



100 Years Ago in The American Ornithologists' Union

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100 Years Ago in The American Ornithologists' Union

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General Notes found in *The Auk* in 1903 (new series vol. 20, old series vol. 28) were primarily centered around identification of species distributions, mostly in the United States. For example, there were three notes on Barn Owls (*Tyto alba*) on Long Island (20:67, 20:212, 20:434) and one from northern Ohio (20:67), where Barn Owls were considered rare. Wood Ibis (*Mycteria americana*) was reported for the second time in Colorado (20:65) and for the first time in Montana (20:210).

Three notes dealt with Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*) hybridizing with other species: American Black Duck (*Anas rubripes*; 20:64), Green-winged Teal (*Anas crecca*; 20:209–210), and Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*; 20:303). At the time, the later two species were considered to be in different genera from the Mallard. In another note, R. Ridgway (20:308) stated that “If the Crested Tits are to be separated generically from *Parus*, as the writer thinks should be done, the name *Lophophanes* should be restricted to the Palearctic species and the name *Baeolophus* Cabanis used for the American species.” He apparently was about 100 years ahead of his time.

Passenger Pigeon (*Ectopistes migratorius*) sightings had increased in Ontario Canada during the last few years of the 1890s (18:191–192), and Fleming (20:66) summarized reports that he felt were reliable of Passenger Pigeons around Toronto between 1896 and 1902. This area was apparently the last stronghold for this species in North America.

Other interesting observations include Bryan’s report of the capture of a Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*) on a boat headed to Hawaii 680 miles (1,100 km) off the coast in the Pacific Ocean, suggesting that Short-eared Owls in Hawaii originated from the North American continent. Felger (20:70) documents 84 passerines killed in trees in a 25 min hail storm in Denver (Colorado) in September 1902.

J. H. Clark performed one of the earliest experiments in mate selection, reported in “A much mated House Sparrow” (20:306–307). In 1897, he erected a nest box in February and saw three House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*), a male and two females, at the box in late February. The male drove one female away and “had considerable trouble keeping her away.” On 19, 23, and 25 March, Clark observed copulations, where upon he shot the female in the presence of the male. The male investigated the dead female and was courting another female within 10 min. The next day the male had three females around the nest and he courted one and the other two left. Clark observed copula-

tions on 27 and 28 March and 2 and 3 April, where upon he shot the female at about noon when the male was not around. The male spent the rest of the afternoon chirping. On the 4th, he had another mate and copulations were observed on the 10, 11, and 17 of April, when Clark shot the female in the presence of the male, which flew away. On the 22nd, the male was back at the box and had five females in attendance on the 24th. He was mated by the 29th of April, copulations were seen on 6 May, and Clark shot this female on 19 May. Upon returning on 27 May, Clark found that the male was mated again and five eggs were in the nest. From those results, Clark concluded that there must be nonbreeding individuals within the population and that the male remated faster if he saw his mate killed. He suggested that it would be interesting for someone to do the reciprocal experiment of male removal on female mating behavior.

In the Correspondence section, there is a letter from J. C. Knox, of Jackson, Minnesota, about the interest of *The Auk* to amateur ornithologists (20:234). Realizing that “highest advancement of American ornithology can be accomplished only through and by professional men [!], and that *The Auk* must and should be their favored organ,” he goes on to say the success of the Union depends on the moral and financial support it receives for the amateur members.

He states that amateurs are most interested in habits and life histories of birds and he suggests that more articles like that should appear in *The Auk*.

In reply, J. A. Allen takes the opportunity to expound on the AOU in general and *The Auk* in particular, after taking the opportunity to thank Mr. Knox for an “exceptionally courteous” letter to the Editor of *The Auk*. The Union was formed to be primarily an association of professional ornithologists, or advanced workers in ornithology, but the secondary function was to secure the affiliation of all American bird students—to bring the amateurs into touch with the professionals. The main function of *The Auk* is to provide a medium of publication for the working ornithologist. But, in closing, Allen notes,

it is the aim of the editorial staff of *The Auk* to cater especially to the popular side of ornithology, to furnish the amateur readers papers that they will enjoy and find profitable. The technical side will always take care of itself; the demand for space for such contributions is always greater than the supply, and it is papers of this character that get the cold shoulder and not those of a popular character, provided of course that they contain something worthy of record.