



Crusty Convincers

**O**N WHAT incongruous steeds world-shaking ideas have sometimes come a-riding!

About a hundred years ago a young naturalist scrambled around among the rocks on the shores of the Galapagos Islands, south of Panama and west of Ecuador. He was having the time of his life, for almost every animal and plant he saw was a species new to him. Reflecting on the possible why and wherefore of this island life being so different from that of the nearby mainland, he was hit right between the eyes with a big idea.

Not being a precipitate young man, Charles Darwin went home and incubated this big idea for forty years before he let it loose in print, to startle the world and revolutionize biology and philosophy.

One of the first things that the young Darwin must have seen on the Galapagos Islands were their tortoises. He must have seen them very soon, for they are the biggest living things in sight there. The old ones—and nobody knows how old they are—get to have a shell diameter or half a dozen feet, and can carry full-grown men on their backs apparently without effort. They are really monumental reptiles.

There were giant tortoises practically without end when Darwin visited the islands. But there are relatively few of them now. Ecuador has never bothered itself about the conservation of wild life on these offshore possessions, and the ranks of the tortoises have been mercilessly decimated by reckless hunters and by whalers that wanted a big mess of turtle soup for their crews.

So the best chance that the Galapagos tortoises have is in emigration. A few zealous zoöphiles have carried off quite a number of them alive for zoological parks.

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ZOOLOGY

## Museums Lack Specimens of Animals Now Becoming Extinct

**"E**XPLORATION, like charity, begins at home." That is the pertinent comment of Dr. Roy Chapman Andrews, director of the American Museum of Natural History. Dr. Andrews, who has headed expeditions into the farthest corners of the earth in search of rare animals for museum groups, realizes that it's high time to hunt for specimens nearer home.

Recent droughts, dust-storms, floods, and erosion, bringing many small rodents of the western prairies close to extinction, called attention to the astonishing fact that specimens of these and other native animals are entirely lacking in several cases. In the American Museum there is only one state—Connecticut—represented by a one-hundred per cent. collection of its animal life. There are no collections whatever in the Museum from the following states: Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky, Illinois, Ohio, Indiana, South Carolina, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware and Rhode Island.

Sponsors of museum expeditions are usually interested in the fauna of far-away places, according to Dr. Harold E. Anthony, curator of mammals at the Museum, in explanation of the situation.

"We have now come to realize," he said, "that various forms of mammals in our country are in danger of extinction and have been going for some time. The great herds of antelope and bison which once roamed the plains have disappeared before the advance of civilization. Now the small burrowing rodents of the western states are being buried under drifts of dust, or drowned by floods."

Pre-historic horses and camels inhabiting the western part of America during

fairly recent geological times, suddenly became extinct for reasons not entirely known to scientists, so that the horses brought over by the Spaniards under Cortez were the first that the Aztecs had ever seen, Dr. Anthony pointed out as a parallel case.

Plans have been made for obtaining a complete collection from every one of the states. Dr. Anthony hopes to secure a mobile laboratory with living quarters to travel through various parts of the United States, picking up specimens with the seasons. Meanwhile the Museum is already extending its North American mammal collection with the aid of a number of persons who have opened their ranches in the West to museum staff-members. Several expeditions have or will shortly set out to collect deer, elk, bear, and small animals.

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The earth would look blue if seen from outer space, says Dr. V. M. Slipher of the Lowell Observatory.

### RADIO

Tuesday, July 30, 3:30 p. m., E.S.T.

**HEALTH HINTS FOR HOT WEATHER,** by Dr. Robert Olesen, U. S. Public Health Service.

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