



## 100 Years Ago in The American Ornithologists' Union

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## 100 Years Ago in The American Ornithologists' Union



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Sixty-one publications were reviewed in *The Auk* in 1909, all done by Editor J. A. Allen. One of the most interesting works Allen reviewed (*Auk* 26:98) was Wallace Craig's (1908) paper on the role of vocalizations in social control in pigeons. Craig (1876–1954) had completed his doctoral degree in 1908 at the University of Chicago, working under Charles Otis Whitman (1842–1910), one of the leading zoologists of his time and an Elected Member of the AOU, who had a large collection of feral pigeons and other birds from around the world. Craig's careful and detailed observations about the role of vocalizations in pigeons led him to conclude that vocalizations were the main factor in social control (or the influence of one individual on the behavior of another). This theoretical work was followed by a series of papers on emotions and behaviors in pigeons, which culminated in another theoretical paper, about emotions in humans and animals (Craig 1922).

Craig joined the AOU in 1912 and is generally referred to as the "forgotten founder of ethology" (Kalikow and Mills 1989). After completing his doctoral degree, he accepted a position as professor of philosophy at the University of Maine in 1908. He became progressively deaf and was relieved of his duties in the spring of 1922 because of that handicap. Over the next 25 years, he held a variety of positions, primarily at Harvard University, from which he retired in 1947. During this time, he had a lengthy correspondence with the Nobel laureate Konrad Lorenz, who credited Craig as the main influence on his concept of instinct (Kalikow and Mills 1989). Lorenz also referred to Craig and Whitman as two of the three great pioneers of ethology, the other being Oskar Heinroth (1871–1945, Honorary Fellow of the AOU), Lorenz's mentor and a famous German ornithologist (Burkhardt 1988). Unfortunately, all the correspondence between Craig and Lorenz has been lost. His last major work was a monograph on the song of the Eastern Wood-Pewee (*Contopus virens*; Craig 1943), in which he had to rely on several other persons' descriptions of the songs because he could not hear them (Kalikow and Mills 1989). Why were his early works ignored by other ethologists and animal behaviorists of his time? Kalikow and Mills (1989) attributed some of this neglect to Craig's staunch defense of Charles Darwin during a period of intense anti-Darwinism from 1900 to 1930.

In another review (26:96–97), Allen discussed the 1907 report by George W. Field on the status and future of the Heath Hen (*Tympanuchus cupido cupido*) on Martha's Vineyard off the coast of Massachusetts. Field reported that between 55 and 60 individuals remained of this once common and widespread eastern subspecies of the Greater Prairie-Chicken. But, reflecting on the support of the islanders and the establishment of a 400-ha reservation, Allen concluded that the Heath Hen's "future increase

seems assured." And increase they did, to around 2,000 birds. But a fire during the 1916 breeding season, severe winters, an influx of Northern Goshawks (*Accipiter gentilis*) during the winter of 1916–1917, and an epidemic of blackhead disease decimated the population in the late teens. A small recovery to 600 birds in 1920 was followed by the final decline to 2 females and 10 males in 1927. A single male, known as "Booming Ben," persisted until he disappeared on 11 March 1932.

In a letter to the editor, Robert W. Shufeldt (1850–1934) announced that he was donating his bird skeleton collection to the New York State Museum in Albany (26:217–218). Shufeldt was one of the founding members of the AOU and can probably be considered the father of avian osteology, given that he published descriptions of the bones of most avian orders. In his letter, he also announced that the New York State Museum would publish a book of his works, *Osteology of Birds*, in 1909 (Museum Bulletin no. 130). He also was one of the first paleornithologists in North America and described dozens of new species of fossil birds.

In perhaps the first report of forensic ornithology (26:450–452), Shufeldt related in a second letter that he had been hired by the Forest, Fish, and Game Commission of New York to identify bones of birds from meals served at posh hotels and restaurants in New York. At the time, the state of New York had heavy fines for serving game birds out of season, but it was difficult to catch the restaurants red handed. Detectives were sent to eat at suspected violators, often dressed to the nines. They ordered out-of-season game birds and were sometimes served "the real thing," but other times they were served chicken by suspicious owners. The detectives would secretly slip bones into their pockets, carefully box and label the bones, and then Shufeldt would identify them and serve as an expert witness in court, where fines could run as high as \$4,500. With the detectives as eyewitnesses and Shufeldt's demonstration of species identification, a verdict for the state was guaranteed.

The year 1909 was the 100th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin on 12 February 1809 and the 50th anniversary of the publication of *On the Origin of Species* on 24 November 1859. The following appeared in *The Auk* (26:108):

ARRANGEMENTS have been made for the celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin by the New York Academy of Sciences on February 12 next at the American Museum of Natural History. The memorial exercises will include the presentation to the Museum of a bust of Darwin, the presentation to be made by Charles F. Cox, President of the Academy, and the acceptance will be by Henry F. Osborn,

President of the Museum. Other addresses will be on 'Darwin's work in Botany,' by Professor N. L. Britton; 'Darwin's work in Zoology,' by Professor H. C. Bumpus; 'Darwin's work in Geology,' by Professor J. J. Stevenson.

The bust by William L. Couper, a famous American sculptor, had been commissioned for \$1,000. It was presented to the museum and stood at the entrance to the renamed Darwin Hall of Invertebrate Zoology until 1940, when the hall was closed and the bust was put in storage. In 1960, the museum gave the bust back to the New York Academy of Sciences, and it was placed in a small outside courtyard at the latter's headquarters in New York City. A second bronze bust was given by the museum to Christ's College at Cambridge University, where Darwin had been an undergraduate, in June of 1909. The delegation was led by Henry Fairfield Osborn (1857–1935), president of the museum (Woram 2005). The celebration was accompanied by an exhibit of "Darwiniana," which consisted of published works, portraits, letters, and specimens to illustrate various aspects of evolution; it closed on 12 March 1909. Years later, two plaster casts of the bust were sent to Ecuador for the 100th anniversary of Darwin's visit to the Galápagos Islands on 17 September 1935 (Woram 2005).

Also announced was the start of a new journal, *The Midland Naturalist*, published at Notre Dame University in Indiana by Julius A. Nieuwland, who served as both editor and publisher. He was a chemistry professor with a great interest in botany. Within the first year, the name was changed to *The American Midland Naturalist*, and the journal is currently celebrating its 100th year. The centennial edition of January 2009 featured a series of articles that trace the history of the journal (McIntosh 2009). Another new journal was announced, *Travel and Exploration*, but it lasted only until 1911. Yet another new journal, *Bird News*, started by the Avicultural Society of California, lasted one year.

J. A. Allen thought that it was important to remind the readership of the following (26:220):

As everybody knows, or has had the opportunity of knowing, the Roosevelt Expedition to Africa is not merely a hunting trip

for the gratification of the big-game aspirations of an ex-President of the United States, but a thoroughly organized expedition in the interest of the United States National Museum and of science.

He also reported on the gala 50th celebration of the British Ornithologists' Union (26:317–319) on 9 December 1908 in London and the start of a large bird-banding program in Great Britain (26:332–333). The program was started by H. F. Witherby, editor of *British Birds*, and each "ring" had a unique number and was stamped "Witherby, High Holborn, London."—KIMBERLY G. SMITH, *Department of Biological Sciences, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas 72701, USA. E-mail: kgsmith@uark.edu*

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