



Mysterious Cat

► THE PUMA or mountain lion often follows human beings, apparently out of sheer curiosity, but very seldom attacks without provocation.

Less than a dozen well-authenticated cases could be found by Stanley P. Young and the late Edward A. Goldman of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service when they were gathering material for their book, *The Puma, Mysterious American Cat* (\$4.), published by the American Wildlife Institute. And there is one case on record in South America of a puma saving a woman's life by driving off other predatory animals that were attempting to attack her.

The puma's record with relation to animals, both wild and domestic, is not

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so free from bloodstains. It is a big animal, and needs a lot of meat. One deer a week is its average ration, the authors state. It kills and eats almost all other kinds of wild animals, even porcupines and skunks. Its appetite for domestic animals, all the way from poultry to crows, has been its undoing, for it has now been wiped out over practically all of its former range in the eastern United States, and greatly reduced in numbers in the West. The same thing is happen-

ing to it in the settled parts of Middle and South America.

Few animals have such a variety of names. In addition to puma and mountain lion, it is called catamount, cougar, deer tiger, Mexican lion and panther. The colloquial "painter" is a corruption of the latter name. The authors prefer puma because that was the name by which it was known to the South American Indians of the ancient Inca empire.

Science News Letter, January 18, 1947

PALEONTOLOGY

Pre-Dinosaur Time Studied

Arizona fossils about 200,000,000 years old help fill in the picture of prehistoric life before the reign of the dinosaurs.

► A PICTURE of life in North America just before the reign of the dinosaurs is being formulated by University of California paleontologists from the fossil remains of beasts who stalked Arizona about 200,000,000 years ago.

The fossils, gathered at Meteor Crater and in the Painted Desert area, represent the first comprehensive evidence of life in North America for a 20,000,000 year period preceding the predominance of the dinosaurs.

This chapter of prehistoric life in North America, the lower Triassic epoch, covering the period from the end of the age of amphibians to the beginning of the age of reptiles, has long been missing. The fossils indicate that life in the Arizona area was similar to that long known in Europe and South Africa for the same period.

The Arizona fossils, collected over a 10-year period, have been described by Dr. Samuel P. Welles of the University of California.

Twenty skulls of large amphibian species were excavated from Meteor Crater. These take many forms, one being a peculiar beast known as aphaneramma, known previously only in Spitzbergen and Greenland. Aphaneramma had a long, slender snout and was about 18 inches long.

Dr. Welles described representatives of a group known as pseudo-suchians, found near Holbrook, Ariz. These were probably ancestors of the dinosaurs, reptiles which were developing bi-pedal characteristics. They stood three or four feet high, and had sharp, serrated teeth.

These prehistoric beasts inhabited a

swampy flood plain, near sea level, which existed in Arizona about 200,000,000 years ago. To the west of the plain lay the ocean.

Some of these reptiles developed into dinosaurs, ranging in size from chickens to such beasts as brontosaurus, which was nearly 100 feet long, Dr. Welles said. The dinosaurs ruled for a 100,000,000 years, in the age of reptiles, giving way to the age of mammals about 50,000,000 years ago.

Science News Letter, January 18, 1947

BOTANY

Living Trees of Species Thought Dead Are Found

► FINDING living trees of a supposedly extinct species was the exciting experience reported by Dr. Herbert L. Mason of the University of California to the Princeton University Bicentennial Conference on Genetics, Paleontology and Evolution.

He was collecting fossil pine cones on Santa Cruz island off the southern California coast when he found trees bearing exactly the same kind of cones.

After he had published a description of the new-found species he began getting reports of the same pines on the mainland. Examination showed this to be incorrect. What he found was even more interesting. Pollen from the island trees blown across 30 miles of water by the wind had fertilized flowers on a closely related mainland pine and thus given rise to natural hybrids.

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