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STORAGE

LARGEST SPECIES OF SNAKE IS EXHIBITED

Life-Size Reproduction of Reticulated Python Shown in Field Museum

An exhibit of the world's largest species of snake, the reticulated python of the East Indies, was placed on public view at Field Museum of Natural History today, Stephen C. Simms, director of the museum announces.

The museum's specimen is 26 feet long, and was collected on the Ogan River in Sumatra by the Chancellor-Stuart-Field Museum expedition to the South Pacific, which was financed and led by Philip M. Chancellor of Santa Barbara, Calif., formerly of Chicago. While some reticulated pythons are said to reach a length of 35 feet, few attain a larger size than that of the museum's specimen, while no other species of snake even approaches closely this length, according to Karl P. Schmidt, assistant curator in charge of reptiles at the museum.

A Forest Creature

"The reticulated python is distinctively a forest creature," says Mr. Schmidt. "It lies stretched out on the lower limbs of trees, and captures for food both the tree-dwelling monkeys and the terrestrial pigs, deer and other forest animals. Like the boas, pythons are powerful constrictors, and kill their prey by crushing action of their coils.

Unlike the American boa constrictors, which bring forth living young, the pythons are egg-laying snakes. The mother snake coils herself compactly around her eggs and remains with them until they hatch. This habit evidently protects the eggs from marauding egg-eating animals, such as monitor lizards and mongooses, which abound in the Malayan forests. The first of the young snakes to hatch may even return to their shells for a few days for shelter until the whole mass is abandoned by the parent snake. Very few other snakes care for their eggs in this manner."

Life-Size Reproduction

The museum's exhibit is a life-size reproduction in cellulose acetate of the 26 foot specimen obtained by the Chancellor expedition. The expedition also brought the museum a second specimen only slightly shorter. The reproduction was made by Taxidermist Leon L. Waters, who has developed a special process for this type of work.

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