

Leisure Worlder

OF THE MONTH

HILDEGARD HOWARD WYLDE

Hildegard Howard Wylde found it a bit disconcerting a while back when the Leisure World adult education class in Russian was discontinued:

You may wonder why the chief curator emeritus of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, with more than 150 published paleontological studies to her credit, would bother to acquire a new language at this stage of her life.

"Because," says Hildegard, her brown eyes twinkling, "one of the latest studies on fossil birds is written in Russian and has yet to be translated into English."

Recent proof of her world acceptance as a foremost expert on fossil birds: Hildegard was asked to author a chapter on "Aves" in *The Encyclopedia of Paleontology* which came off the press last November. In case you're interested in adding it to your library, the price is a mere \$90.

Mrs. Wylde has been chosen to be Rossmoor Corporation's Leisure Worlder of the Month for July.

Hildegard's rise to world fame as an avian paleontologist embraced 33 years with the Natural History Museum where in 1928 she started doing such things as cataloguing and on rainy days, dusting skeletal exhibits of mammals. Along the way she became curator of avian paleontology and eventually chief curator, division of science. Her prolific scientific writings attracted world attention.

It was at the Museum that she met her artist-husband, Henry Wylde. "Our work threw us into close proximity, especially when we dusted such fossils as saber-toothed tigers," she says, her eyes crinkling with mirth.

"That's where our romance began," adds Henry. They were married in 1930.

The Wylde's still work together. His painting and photography complement Hildegard's continuing study of bird fossils. "Hildegard usually has a pair of calipers in her hand measuring some new-found fossil," says Henry who describes his painting as "on the abstract side."

Born in Washington, D.C., she came to California with her parents at an early age. When she enrolled in what was known as University of California Southern Branch (now UCLA) her intent was to follow in the footsteps of her author-father and study journalism.

"My father used to tell me fascinating stories about dinosaurs and I'm sure that subconsciously directed my destiny. Dr. Loye Miller, one of my instructors, who played an early role in the fossil discoveries at Rancho La Brea, had much to do with my decision to go into paleontology. And he introduced me to fossil birds," says Hildegard.

She earned her B.A. in zoology, with Phi Beta Kappa honors, at California, Berkeley. It was there, too, she won her master's in paleontology and later her Ph.D.

Hildegard's honors and fellowships, as listed in *Who's Who in America* and science publications, are too numerous to recount. Notably, she was given the Brewster Memorial Award in Ornithology in 1953 and became a John Simon Guggenheim Foundation Fellow in 1962-63.

In addition to continuing her extensive writings since moving to Leisure World, Hildegard has found time to join the Audubon Society, Naturalists Club, the Writers and Publishers Club and the Historical Society. Her article on local life millions of years ago in the first Leisure World History journal has won high praise.

Four of her latest published articles have been on fossils discovered right here in Leisure World. Hildegard Howard Wylde is indeed a Rara Avis of the Rarae Aves!