

## American Ape Reported

*Zoology*

A report from Paris, stating that an anthropoid ape has been shot in Venezuela, is of such interest that if it proves to be correct it will revolutionize certain accepted ideas of American natural history. No higher ape has ever been discovered on the American continent. The Old World alone has been the habitat of these highest types of animal life next to man, and it has been assumed that in the Old World alone the process of evolution went through its various stages up to the production of *Homo sapiens*. Discovery of an anthropoid ape in America would therefore reopen many supposedly settled questions.

The alleged discovery is so remarkable, however, that scientists here are frankly skeptical.

"I would not say that the discovery of an American ape is ridiculous," stated Dr. C. W. Stiles, of the U. S. Hygienic Laboratory, well-known authority on the classification of apes and monkeys.

"Many apparently ridiculous things turn out to be true. If there is any possibility that an anthropoid ape has been found on this continent the discovery is of such importance that a scientific expedition should visit the region at once to verify the report. We might reasonably expect scientific investigators of Venezuela to

handle this matter and give us the facts."

The report stated that M. Francois de Loys, a geologist, saw in a Venezuelan forest two strange animals which he at first mistook for bears. He killed one and discovering that it was an ape, he photographed it, noted that it had 32 teeth, and estimated that it must have stood about four and one-half feet tall. But—the geologist did not bring back any single fragment of the ape's skeleton for scientific scrutiny.

Commenting on this factor of the report, Dr. Stiles said:

"When we are told that the skull was saved and used as a salt box by the expedition's cook, and that the skull went to pieces and the fragments disappeared except for one mandible, and that this was lost, we immediately wonder if this ape story is not really a fish story."

The statement that the animal had 32 teeth is significant, he pointed out, since this number of teeth is characteristic of the higher apes, monkeys, and baboons of the Old World, as well as characteristic of man. Higher monkeys native to the American continent have 36 teeth. The ape shown in the photograph brought back by the French geologist resembles an orang-utan, Dr. Stiles said.

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## To Study Gorillas

*Zoology*

The behavior of the mountain gorillas of Belgian Africa, the rarest and shyest of all man's evolutionary cousins, will be subjected to the study of a competent psychologist as the result of a joint expedition undertaken by Yale University and the Carnegie Institution of Washington, by special arrangement of the Belgian government.

Dr. Harold C. Bingham of Yale University, who has already carried on extensive studies on the behavior of apes in captivity, will be the scientific representative of the two American institutions. He hopes to establish close and sustained contacts with groups of the mountain gorillas, to follow their movements day and night, and to observe their traits of behavior in relation to species or varieties, their manner of life and their distribution. He is also equipped to secure photographic records.

Dr. Bingham, accompanied by his wife, will sail in June. After a brief visit in Europe, they will proceed to Dar-es-Salaam on the Red Sea, and thence inland by rail, auto and lake steamer to the head of Lake Kivu. From this point the last hundred miles to the home of the gorillas will have to be traversed by safari.

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## Hérons Survive in Florida

*Ornithology*

The heron, a beautiful bird mourned as near extinction, seems to have found a natural sanctuary in Florida, where it can hold its own and even thrive.

J. V. Kelsey, U. S. game protector, recently made a trip through the Lake Okeechobee section, and reported that he witnessed a rare and beautiful sight, and one which indicated an encouraging survival of birds thought nearly extinct. At a point approximately ten miles east and north of Belle Glade, Palm Beach County, and as far as Pahokee, in all a distance of about 25 miles, there were thousands of American egrets and snowy herons, stretching away into the overflowed country as far as the eye could see.

He reported that it was impossible to estimate anywhere near the total numbers of these beautiful birds. Among them he saw a dozen great white herons; and within 100 yards of Belle Glade not less than 300 snowy herons fed unmolested.

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## Parachute Is Airplane Life-Saver

*Aviation*

By THOMAS CARROLL

The parachute has introduced the greatest element of safety in aviation in many years. The parachute itself is not new; it is as old as balloons. But its adaptation to use in an airplane required revision of its design and manner of use.

The old type of parachute was a simple fabric umbrella-like affair which was packed in a bag. It was attached to the balloonist and he withdrew it from the bag when he jumped.

This type of parachute was used during and after the World War in airplanes but the bulkiness of the attached bag and the possibilities of entanglement were too great. The newer type now generally used is placed in a pack which is attached by a harness to the pilot who either wears it on his back, or holds it in his lap, or, as is more usual, sits on it, hard seat cushion though it is. Be-

fore the parachute is actually used, the aviator must leave the airplane, jumping clear of all parts. Only then can it be safely opened without entangling in the parts of the airplane.

The parachute is opened by the operator pulling a latch string which is attached to a large ring just below his left arm pit. This latch unlooses the fastenings of the pack which are pulled open by rubber cords freeing a small parachute about the size of a doll's parasol, which is spread open by a spring. This small parachute, called the pilot chute, pulls the big chute out of the pack and frees it to the air. The parachute checks the fall of the operator and lets him down relatively easily. The resulting landing is about equal to jumping from an eight-foot wall without a chute onto the sometimes hard ground.

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