



## 100 Years Ago in The American Ornithologists' Union

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## 100 Years Ago in The American Ornithologists' Union

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During 1906, 90 notes were published in *The Auk*, fully two-thirds of them dealing with distribution issues. As in 1905, Massachusetts led the way with 12 notes on bird distribution, followed by Michigan (7), New York (4), and 3 each for Connecticut, South Carolina, and Maine. Twenty-one states were represented, with nine reports from Canada and one from Bermuda. No reports concerned other countries. Only two notes dealt with taxonomic issues.

Back-to-back notes documented the rare breeding of Dark-eyed Juncos (*Junco hyemalis*) in eastern Massachusetts (23:103). More bizarre were two notes concerning E. E. Brown collecting a Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*) on 5 November 1905 in Kansas. The first note, by Francis H. Snow, contended that Brown collected the bird at Thacher's Lake, 6.4 km from Lawrence, Kansas, from a small flock of birds (23:106). The second note, by Lewis Lindsay Dyche, contended that Brown shot it at Lake View, 8.0 km northwest of Lawrence, and that it was the only bird seen (23:220). Snow (1840–1908) was known as the Pioneer of Kansas Ornithology (Taylor 1932), and he joined the AOU in 1903. A founding faculty member in 1866 at what would become the University of Kansas, he eventually served as Chancellor from 1890 to 1901. Actually more famous as an entomologist, he helped amass a huge insect collection at the university, which bears his name, as does Snow Hall on the university campus. Dyche (1857–1915) was also a famous naturalist, an Arctic explorer, and a wildlife biologist based at the University of Kansas. He joined the AOU in 1886. In the race to be the first person to the North Pole, he actually rescued his rival, Robert Peary, on one occasion. Considered an excellent taxidermist, he collected many vertebrate specimens, primarily mammals, all over the world for the Museum of Natural History, which is housed in Dyche Hall. In 1911, he was named state game warden and fish commissioner, one of the first in the country. His life

is retold in the book *The Dashing Kansan* (Sharp and Sullivan 1990).

Jesse C. A. Meeker reported a male Golden-winged Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*) mated with a female Blue-winged Warbler (*V. pinus*) in Connecticut. When first discovered, the nest was being defended by those two birds and there were five young in it. When Meeker returned to the nest five days later, the nestlings had fledged, but he was able to find one in the underbrush, and it was a typical Blue-winged Warbler (!).

In 1904, the following announcement appeared in *The Auk* (21:410):

With a view to obtaining positive evidence of the return of birds to the place of their birth, or otherwise, as the case may be, Mr. P. A. Taverner of 95 North Grand Boulevard, W., Detroit, Michigan, proposes to attach small aluminum bands to the tarsus of young birds, in the hope that some of the birds thus tagged may afterward fall into the hands of ornithologists and be reported. The tag, for the sake of brevity of address, will be inscribed "Notify The Auk. N.Y.," to which any such discoveries should be reported for publication.

In 1906, Taverner reported the first success, probably the first banding recovery in North America (23:232). On 29 May 1905, Charles Kirkpatrick "tagged" a nest of half-grown flickers (*Colaptes auratus*) near his home in Keota, Iowa. On Christmas Day, J. E. Ross collected one of those birds in Many, Louisiana. Taverner observed that:

This single success shows what might be expected if the work was more generally prosecuted by ornithologists in the field. The amount of labor it entails to bend bands around the legs of a brood of nestlings is insignificant in comparison with the value of the results that may be achieved if but a very small percentage of the so marked birds ever turn up again.

Recognizing the importance of each band having a unique number, he also volunteered to be the single source of bands and to supply them to anyone interested in tagging birds. The work soon became too extensive for an individual to handle and was later conducted, in turn, by the American Bird Banding Association (with support from the Linnaean Society of New York), the United States Biological Survey (which became part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), and now the Bird Banding Laboratory at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Maryland (which is part of the U.S. Geological Survey).

Percy Algernon Taverner (1875–1947) moved to Canada in 1911 and produced *Birds of Eastern Canada* in 1919. The second volume, *Birds of Western Canada*, appeared in 1926 and coincided with the first Canadian AOU meeting in Ottawa. Eventually he authored his major opus, *The Birds of Canada*. A Fellow in the AOU, his death was hailed as an end to “an era of Canadian ornithology that surely will bear his name” (McAtee 1948:85).

In a previous column (122:380), a presentation by Otto Widmann at the 1905 annual meeting was referred to as an unanswered question: Should Bird Protection Laws and their Enforcement be in the Hands of the National Government? In this issue of *The Auk*, we find the answer (23:109–110). Widmann argued that without question, protection of birds must be in the hands of the national government. Bird laws should be consistent across the country, and all states and territories should have laws protecting birds. State legislators cannot be expected to possess the knowledge about birds to propose such laws, and he gave the example of his own Missouri legislature mistakenly passing a law to allow shooting of “chicken” hawks, when it meant to allow shooting of “duck” hawks or Peregrine Falcons (*Falco peregrinus*). At the time, nearly all hawks in Missouri were known as “chicken” hawks, allowing the slaughter of many beneficial species. Second, state and local enforcement officers should not be expected to uphold these laws. They may not be sympathetic

to the cause of bird conservation and they may be reluctant to “cause the enmity” of fellow citizens over laws that they care little or nothing about. Federal agents should be responsible for the protection of landbirds and seabirds, which are “guests” of our nation. Widmann ends his essay with the following far-sighted thought:

A Nation that spends hundreds of millions to protect her citizens and their rights and interests should be able to give full protection to its feathered wards, for as such must we regard these defenseless creatures. We owe it to posterity to do everything in our power to preserve the beautiful in creation, and not least among that are the birds. It is not only their economic, but also, and much more so, their esthetic value which has to be considered when we form and give judgment on the relation of birds to man and on their right to live. This esthetic worth may have played a small part in the past among the poorly educated masses of our rural population, but it will be of immensely more importance for the better educated and cultured population of the future to which bird life will be a great relief of the monotony of country life already threatening to become almost unbearable by the disappearance of trees, shrubs, wild flowers, and everything else pertaining to beauty and loveliness in Nature.

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