

Contributions to the History of North American Ornithology. Vol. I, II

Author: David W. Johnston

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Unfortunately, today few North American ornithologists have an interest in or appreciation for the history of their science. Davis and Jackson have sought to fill this gap in their two fine volumes. The first volume focuses chiefly on North American universities, museums, societies, government agencies, and other organizations, especially those with long and prominent histories. Invited authors describe the institution's history, its principal investigators, and their philosophies in guiding the institution and its activities. Illustrative material often includes old photographs of pioneering ornithologists in field gear or at work in their laboratories. The authors and editors readily admit to the purely descriptive nature of each narrative, leaving interpretive research for later publications. Also included in this volume are an essay on Alexander Wilson, an account of avian biogeography, and an extremely useful chapter covering literature on the history of North American ornithology.

Volume II begins with coverage of specific institutions not found in volume I because of lack of space and time. Other chapters deal with professional organizations (such as the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary and Colonial Waterbird Society) and a state (Nebraska). I was especially intrigued by the coverage of two organizations with which I have been associated: the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology and the Association of Field Naturalists (formerly, the Northeastern Bird-Banding Association). The authors of those two accounts vividly capture early historical struggles and accomplishments, changes over the years, and contemporary goals.

Surely other readers of those collections of North American ornithology will find narratives of their own institutional associations to be informative reading. We can anticipate from Davis and Jackson more historical volumes on this important aspect of ornithology.—DAVID W. JOHNSTON, *5219 Concordia Street, Fairfax, Virginia 22032, USA. E-mail: fordeboids@erols.com*

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Contributions to the History of North American Ornithology. Vol. I, II.—William E. Davis, Jr., and Jerome A. Jackson, Eds. 1995, 2000. *Memoirs of the Nuttall Ornithological Club*, no. 12, 13, Nuttall Ornithological Club, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Vol. I: vii + 501 pp. Cloth. ISBN 1-877973-36-X. \$40.00. Vol. II: vii + 401 pp. Cloth. ISBN 1-877973-40-8. \$30.00. Order from the Nuttall Ornithological Club, c/o Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138, USA.—The American Ornithologists' Union and *The Auk* were formerly bastions of historical ornithology. Early outstanding publications from AOU members included those of several men, such as J. A. Allen, T. S. Palmer, and W. L. McAtee, who wrote historical accounts of selected topics in "Fifty Years' Progress of American Ornithology 1883-1933." Then, Elsa Allen's incisive work on ornithological history before Audubon appeared in 1951, and Paul H. Oehser published "Biographies of Members of the American Ornithologists' Union" in 1954. More recently, historical material from North America has focused largely on biographies, autobiographies, and abbreviated accounts in regional bird books and breeding bird atlases.