

## 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 1907, there were over 100 General Notes published in *The Auk*, 75% of which dealt in some manner with new distributional information. Many of these reports dealt with the distribution of birds in New England. For example, two reports (24:100) concerned specimens of Common Ravens (*Corvus corax*) in Maine, one from 1884 and one from 1889. Two reports (24:103–104) were authored by Francis G. Blake on the same pair of birds. The first documented nesting by Northern Rough-winged Swallows (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*) at Norwich, Vermont, and the second note concerned the same pair of birds flying across the Connecticut River and foraging in New Hampshire, providing the first record of that species for that state.

In a note entitled "A wounded Sora's long swim" (24:96), Robert C. Murphy (1887–1973) related finding a Sora (*Porzana carolina*) swimming in the water off Staten Island in New York City. Initially thinking it was a diamondback terrapin (*Malaclemys terrapin*), he rowed out to investigate and was surprised to find a bird. It had a damaged right wing, so Murphy concluded that it "had flown forcibly against some hard object." Given the direction from which the bird was moving, Murphy suggested that it must have swum from marshes in New Jersey, some 9 miles (15.3 km) away. Only 20 years old when he published this note, Murphy would go on to have a long and distinguished career at the American Museum of Natural History. He authored *Oceanic Birds of South America* in 1936 and served as President of the AOU from 1948 to 1950.

F. W. Carpenter was watching birds migrate using a telescope aimed at the moon on 7 October 1906 (24:107–108). Of the 54 individuals he noted, 42 were flying south, 2 were flying east–west, but 12 were flying north, which Carpenter thought was unusual. Joel Stebbins, who was with him, counted 13 birds flying south and 5 birds flying north. Together, using two telescopes, they estimated the flight of two

individuals to be 68 and 93 miles per hour (109 and 149 km h<sup>-1</sup>).

Thomas S. Roberts (1858–1946) had a supplementary note (24:449–450) to the massive die-off of Lapland Longspurs (*Calcarius lapponicus*) that he had reported earlier (24:369–377) in the same issue. Mr. A. D. Brown had informed him that he had seen this die-off of Lapland Longspurs before and that he thought it was due to the lack of food (seeds). With snow and ice, there would be nothing for the migrating birds to eat. In another note, W. E. Saunders (1861–1943) reported on a massive die-off of migrating birds in Lake Huron following a heavy snowfall in early October 1906 (24:108–110). Mr. Newton Tripp had spent the Canadian Thanksgiving Day (12 October) on the lake shore near Port Franks, Ontario, and reported 5,000 dead birds to the mile (1.6 km) in a letter to Saunders. Saunders immediately headed for the coast and was able to spend "2 or 3 hours" censusing dead birds. He found 26 species and 1,845 individuals in a stretch of about 2 miles (3.2 km). The most common species were 417 Dark-eyed Juncos (*Junco hyemalis*), 358 American Tree Sparrows (*Spizella arborea*), 153 White-throated Sparrows (*Zonotrichia albicollis*), 131 Golden-crowned Kinglets (*Regulus satrapa*), 130 Swamp Sparrows (*Melospiza georgiana*), and 100 Winter Wrens (*Troglodytes troglodytes*). Saunders did not visit the area visited by Tripp, who estimated that the dead birds stretched for at least 10 miles (16 km). In other areas, people reported that the birds were "piled 6 deep." A life-time resident of London, Ontario, Saunders was one of the founding members of the AOU, as was Roberts. At their deaths, Saunders was the fourth remaining founder and Roberts the third. They were outlived by Charles Batchelder (1856–1954) and A. K. Fisher (1856–1948).

The big news around Boston was the nesting of Brewster's Warbler at the Arnold Arboretum. Before it was known to be a hybrid between Blue-winged Warbler (*Vermivora pinus*) and Golden-

winged Warbler (*V. chrysoptera*), this male bird was causing quite a stir. Helen Granger (24:343–344) presented the prehatching details. The male had arrived in early May and was singing the song of a Golden-winged Warbler. Much effort went into searching for the nest and it, the female, and five eggs were found on the ground by C. J. Maynard (1854–1929). The female Brewster's Warbler was described as being similar to a female Golden-winged Warbler, which, of course, she was. The eggs were reported to be similar to Golden-winged Warbler eggs, which they were. Much anticipation centered on what the fledglings would look like. Walter Faxon (24:444) provided the posthatching information. The eggs hatched 15 June and the nestling fledged on 22 June. A collector was sent from Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology on 22 June to shoot the adults and young, but the staff would not allow shots to be fired in the Arboretum. The nest was collected and placed in the museum. A native of Newton, Massachusetts, Maynard wrote, illustrated,

and published a number of books on ornithology and natural history. Helen Granger would marry Charles Whittle, and together they operated bird-banding stations in New Hampshire and Massachusetts and were very active in the Northeastern Bird-Banding Association. Faxon would continue to study breeding of Blue-winged and Golden-winged warblers in eastern Massachusetts, and he produced the definitive work proving that Brewster's Warbler was a hybrid (Faxon 1913). —KIMBERLY G. SMITH, *Department of Biological Sciences, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas 72701, USA. E-mail: kgsmith@uark.edu*

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