

100 Years Ago in The American Ornithologists' Union

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100 Years Ago in *The American Ornithologists' Union*



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In 1903, the AOU held its twenty-first annual congress in Philadelphia, and published volume 20 (new series) and volume 28 (old series) of *The Auk*. C. Hart Merriam continued as the President of the society, and Charles B. Cory and C. F. Batchelder were Vice-Presidents, all for the fourth year in those offices. John H. Sage entered his fourteenth year as Secretary and William Dutcher entered his sixteenth year as Treasurer. The Council consisted of seven members and four ex-presidents. J. A. Allen continued as Editor of *The Auk*, a position that he had held since volume 1, and Frank M. Chapman was the Associate Editor, a position that he had held since 1893. There also was a Committee of Arrangements for the Meeting of 1903 and a Committee on Publications.

The membership consisted of 775 individuals in five categories: 47 Fellows (14 of whom were founding members and 4 of whom were Life Members), 18 Honorary Fellows, 61 Corresponding Fellows, 63 Members, and 586 Associates. Fellow Thomas McIlwraith, a founding member of the AOU and an authority on birds of Ontario, Canada, died in January 1903 in Hamilton. His memorial was read at the congress in Philadelphia by A. K. Fisher and it was the lead article in January issue (*Auk* 21:1–7). Fellow Gurdon Trumbull also died in 1903.

The twenty-first Congress of the AOU convened on Monday night, 16 November 1902 in the Council Room at the Academy of Natural Sciences. Nineteen Fellows were present for the business meeting. Charles B. Cory was elected President and Charles F. Batchelder and E. W. Nelson were elected Vice-Presidents. No new Fellows or Honorary Fellows were elected, but six people were elected as Corresponding Fellows. Eight people were elected as Member, including William Beebe and Edward H. Forbush, and 104 new Associates were elected. During the year, the Union lost 60 members: 8 died, 17 resigned, and 35 were dropped for nonpayment of dues. The Treasurer reported that the Union was in the best financial condition ever, and members of the Committee on Classification and Nomenclature of North American Birds were reelected.

The rest of the Congress consisted of three days of sessions open to the public held in the lecture hall at the Academy of Natural Sciences. The first session on Tuesday morning was called to order by Vice-President Batchelder, and was followed by Fisher's memorial address. Four other presentations were given, including Witmer Stone's "Two neglected ornithologists—John K. Townsend and

William Gambel." Presentations continued Tuesday afternoon, Wednesday, and Thursday. One paper was presented by a woman, "Nesting habits of the Whip-poor-will" by Mary Mann Miller. Presentations were made on the bird life of the Farallon Islands (Frank M. Chapman) and Laysan Island (Walter K. Fisher), the origin of migration (P. A. Tavernier), the exaltation of subspecies (Jonathan Dwight, Jr.), the death of young birds due to excess rains (B. S. Bowditch), and the history of collecting permits (T. S. Palmer). Many of the presentations appeared as articles in *The Auk* during 1904.

At the start of the third day, resolutions were read thanking J. A. Allen for his 20 years as Editor of *The Auk*, and for William Dutcher for his many years as Treasurer. In his report, the Secretary mentioned that attendance at this meeting was the largest ever. It was agreed that the next meeting would be in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on 28 November 1904.

The last presentation on the third day was by William Dutcher, who presented the report of the Committee on Protection of North America Birds. His lengthy committee report—well over 100 pages—was published as a supplement to *The Auk* (21:97–208). As in the previous year, it gave detailed information on what had happened in most states in terms of legislation, warden systems, and Audubon Society work. In the report, he also discussed expenditures during 1903 from the Thayer Fund, a fund established to provide financial support for bird conservation efforts in the United States. The fund received donations of nearly \$4,000 that year and spent most of the money on warden salaries, purchase of the launch "Audubon" in Florida, and printing of 100,000 educational leaflets.

At the end of the AOU Congress in 1902, it had been proposed to have a special meeting of the AOU in California in May of 1903 in conjunction with the Cooper Ornithological Club, based on an invitation published in *The Condor* in summer of 1902 (*Condor* 4:98). So, at 10:30 pm on 3 May, two railroad cars left Chicago, where 13 AOU members and 31 other people had gathered for the journey, arriving in San Francisco on the afternoon of 14 May (*Auk* 20:299–302). Along the way, the train stopped at Santa Fe, New Mexico; Adamana, Arizona; the Petrified Forest in Arizona; the Grand Canyon (for two days); the Mohave Desert in Hesperia, Arizona; Riverside, California; and Los Angeles.

A meeting was held 15–16 May in San Francisco at

the California Academy of Sciences for 13 AOU members and 33 members of the Cooper Ornithological Club, which was celebrating its 10th anniversary meeting. Joseph Grinnell gave two presentations, one on the origins of Chestnut-backed Chickadees (*Poecile rufescens*) and one on vocalizations of Bushtits (*Psaltiriparus minimus*). William Finley gave a talk on the birds of Oregon and Frank M. Chapman spoke on the bird islands of our Atlantic Coast, illustrated with lantern slides. Louis A. Fuertes made a presentation entitled "Remarks on the AOU journey across the continent."

Members were then free to find their way back east by whatever route they wanted. Cost of a round trip ticket from New York was \$74.50, unless they came back through Seattle or Portland, which was an additional \$11.50. The return ticket was good until 15 July, so most members spent several weeks conducting research or exploring the West Coast. For example, Otto Widmann spent three and a half days in Yosemite Valley observing birds. Based on that, he presented a paper at the next congress in Philadelphia and published an article, "Yosemite Valley Birds", in *The Auk* (21:66–73).