

VISIT OF THE ASIATIC PRIMATE EXPEDITION.

In order to give our members an opportunity of meeting the members of the Asiatic Primate Expedition of Harvard University, an Ordinary General Meeting of the Society was held on May 1st., 1937, just before their departure from Siam. The President, Phya Indra Montri, was in the chair, and the speakers were Mr. Harold J. Coolidge, Junr., Assistant Curator of mammals at the Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology, Mr. Sherwood L. Washburn, Sheldon Fellow, and Dr. Adolph H. Schultz, Assoc. Professor of Physical Anthropology at John Hopkins University.

Mr. Coolidge, the leader of the expedition, was the first to address the meeting. Having paid tribute to the Siamese Government for considerable assistance very willingly given, he gave a brief resumé of the results which they had obtained after two months work in Northern Siam where they established a base camp on Doi Angka at an altitude of about 4,300 feet. This was for the purpose of studying in its natural habitat the gibbon, a significant ape that is believed to occupy a key position in the evolution of the anthropoid stocks and men. They found that the gibbons of northern Siam are extremely plentiful as they are not greatly hunted, their principal menace being the confinement of their forests to smaller areas by clearing for agriculture and by forest fires.

The work of the expedition could be described under three different headings:—

1. Detailed study and preparation of skins, skeletons and anatomical primate material from a single locality.
2. Careful observation of the behaviour of free wild-ranging gibbons.
3. General collection of zoological and botanical material for the Harvard Museum.

Very satisfactory studies and collections had been made, the latter including over a thousand birds and some four hundred mammals, but the speaker was unable to enlighten the meeting as to the scientific results obtained as these would only be known when the material had been exhaustively worked out in the laboratory. In conclusion Dr.

Coolidge said that he was Secretary of the American Committee for International Wild Life Protection and therefore he was most interested in the earlier efforts of the Siam Society to secure protection for wild animals in this country. Siam is one of the few civilized nations that has not awakened to the value of preserving its *fauna* and *flora*, not only by laws but also by the establishment of National Parks. He is sure that Siam could have some of the finest parks in the Far East.

The next speaker was Mr. Washburn who had assisted Dr. Carpenter in his behaviour observations. He said that they had soon found the Doi Angka camp unsuited to their work and had moved to Doi Chiengdao where the conditions were better. He had 16 groups of gibbons, numbering 80 animals, under observation, and gave an interesting account of "close-up" studies of gibbons in various phases of their daily life. The two live gibbons exhibited at the meeting belonged to his collection and Dr. Carpenter would bring down several more which would be taken to the United States and studied in the laboratory under artificial conditions. When Dr. Carpenter has completed his researches and published his results, the world will then have really accurate information on the behaviour of gibbons in the wild and in captivity.

Dr. Schultz, Primate Morphologist to the expedition, gave a lucid and witty speech in which he indicated the anatomical considerations which connected the gibbon with *homo sapiens*. They wanted to know the process of evolution, how man had developed from his earliest stages, how he acquired his knowledge and that quality which has made him different from the gibbon. They wanted to know whether environment would have any effect on the gibbon and the only way to arrive at a solution was to watch the gibbons in their natural home and then for comparison to find out how they behaved in artificial surroundings. He concluded by saying that he had been able to make a great many measurements of gibbons as well as preserving much anatomical material and many specimens of parasites affecting these animals,

The remarks of the three speakers, occupying nearly an hour, were followed with great interest and at the close the President expressed to them the thanks of the meeting for their interesting lectures.

C. J. H.

