



#### FAMILY GROUP OF 50,000,000 YEARS AGO

At first glance, this looks a little like a complex skeleton with three necks and skulls. It resolves itself, however, into a group of three skeletons of the Upper Pliocene horse, *Plesippus*, recently put on display in the U. S. National Museum. Center, with head held high, is the stallion; at right, a half-grown young horse; at left, the mare noses at the pitiful little bones of a dead new foal. The group was assembled out of bones dug up in the Northwest.

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#### WILDLIFE

## Wild Geese, Prized in U. S., Are Pests on Far South Isle

WILD GEESE, prize birds to North American sportsmen, are worth nothing apiece on Tierra del Fuego, large island that forms the southern tip of South America. The two most common species, whose numbers are estimated at a hundred million, are regarded as pests by the Argentine and Chilean sheep ranchers because they eat so much grass and because they foul the ground so badly that sheep refuse to graze where the geese have been.

Instead of doing anything to conserve the geese, the ranchers do all they can to kill them off, reports Dr. T. Gilbert Pearson, president emeritus of the National Association of Audubon Societies, who has been in South America conducting a study on wildlife conditions for the International Committee for Bird Preservation.

One large rancher hired men to collect

the eggs of the birds. In one season they collected 60,000 dozen goose eggs, with no noticeable effect on the number of geese. So the rancher gave it up as a waste of time and money.

In general, wildlife receives scant protection in Chile, Dr. Pearson states. There are a few inadequate game laws, but enforcement is half-hearted. Dynamiting and netting fish is common practice; wild doves are sold in the market at 18 pesos (60 cents) a dozen; more than a ton of guanaco skins were exported from the country in one year. The guanaco, a small relative of the camel, is continually growing scarcer.

Chileans are only now beginning to realize what this reckless waste of wildlife will eventually mean to their country. If effective action toward a conservation program can be taken soon, they will still have the advantage of a larger stock

of wildlife for restoration purposes than the United States had when the movement got well started in this country.

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#### ENGINEERING

## Half of Railroad Trackage Still Lacks Block Signals

THE HEAD-ON collision near Akron, Ohio, of a gasoline rail car with a freight train, causing more than 40 deaths, calls attention to the fact that less than half of the nation's passenger rail trackage is equipped with automatic block signals. Data on file in Washington, D. C., indicate that the stretch where the collision occurred did not have the automatic signals, but used manually operated ones.

Automatic block signals indicate some distance away whether a train is in a certain block. It is too early to tell whether these would have prevented the Akron wreck, but it seems likely that they would have done so.

According to S. N. Mills, director of the Bureau of Safety of the Interstate Commerce Commission, there was on January 1, 1940, a total in the United States of 208,848 miles of track used by passenger lines. Over 62,943 miles, mostly carrying light traffic, there are no signals, but the trains are operated by orders. Manually controlled signals, operated by men in signal towers or stations, protect 50,018 miles. This type of signal seems to have been used on the line where the crash occurred. Automatic block signals are used over 95,887 miles, making a total of 145,905 miles protected with some kind of signal.

Mr. Mills stated that his department is investigating the Akron wreck with two local inspectors, and another who has been sent from Washington. Several weeks will elapse, he said, before a definite report can be made.

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## ● Earth Trembles

Information collected by Science Service from seismological observatories resulted in the location by the U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey of the following preliminary epicenter:

Saturday, July 27, 8:32.4 a.m., EST

Off the Pacific coast of Guatemala. Latitude 13.8 degrees north. Longitude 91.7 degrees west.

A strong shock.

For stations cooperating with Science Service, the Coast and Geodetic Survey, and the Jesuit Seismological Association in reporting earthquakes recorded on their seismographs, see SNL, Feb. 24.