

Hildegarde Wylde is honored for month of July

Hildegarde 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 Mrs. Wylde, "one of the latest studies on fossil birds is written in Russian and has yet to be translated into English."

As recent proof of her world acceptance as a foremost expert on fossil birds, Hildegarde 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. Her host of friends are invited to assemble in the Rossmoor New Sales Pavilion at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, July 1, for the informal ceremony when her color portrait will be hung there in a place of prominence. It will remain on display until August 1. Then, in another ceremony, it will be presented to her.

Hildegarde'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. "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 Hildegarde's continuing study of bird fossils. "Hildegarde 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."

Mrs. Wylde says her swing from vertebrate to avian paleontology seemed to come naturally although she recalls that her master's thesis was on "The Fossil Turkey" whose bones were exhumed from the famous Rancho La Brea tar pits.

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 Hildegarde.

In addition to continuing her extensive writings since moving to Leisure World, Mrs. Wylde 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.

In 1961 Soroptimist International, Miracle Mile Chapter (Los Angeles) made her an honorary member. As a result Mrs. Wylde has been active in the Laguna Hills chapter and currently is its vice president.

Four of her latest published articles have been on fossils discovered right here in Leisure World.

Hildegarde Howard Wylde is indeed a Rara Avis of the Rarae Aves!



Hildegarde Wylde