

NEWS AND VIEWS

Science Clubs of America

A NATIONAL science activity, Science Clubs of America, is being sponsored by Science Service, the American science news service. In every locality throughout the country there will be groups active in various fields of science. Science clubs in high schools will be encouraged and given the opportunity of joining in the national movement and entering into national activities. Groups of enthusiastic amateurs in science—grinding telescope mirrors, collecting insects, breeding new plants, collecting minerals, or pursuing scores of other interesting avocations—will join in this important development. As the nucleus of Science Clubs of America, there are more than eight hundred junior clubs which have been organized during the past fourteen years by the American Institute of the City of New York. These clubs exist not only in the United States but also in Puerto Rico, Hawaii, the Philippines, British West Indies, Alaska, Canada, and even Portugal. An advisory committee on Science Clubs of America, representing jointly the American Institute and Science Service, is being formed.

Excavations in Alaska

Dr. H. L. Shapiro and Dr. F. G. Rainey, of the American Museum of Natural History, have been excavating five hundred arctic tombs at Point Hope, Alaska. The five hundred skeletons are said to form one of the largest collections of the sort ever found at a site in America. The two anthropologists sought remains of an ancient and unknown people, whom Dr. Rainey first discovered in expeditions of 1939 and 1940. Also they sought later Eskimo burials which would aid in showing what relationship the lost ancients had to the later Eskimos. The mysterious unknown people had a remarkably big town with well-planned streets, more than a hundred miles north of the Arctic Circle; and about two thousand years ago they abandoned this settlement. They are looked upon as a lost race, because their ivory arts are unlike those of known Alaskan Eskimos, ancient or modern. Also, it is explained, they lacked many typical Eskimo implements, and were more dependent on land than on the sea for their resources.

Dr. Shapiro plans to examine the physical traits of the forgotten northerners, to place them more definitely in the story of prehistoric America. The Ipiutaks, as they are now called from the Eskimo name of a spit of land near their old home, may have come from as far away in Asia as north China, according to one suggestion. A new glimpse into curious burial customs of the Ipiutaks is revealed by a carved ivory mask with staring inset ivory eyes, which was found covering the body of a little child. The child lay resting on the knees of a man, and a woman also accompanies it. Masks with ivory eyes

have been found before in the graves of these mystery people, but what their significance was for a future life remains one of the unsolved puzzles of the arctic.

Koalas in Australia

A CENSUS of koalas on Phillip Island, Victoria, was taken this year with the aid of school-children, and, we are informed by Sir James Barrett, the count shows a record population of 590, a natural increase of thirty-nine over the number shown after the census of July 1939. Many *Eucalyptus viminalis* and red gum, on which the animals feed, are being planted. The koalas are now confined to the eastern fringe of the Australian mainland, from southern Queensland to Victoria. They used to be present in South Australia, but, apart from some imported from Victoria and maintained in sanctuaries, it is doubtful if there are any there now. According to *Wild Life*, the Australian nature magazine, the combined Victorian population is somewhere between 900 and 1,100 individuals. This compares very unfavourably with the number of koala pelts marketed during 1920 and 1921, namely, 205,679.

The koala fur is remarkably warm and is practically indestructible, a jacket made of it often being passed down from father to son for several generations. This, no doubt, accounts for the dwindling of the koala. Other factors have been deforestation, disease, and, above all, bush fires. The last-named is the prevalent danger. Steps are being taken to combat this, especially on Phillip Island, where efforts are also being made to supply an abundance of natural food and shelter in open sanctuary conditions. Two large areas have been set aside for the purpose, one of 256 acres and the other of 160 acres. Money is still required for this conservation. It is estimated that a preliminary grant in Victoria of £500 a year would enable the work to be carried on satisfactorily; and it is to be hoped that such a comparatively small sum will soon be assured, preferably from the various Australian Governments, or from the natural history societies or private individuals.

Trees and their Care

IN the July-September issue of *Trees*, the journal of the Men of the Trees, it is stated that the money already received in connexion with the Million Shilling Fund has enabled about 90,000 trees, hardwoods and softwoods, to be planted in Great Britain. Exception appears to have been taken to the fact that some of these trees have been presented to landowners who have already been paid for timber supplied for war purposes. It is said in defence that since these people have trained foresters and planters, the trees will be better looked after; but surely the man who can afford to maintain a trained forester can afford the mere price of the plants necessary to replant felled areas. It is difficult to