

100 Years Ago in the American Ornithologists' Union

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100 Years Ago in The American Ornithologists' Union



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The 31st stated meeting was held in New York City, and the annual business meeting was called to order by President Frank M. Chapman on the night of Monday, 10 November 1913, at the Explorers Club on Amsterdam Avenue. The meeting was attended by 27 Fellows. The membership had decreased from nearly 1,100 members at the end of the previous meeting to just under 1,000: 49 Fellows, 2 Retired Fellows, 15 Honorary Fellows, 57 Corresponding Fellows, 77 Members, and 792 Associates. During the year, the Union lost 78 members: 14 to death, 29 by resignation, and 35 for nonpayment of dues. The report of the Treasurer showed the finances of the Union to be in satisfactory condition. Frank M. Chapman was re-elected as President, A. K. Fisher and Henry W. Henshaw continued as Vice-Presidents, John H. Sage entered his 24th year as Secretary, and Jonathan Dwight, Jr., served his 10th year as Treasurer. In addition to those five, the Council consisted of seven elected members and eight ex-presidents.

The 14 deceased members included two Honorary Fellows, one Corresponding Fellow, one Member, and 10 Associates. The Honorary Fellows were Philip Lutley Slater (1829–1913) and Alfred Russel Wallace (1823–1913), both of whom had been original Honorary Fellows and both of whom were luminaries in their field. In his 12-page memorial (*Auk* 31:1–12), D. G. Elliot started with “A Prince in the realm of Zoological Science has fallen, and I am called here today to bid you look upon his face, and hearken to the records of his deeds,” stating further that Slater “has long been recognized as one of the great leaders and exponents of our science.” Slater was a founding member of the British Ornithologists' Union and the first editor of *Ibis*. He is probably best remembered for his scheme of six geographic realms on the surface of the earth, published in 1858. Wallace, of course, is generally considered to have independently arrived at the theory of natural selection, co-authoring a paper with Darwin in 1858. He is also remembered as the Father of Biogeography and for Wallace's Line, the boundary between Slater's Indian and Australian realms, which passes between the islands of Bali and Lombok. Wilmer Stone stated (31:138):

Wallace was typical of a group of scientific men of the last century, which may well be known by the name 'naturalists,' among which he ranked at the very top and of which he was the last survivor. In the present days of specialization it seems impossible for men of this type to develop and it is doubtful if the world will ever again see men of such broad learning as those who contributed to the fame of what Wallace himself has termed 'the Wonderful Century.'

Robert Collett (1842–1913), a Corresponding Fellow since 1883, was Director of the Natural History Museum of Christiania

(= Oslo), Norway, at the time of his death, a position that he had held for 30 years. Herbert Brown (1848–1913), a Member of the AOU since 1901, was a newspaperman in Tucson, Arizona, who was an amateur ornithologist. He started the University of Arizona bird collection in 1884, which today has over 18,000 specimens.

Three Fellows were elected: Waldo Lee McAtee (1883–1962), Joseph Mailliard (1857–1945), and Waldron De Witt Miller (1879–1929). As mentioned in previous columns, McAtee was an authority on bird food habits and had a long, distinguished career with the Biological Survey in Washington, D.C. (see 80:474–485). Mailliard moved from New Jersey to California at an early age and lived on a ranch near San Rafael, where he and his brother, John (1862–1935), began to collect birds, eggs, and nests. Primarily businessmen, the brothers donated their substantial collection to the California Academy of Sciences in 1918. At age 62, Joseph was made an honorary curator at the Academy in 1919 and then Curator Emeritus when he was 70, working at the Academy well into his 80s. Miller was tragically killed in a motorcycle accident while on one of his many weekend excursions into the pine barrens of New Jersey. Since 1903, he had been associated with the Department of Ornithology at the American Museum of Natural History, where he was appointed Assistant Curator of Ornithology in 1918. Much of his research dealt with pterylography and avian anatomy.

Lord Lionel Walter Rothschild (1868–1937) was elected an Honorary Fellow. When just 21 years old, he started a museum at his estate at Tring, buying collections and sending collectors all over the world. Eventually, he sold most of his bird collection (nearly 280,000 specimens) to the American Museum of Natural History in 1931, and his family donated his museum, which still exists today, to the government in 1937. Sergius N. Alpheraky (1850–1918), of St. Petersburg, Russia, and Edward Daniel Van Oort (1873–1933), of Leiden, Holland, were elected Corresponding Fellows. Alpheraky was primarily an entomologist, but he published two monographs on the ducks and geese of the Palearctic. Van Oort was Director of the Royal Museum of Natural History and was responsible for establishing a bird-banding program, whereby over 100,000 birds had been banded in Holland by 1930.

Arthur A. Allen (1885–1964), Rudolph M. Anderson (1876–1961), W. H. Bergtold (1865–1936), W. Lee Chambers (1878–1966), and George Willett (1879–1945) were elected as Members. Allen, of course, would go on to be one of the leading ornithologists of his time at Cornell University (85:192–202). Having published *The Birds of Iowa* in 1907, Anderson was instrumental in establishing the migratory bird treaty between the United States and Canada in 1916 and was Chief of the Biology Department at the National Museum

of Canada from 1920 to 1946. Bergtold was a medical doctor by trade who spent most of his life in Denver, Colorado. His major work was *A Study of the Incubation Periods of Birds: What Determines Their Lengths*, a book that appeared in 1917. He was elected a Fellow in the AOU in 1921. Chambers was involved with selling sporting goods in southern California but had a deep interest in ornithology. He served as treasurer and then business manager of the Cooper Ornithological Society from 1905 until 1950. Willett was a good friend of Chambers and was involved with law enforcement in California and game management in Alaska for many years. In 1928, he became head of the Department of Ornithology and Mammalogy at the Los Angeles County Museum, where he also had a career as a malacologist. He was elected a Fellow in the AOU in 1939.

As in the previous year, a large number of people (142) were elected as Associates, meaning that the AOU had over 1,000 members for the second year in a row. Notable among that group were Thomas D. Burleigh (1895–1973), who would author *Georgia Birds* (1958) and *The Birds of Idaho* (1972) and become a Fellow in the AOU in 1948; Gilbert Hovey Grosvenor (1875–1966), editor of *National Geographic Magazine* from 1899 to 1954 and president of the National Geographic Society from 1920 to 1954; Louis Agassiz Shaw, Jr. (1886–1940), grandson of Louis Agassiz and co-inventor of the first iron lung; and E. F. Pope (1870–1952), an enigmatic character (Casto 2008), who started out collecting and selling primarily raptor eggs in Texas and ended up making longbows, which are still prized by archers today. It has been suggested that he faked the locations of some clutches during his collecting career (e.g., James et al. 2009).

One of the largest meetings of the AOU was called to order the next day by President Chapman at the American Museum of Natural History. On the first day, Charles Thompson presented a paper titled “A plea for the conservation of the eider,” after which it was voted to send copies of his talk to the Governor General of Newfoundland and the Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Quebec, with the recommendation “that all proper measures be taken for the protection of the Eider on the Labrador Coast, thus preventing its extinction.” On the night of the second day, members of the AOU and their guests dined at the Hotel Endicott, located across Columbus Avenue from the museum, between 81st and 82nd avenues. Once one of the most elegant hotels in the city, today it is storefronts, condominiums, and apartments. On Friday, many members visited the New York Zoological Park and Aquarium, where they were hosted for lunch by Director Townsend and William Beebe, Curator of Ornithology.—KIMBERLY G. SMITH, *Department of Biological Sciences, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas 72701, USA. E-mail: kgsmith@uark.edu*

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