



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 1902, the AOU held its twentieth annual congress in Washington, D.C., and published volume 19 (new series) and volume 27 (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. John H. Sage entered his thirteenth year as Secretary and William Dutcher entered his fifteenth year as Treasurer. The Council consisted of seven members and four ex-presidents. J. A. Allen continued as Editor of *The Auk* and Frank M. Chapman was the Associate Editor. There also was a Committee on Publications and a Committee of Arrangements for the Meeting of 1902. The membership of the Society for the first time consisted of five categories: 48 Fellows (15 of whom were founding members and 5 of whom were Life Members), 16 Honorary Fellows, 61 Corresponding Fellows, 53 Members, and 575 Associates.

The twentieth Congress of the AOU convened on Monday night, November 17, 1902 at the home of President Merriam. Twenty-one Fellows were present for the business meeting. Only one new Fellow was elected: Harry C. Oberholser. Ernst Hartert and John A. Harvie-Brown were elected Honorary Fellows and Arthur J. Campbell, W. P. Pycraft, Hermann von Ihering, and Alfred J. North were elected as Corresponding Fellows. Thirteen people were elected as Member, including Arthur C. Bent and Arthur H. Howell, and 84 new Associates were elected. During the year, the Union lost 65 members: 9 died, 14 resigned, and 42 were dropped for nonpayment of dues. The Treasurer reported that the union was in good financial condition, and all officers were re-elected, as was the Committee on Classification and Nomenclature of North American Birds.

The rest of the congress consisted of three days of sessions open to the public held at the U.S. National Museum. The first session on Tuesday morning called by order by Vice-President Cory, and was followed by three presentations. The most provocative of those was J. Gilbert Pearson on "Summer Bird Life of Eastern North Carolina." The discussion that followed told of the incredible number of birds being slaughtered for "northern markets," including waterfowl, shorebirds, and upland gamebirds. Only two papers were presented in the afternoon session, both illustrated with lantern slides: Frank M. Chapman speaking about bird life on Gardiner's and Cobb's islands (New York) and William Dutcher on Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*).

The second day started with a presentation by J. A. Allen on "The A.O.U. Check-list—Its History and its Future," which was subsequently published as the lead article in *The Auk* in 1903 (*Auk* 20:1–9). The Committee on Classification and Nomenclature of North American Birds was appointed at the first meeting of the AOU in 1883 and published its first check-list in 1886. On this 20 year anniversary, Allen concluded that "probably very few, if any, *bona fide* species remain to be discovered" in North America. He envisioned most of the future work of the committee would be at taxonomic levels above that of the species, particularly at the then messy concept of subgenera. In closing, he deplored the current trend in splitting of species. Five more papers were presented in the morning session and four papers, all illustrated with lantern slides, were given in the afternoon session.

On the third day, William Dutcher presented the report of The Committee on Protection of North America Birds, and T. S. Palmer, of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Division of Biological Survey, presented "Federal Game Protection in 1902." The magazine *Bird-Lore* had been started in 1899 to divert the Audubon Societies away from Dutcher's committee and it was a big success. *Bird-Lore* was very popular, and the AOU committee now was free to turn its total attention to issues concerned with bird protection. Dutcher was the real go-between, serving as Chair of the AOU committee and Chair of The National Committee of Audubon Societies. His lengthy committee report was published as a supplement to *The Auk* (*Auk* 20:101–159) and it gave detailed information on what was happening in most states in terms of legislation, warden system, and Audubon Society work. Included were two maps, one showing all the states that had passed bird protection laws and one showing the states with Audubon Societies.

As in the previous year, the Audubon Societies held their third annual meeting with the AOU. A public meeting was held on the night of the 19th and their annual business meeting was on the night of the 20th. They met jointly with the AOU on the morning of the 20th to hear Dutcher's committee report and Palmer's address.

At the end of the meeting, it was proposed to have a special meeting of the AOU in California in May of 1903 and a committee was formed to explore the possibilities. In what sounds like one large "road-trip,"

the committee proposed (Auk 20:245–246) that some of the group start by train in New York and travel to Chicago where all members would gather on 3 May, arriving in San Francisco on about 13 May. A meeting would be held May 15–16 for AOU members and the Cooper Ornithological Club. 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 one came back through Seattle, which was an additional \$11.50.

After agreeing to hold the next AOU Congress in Philadelphia on 16 November 1903, many members attended a reception at the National Zoological Park, hosted by S. P. Langley, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, and Frank Baker, superintendent of the park.