BioOne COMPLETE

100 Years Ago in the American Ornithologists' Union

Author: Smith, Kimberly G.

Source: The Auk, 134(1) : 256-257

Published By: American Ornithological Society

URL: https://doi.org/10.1642/AUK-16-223.1

BioOne Complete (complete.BioOne.org) is a full-text database of 200 subscribed and open-access titles in the biological, ecological, and environmental sciences published by nonprofit societies, associations, museums, institutions, and presses.

Your use of this PDF, the BioOne Complete website, and all posted and associated content indicates your acceptance of BioOne's Terms of Use, available at www.bioone.org/terms-of-use.

Usage of BioOne Complete content is strictly limited to personal, educational, and non - commercial use. Commercial inquiries or rights and permissions requests should be directed to the individual publisher as copyright holder.

BioOne sees sustainable scholarly publishing as an inherently collaborative enterprise connecting authors, nonprofit publishers, academic institutions, research libraries, and research funders in the common goal of maximizing access to critical research.

Downloaded From: https://complete.bioone.org/journals/The-Auk on 29 Mar 2024
Terms of Use: https://complete.bioone.org/terms-of-use

The Auk
Ornithological Advances
AmericanOrnithology.org

Volume 134, 2017, pp. 256–257
DOI: 10.1642/AUK-16-223.1

100 YEARS AGO IN THE AOU

100 Years Ago in the American Ornithologists' Union

Kimberly G. Smith

Department of Biological Sciences, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA

Published December 28, 2016

The annual meeting of the AOU convened in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on November 12, 1917. In attendance were 21 Fellows, 20 Members, more than 100 Associates, and a number of visitors. Among those present were three of the 23 Founders of the Union, seven other members who were elected at the first meeting in 1883, and five members from Canada, making it the biggest meeting to date in Cambridge.

The annual meeting of the Fellows was called to order by President Albert K. Fisher at 3:40 in the afternoon at the Colonial Club on Quincy Street, and the annual meeting of the Fellows and Members occurred at the same place that evening, starting at 8:30. The membership consisted of Fellows (49), Retired Fellows (3), Honorary Fellows (14), Corresponding Fellows (59), Members (77), and Associates (689), for a total of 891. During the year, from November 1916 to November 1917, the Union lost 37 members, 15 by death and 22 by resignation. John H. Sage, who had served as Secretary for 28 years, was elected President and T. S. Palmer replaced him as Secretary.

Three of the deceased members were Corresponding Fellows: Edward Pierson Ramsay (1842–1916) and Alfred John North (1855–1917), both from Australia, and Émil August Goeldi (1859–1917) from Switzerland. Ramsay was curator at the Australian Museum from 1874 to 1894 and published *Catalogue of the Australian Birds in the Australian Museum at Sydney* in four parts. North was also associated with the Australian Museum and was Ramsay's assistant for a few years. He was quite interested in eggs and coauthored *Descriptive Catalogue of the Nests and Eggs of Birds Found Breeding in Australia and Tasmania* in 1889. Goeldi spent much of his career in Brazil, first at what is today the Museu Nacional do Rio de Janeiro, and then at the museum in Belém, where he was director from 1894 to 1905. In 1902, the museum was renamed in his honor, Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi. Founded in 1866, the museum celebrated its 150th anniversary last year.

There was one opening for election to Fellow, and Percy A. Taverner (1875–1947) was elected to fill that vacancy. One of the leading Canadian ornithologists of his time, he was the first ornithologist at the (then) National Museum of Canada, which he was associated with from 1912 until he retired in 1942. The author of over 300 publications, his most famous works were *Birds of Eastern Canada* (1919), *Birds of Western Canada* (1926), and *Birds of Canada* (1934). At the time, that last book was considered the best ever written on the distribution of birds of North America.

Arthur Humble Evans (1855–1943) of Cambridge, England, and William Lutley Sclater (1863–1944) of London were elected as Honorary Fellows. Evans was a former editor of *The Ibis*, published the *Birds of Britain* (1916), and was associated with Cambridge University for most of his career. At the time of his death, he was the oldest member of the British Ornithologists' Union, which he joined in 1879, and he was an original member of the British Ornithological Club. Sclater was the son of the famous ornithologist Philip Lutley Sclater (1829–1913), who was one of the first Honorary Fellows in the AOU (1883). The younger Sclater started out at Eton College but then became curator at the South African Museum at Cape Town. There he finished two works started by others: *Flora and Fauna of South Africa* and the five-volume *Birds of Africa*. His wife had connections in Colorado Springs, Colorado, so he moved his family there for a few years (1906–1909) and published *A History of the Birds of Colorado* in 1912. Sclater next became curator of the Bird Room at the National History Museum in London, a position he held until his death in 1944. He was killed during World War II when a German bomb fell on his house in London. Frank Evers Beddard (1858–1925), also of London, was elected as a Corresponding Fellow. Although he published *The Structure and Classification of Birds* (1898), he was generally considered the authority on annelid worms early last century.

Five people were elected to the category of Member, which would be Elected Member today. The most prominent of them was Rollo Beck (1870–1950), whom I have mentioned many times over the years; he was the leading bird collector of his time. James P. Chapin (1889–1964) was mentioned in my previous column for his six-year expedition to the Belgian Congo. Winthrop Sprague

© 2017 American Ornithological Society. ISSN 0004-8038, electronic ISSN 1938-4254
Direct all requests to reproduce journal content to the Central Ornithology Publication Office at pubs@americanornithology.org

Downloaded From: https://complete.bioone.org/journals/The-Auk on 29 Mar 2024
Terms of Use: https://complete.bioone.org/terms-of-use

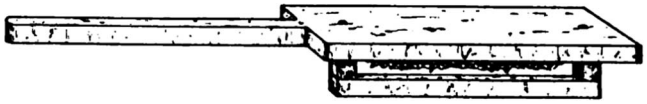


FIGURE 1. A diagram of Saunders's "feeding slab," showing the bird seed embedded in suet on the undersurface of the slab (from Forbush 1918).

Brooks (1887–1965) was curator at the Boston Society of Natural History for 15 years and curator at the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard University from 1928 to 1934. Francis Harper (1886–1972) spent much of his life working in the Arctic, publishing *Birds of the Ungava Peninsula* in 1958. Winsor M. Tyler (1876–1954) would become a Fellow in the AOU in 1950, based on his contributions to the Bent series of *Life Histories of Birds*. A total of 113 people were elected as Associate Members. Notable among them was George K. Cherrie (1865–1946), who was a collector on over 40 expeditions, mostly to Central and South America; Joseph Scattergood Dixon (1884–1952), who started out as a collector for Joseph Grinnell and was an "economic mammalogist" at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology from 1920 until 1931, when he left to work for the National Park Service; George R. Mayfield (1877–1964), a founding member of the Tennessee Ornithological Society; and a young Gardner D. Stout (1904–1984), who would become the president of the American Museum of Natural History (1968–1975) and who edited the wonderful *Shorebirds of North America* (1967).

Papers were delivered during the next three days in the Nash Lecture Hall at the Harvard Museum of Natural History. One of the first presentations was by William E. Saunders (1861–1943), an amateur naturalist from London, Ontario, who demonstrated his "feeding slab," a device that prevented English Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) from feeding on bird seed (Figure 1). Bird seed was placed on the upper surface of the slab and then covered with melted suet. When the suet cooled and hardened, the slab was turned upside down, so the seeds and suet were now on the undersurface. Birds like chickadees and nuthatches would have no problems feeding from the undersurface, but sparrows could not. On the second day, an hour was devoted to a discussion of "Ornithological Work in 1917." T. S. Palmer made a presentation on "The Span of Life and Period of Activity of Ornithologists," which was probably related to a note that Palmer (1917) had published on the oldest ornithologists (he was nicknamed "Tomb Stone" for a reason!). At the time of his talk, Lyman Belding (1829–1917) was the oldest living ornithologist, but he died one week after Palmer's talk. Witmer Stone also made a presentation on the second day, entitled "Sight Records—A Problem of Present-Day Ornithology."

Lunch was provided at the Colonial Club each day by the Nuttall Ornithological Club, and there was a dinner at Mifflin Hall in Brattle Square on Wednesday evening. On Friday, Charles W. Townsend and Francis H. Allen led a field trip to the sand dunes of Ipswich, north of Boston, in search of Ipswich Sparrows (now considered a subspecies of the Savannah Sparrow [*Passerculus sandwichensis*]) and Snow Buntings (*Plectrophenax nivalis*). Others visited the Boston Society of Natural History, the library of the Harvard Museum, and Mt. Auburn Cemetery, where several famous ornithologists are buried.

LITERATURE CITED

Forbush, E. H. (1918). Food, feeding, and drinking appliances and nesting material to attract birds. Circular No. 2. State Department of Agriculture, Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Palmer, T. S. (1917). The oldest American ornithologist. The Condor 19:166.

Downloaded From: https://complete.bioone.org/journals/The-Auk on 29 Mar 2024
Terms of Use: https://complete.bioone.org/terms-of-use