

IN MEMORIAM: MELBOURNE ARMSTRONG CARRIKER, JR., 1879–1965

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Melbourne Armstrong Carriker, Jr., a Fellow of the AOU, was one of the outstanding ornithological collectors and explorers in the Neotropics in the early 20th century. He traveled and collected bird specimens throughout most of Latin America. By 1944, his efforts had produced about 53,000 bird specimens (Phelps 1944), and he continued to collect for another 20 years. The AOU recognized his contributions with the Brewster Award, which was given to him and W. E. Clyde Todd in 1925 for their work on the birds of the Santa Marta Region, Colombia. Carriker published broadly on birds, and though he is often remembered as an ornithological collector, his study and collection work on the Order Mallophaga were at least as extensive as his work on birds, and he actually produced many more articles on the systematics of this insect group than on birds.

Carriker was born in Sullivan, Illinois, on 14 February 1879, the son of a Nebraska doctor. As a young man, Carriker attended college for two years, but soon decided that his career lay elsewhere. He had always liked hunting and the out-of-doors, and gradually he became involved in bird collecting. At age 23, he made the first of several collecting trips to Costa Rica. It was during this time that he became associated with the fledgling AOU; in 1907, he was elected an Associate Member (a membership category that no longer exists). He continued to collect in the Neotropics, spent two years in Venezuela, and in 1911 began living and collecting in Colombia.

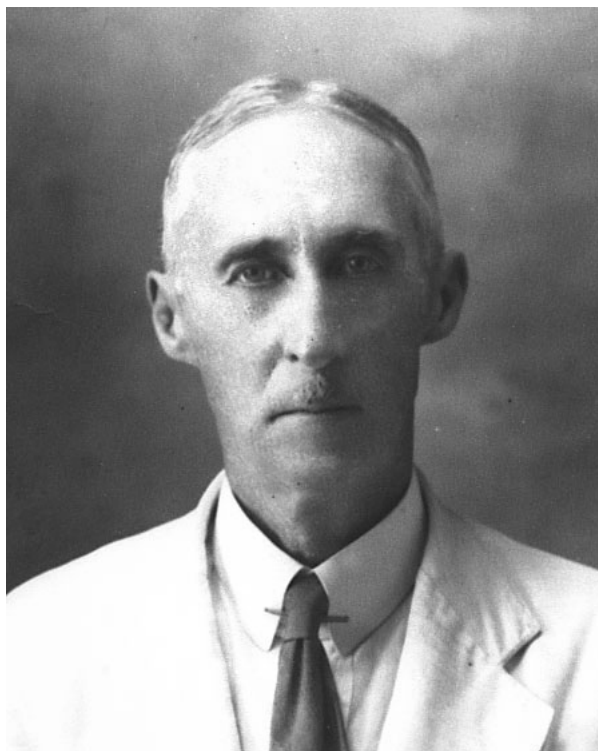
On a visit to Santa Marta, Colombia, Carriker met Myrtle Carmelita Flye, the daughter of an American engineer who had come to Santa Marta to help with electrification of the city and had stayed on to become a coffee planter. Carriker and Myrtle were married in Wayland, Michigan, on 22 June 1912, and moved back to

Colombia to start a coffee plantation adjacent to "Cincinnati," the Flye family's plantation. Their own plantation was named "Vista Nieve."

The five Carriker children, Melbourne Romaine, Myrtle Florence, Howard Holland, Frederick Ruthven, and Alva Marie were born at Vista Nieve. Throughout this period, Carriker continued to collect, primarily around Vista Nieve, but also elsewhere in Colombia and nearby Venezuela. The specimens were sold mainly to the Carnegie Museum for up to \$5 apiece, a good price at the time and, after 1938, to the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. He continued to write and, in 1922, coauthored with W. E. Clyde Todd of the Carnegie Museum the work on the birds of the Santa Marta Mountains that would earn them the Brewster Award.

The Carrikers returned to the United States in 1927 to enrich their children's education. Carriker had received a job offer from the Academy of Natural Sciences, but when it came time to leave for the United States, the academy discovered that it had no money for his position. Nevertheless, the academy told him to come anyway, that the funding would come through in a year or two. So Vista Nieve was sold, and the Carriker family moved to Beachwood, New Jersey. Times were hard for the family for the next year and a half. While waiting for the position to open at the academy, Carriker—a skilled carpenter—worked in that trade as a contractor, and was active in local politics.

Finally, in fall 1929, the academy's financing appeared, and Carriker was hired as a Curator. Between 1929 and 1938, he made four expeditions to Peru, then three to Bolivia, each trip lasting longer than six months. He became an Elective Member of the AOU in 1933. But immediately after returning from Bolivia in



Melbourne Armstrong Carriker, Jr., 1879–1965
(1 February 1942. Photographer not known.)

May 1938, he was laid off by the academy, a result of the shortfall of funds during the Great Depression. He returned to working as a contractor and carpenter for the next few years.

The long years of separation and constant travel had taken a toll on Carriker's marriage. In 1941 the Carrikers were divorced, and Carriker returned permanently to Popayán, Colombia. He became an associate of the U.S. National Museum and was also named a Research Associate of the Natural History Museum of the Universidad del Cauca, and continued to collect specimens of birds and Mallophaga, mainly in Colombia. During his later years, he published almost exclusively on Mallophaga. His last strictly ornithological article was published in 1959. Most of his papers and his collection of Mallophaga were given to the U.S. National Museum, Division of Entomology. He later married Felisa Quintano Roper. He was elected a Fellow of the AOU in 1961, and he died on 27 July 1965, at age 86. He was buried in Bucaramanga, Colombia.

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