular sea shells of the world to which the interested layman or collector resorts for information. These books have two disadvantages: they are bulky and expensive. Now there is a recently published booklet on the same subject which overcomes the two handicaps mentioned above: it is of pocket-size, and is very, almost incredibly, inexpensive, costing just one dollar! As far as the contents of this recent booklet are concerned, they hold to what is promised in the title. The selection of shells is good and the accompanying figures in color are as useful as anyone could wish. Hence one really can recommend Abbott's new publication wholeheartedly, and hope that it will get the vast distribution that it deserves.

FRITZ HAAS
Curator Emeritus, Lower Invertebrates

Drawings for this month's Bulletin by Museum Artist, E. John Pfiffner. Photographs by the Division of Photography.

CEYLON RARITIES

(*Continued from page 5*)

The geographic range of *Herpestes vitticollis*, like that of the brown mongoose, *H. fuscus*, extends only up into the southern tip of India, and is thus exceedingly small. It may seem a curious thing that two mongoose species out of the four known to inhabit Ceylon should be so limited in distribution. However, the Western Ghats (mountains) of southern India and the Central Highlands of Ceylon receive torrential rains from the southwest monsoons which support the lush tropical rain forest that is rare in most of the rest of India. Such tropical rain forests appear to provide a proliferation of niches for similar species in many genera of animals. To cite another example besides the mongoose, there are three species of the diurnal tree squirrel genus, *Funambulus*, whose ranges are all limited to this same area.

How such a proliferation of similar species may have come about is a question that invites speculation. I have published one hypothesis seeking to explain the origin of the species of squirrels local to Ceylon and southern India, in which I suggest that the simple mechanism involved is the presumed union of Ceylon with the mainland during each glacial period of the Pleistocene, and the separation of Ceylon from the mainland during each interglacial period. (Ceylon and peninsular India have been physiographically very stable, and the lower and higher sea levels of glacial and interglacial periods should obviously have accomplished the unions and separations mentioned.) Each union would permit mainland species to invade Ceylon; each separation might be long enough to allow island and mainland populations of any one species to evolve differences that would prevent their interbreeding when rejoined at the beginning of the next union. These pairs of populations would survive as distinct species if they evolved habits that would enable them to avoid competition with one another. Very likely the mongoose with the striped neck, the brown mongoose, and even the ruddy mongoose originated in this way.

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