

## ETHNOLOGY

# Study Choco Indians

Smithsonian Institution scientists tell of their study of light-skinned South American Indians who shun white men's clothing and housing.

► INDIANS WHO still prefer their own black and red body paint to the white man's clothing have been studied by Dr. Matthew W. Stirling, ethnologist of the Smithsonian Institution. Dr. Stirling, accompanied by Mrs. Stirling, visited these people, the Choco Indians of Darien, Panama, last winter.

The Chocos, who live on the Sambu River, are close neighbors of the much publicized "White Indians" of the San Blas tribe, but actually the Chocos, when not painted, are much lighter skinned than the San Blas. Among the San Blas, albinism is very common and it is this trait that has given them the reputation of being white, Dr. Stirling said.

Although not interested in adopting the white man's clothing and housing, the Choco Indians have become enthusiastic about some of the "blessings" of civilization. They like outboard motors, Dr. Stirling found, and also mosquito nets and kerosene lamps.

The well-dressed Choco wears little and this seems appropriate to the very warm climate in which he lives. The Choco man wears a G-string, which is a cloth passed between the legs and looped over a waist string back and front. Choco ladies wear a garment which gives a sarong effect. And they now like the bright-colored cotton cloth imported from civilization in preference to the native bark cloth.

The Sambu River, where the Chocos live, has recently been opened to boats of the banana trade. The Chocos take silver money in exchange for their fruit. But they do not use the money as currency. Instead they cut four holes around the edges of the silver coins and string them together in the shape of a vest or dangling bright pendants to hang from the head.

They paint their bodies with pigments from native plants. Their faces from the mouths up are painted with red paint, but from the ears down they are an all-over black. A good paint job stays on for about three weeks.

The native blowgun with poison darts is going out of use, the Stirlings found. But neither does the Choco like civilization's rifle. When he goes hunting, he takes bow and arrows or spears.

The native house is fitting for the climate. A large platform is built on stilts high off the ground. There are no sidewalls, but the roof is sloped down low to keep out the rain. The main platform, which may be 40 feet square, is kept clear and very clean. Around the sides are found separate "porches." Each one of these is used by a

married daughter and her family for their sleeping quarters.

Science News Letter, August 15, 1953

## ORNITHOLOGY

## Warbler Builds Nest Over Cowbird's Gift of Eggs

► THE COWBIRD that foists its children off on other birds is outwitted by the yellow warbler or "wild canary."

To save itself the trouble of hatching its eggs and caring for its young, the cowbird lays its eggs in the nests of other birds. The yellow warbler has learned to build a second floor over the nest in which the strange egg is deposited, leaving the alien egg "to cool off in the cellar."

Even if the cowbird is persistent and keeps on invading the nest with its eggs, the warbler will build another story to its nest in order to avoid having unwanted children, even as many as six stories.

This conflict between birds is told in a new volume by Arthur Cleveland Bent, collaborator of the Smithsonian Institution.

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## • RADIO

Saturday, August 22, 1953, 3:15-3:30 p.m., EDT  
"Adventures in Science" with Watson Davis, director of Science Service, over the CBS Radio Network. Check your local CBS station.

Dr. Thomas H. Hunter, dean of the University of Virginia School of Medicine, will discuss "Medical Research Progress."

## BIOCHEMISTRY

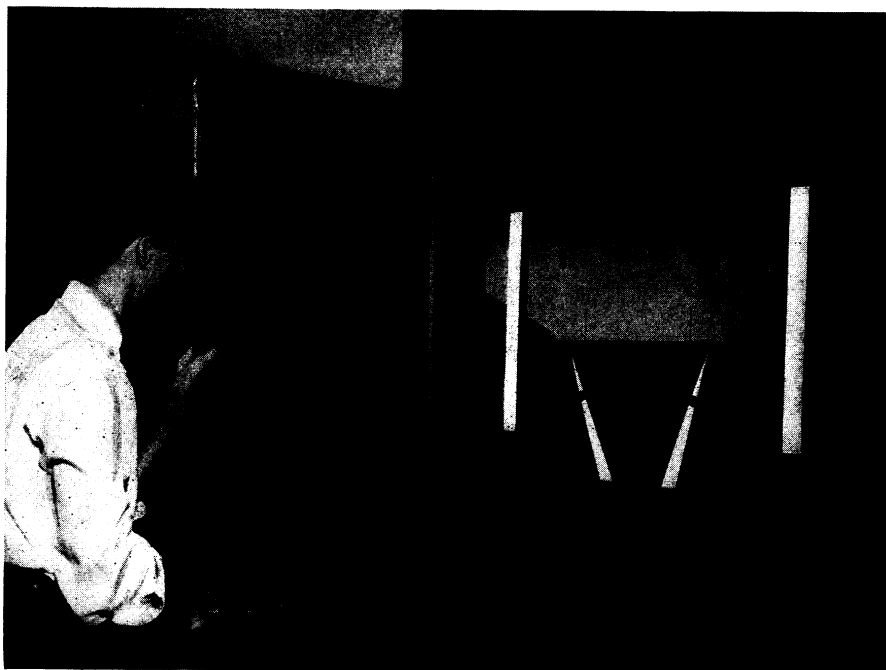
## Food Poisoning Depends On Chemistry of Body

► THE POSSIBILITY that whether or not a person gets food poisoning depends on the state of his body chemistry is suggested in experiments reported by Drs. L. Joe Berry and Roland B. Mitchell of Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, Pa., and the USAF School of Aviation Medicine, Randolph Field, Tex.

Altering body chemistry to block that part of it called the citric acid cycle, these scientists found, made mice very much more susceptible to infection with the germs called *Salmonella typhimurium*. These germs cause disease in mice and also food poisoning in man.

Mice that had their citric acid cycle blocked by injections of sodium malonate died within eight hours after doses of *Salmonella* that do not cause casualties among normal mice until the third day. The sodium malonate by itself would not kill the mice in the doses used, they report in *Science* (July 31).

Science News Letter, August 15, 1953



**THREE-DIMENSIONAL PAINTING**—Prof. Wayne L. Shick of the University of Illinois shows here an abstract of geometric forms and shadows he has painted which, without being projected, will produce a stereoscopic effect when viewed with a mirror.