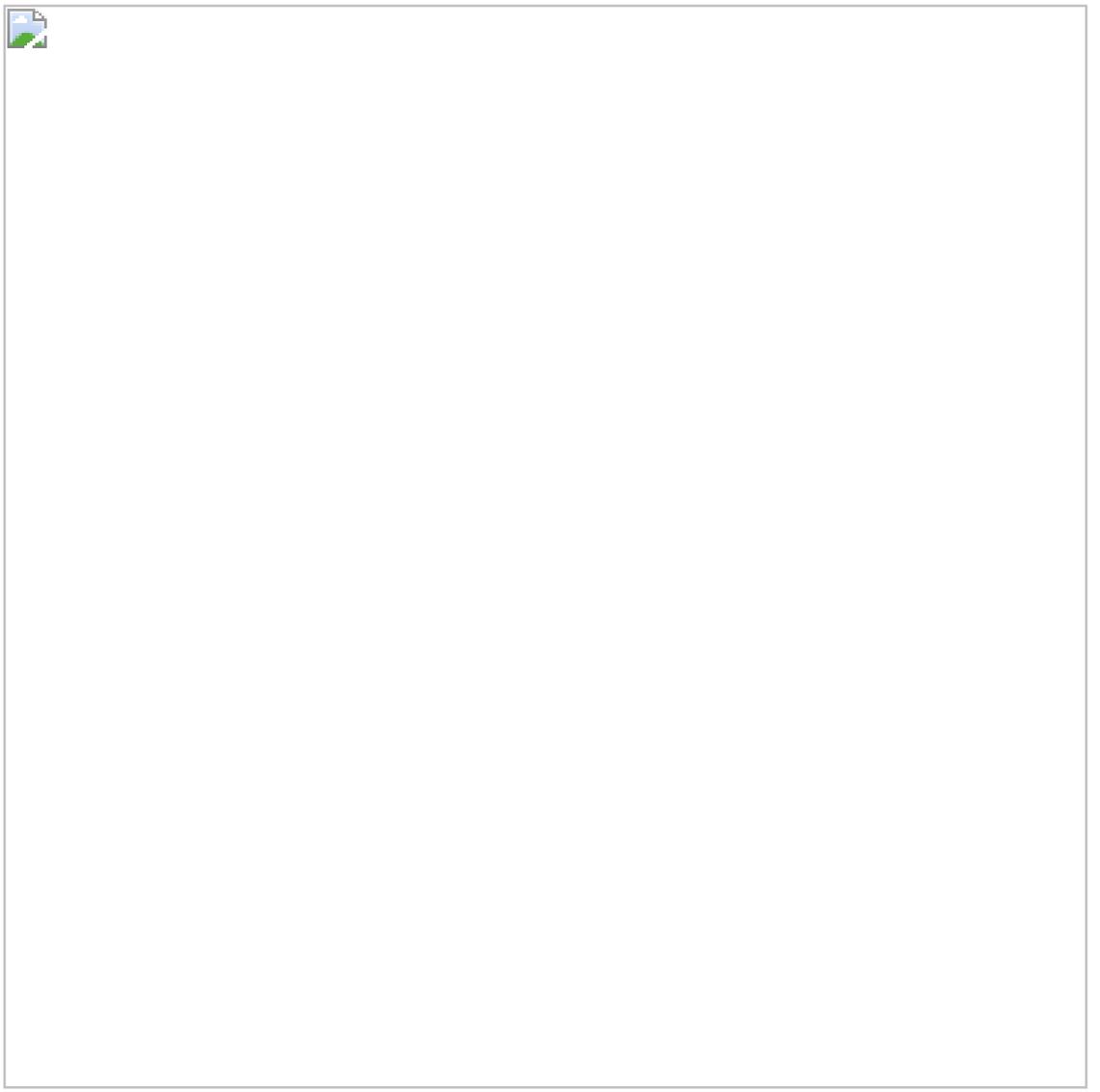

100 Years Ago in The American Ornithologists' Union

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Source: The Auk, 127(4) : 964-965

Published By: American Ornithological Society

URL: https://doi.org/10.1525/auk.2010.127.4.964

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The Auk 127(4):964–965, 2010

As in previous years, most of the Recent Literature reviews were done by Editor J. A. Allen. One piece he reviewed was by A. K. Fisher (1909), on the value of predaceous birds and mammals (Auk 27:100). While most mammal predators were generally beneficial, Fisher singled out feral house cats (*Felis catus*) as the major source of bird mortality:

> Many an innocent hawk, skunk, owl, and weasel has been shot for the deeds of that sleek highwayman, the house cat. It is safe to say that this marauder, which enjoys all the comforts and protection of a home, destroys in the aggregate more wild birds and young poultry than all the native natural enemies combined.

Fisher went on to cite a source that estimated that in the New England states alone 1,500,000 birds were destroyed annually by cats. Fisher himself estimated that 3,500,000 birds were destroyed annually in the state of New York.

Fisher found that most predatory birds were beneficial, with the exception of the Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*), Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*), Sharp-shinned Hawk (*A. striatus*), and Cooper's Hawk (*A. cooperii*). He went on to list groups of useful birds that were primarily insectivorous, such as herons, gulls, and terns. The paper is illustrated with three paintings by Louis Agassiz Fuertes of the two accipiters and the owl, which Allen said

> are pilloried in the three plates that illustrate the paper, in order that they may be the better recognized and distinguished from the beneficial species that for the most part compose these two groups of useful birds.

Allen also reviewed a book by Hebert Keightley Job (1864–1933) entitled *The Sport of Bird Study—A Book for Young or Active People* (27:102–103). The book started out with

> Of course there's nothing wrong in shooting lawful game in moderation, but it's simply this, that the new way is so much better than the old that we don't care for shooting. Gunners can hunt only in the fall, but our hunting lasts the whole year. Their game, too, is limited to a few kinds, while we have every sort that flies.

What Job is referring to is taking pictures of birds, as he was one of the earliest proponents of bird photography as a hobby and outdoor activity. He traveled widely throughout North America photographing birds and producing some of the earliest "moving pictures" of birds. An Elected Member of the AOU in 1901, at the time he wrote this book he was the State Ornithologist of Connecticut.

Another important publishing event of 1910 was the third edition of the *Check-list of North American Birds*, which appeared in August. The Check-list Committee consisted of J. A. Allen, Robert Ridgway, William Brewster, C. Hart Merriam, Charles W. Richmond, Jonathan Dwight, Jr., and Witmer Stone. Allen, Brewster, and Ridgway had also served on the committees for the first (1886) and second (1895) check-lists. Allen was the chair of the committee and also wrote the review for *The Auk* (27:466–472). Many changes in scientific names had been made since the last check-list as older, obscure references came to light. The committee was bound to follow the "strict laws of nomenclature" in using the first description of a species, rather than a name that had been in use but that was not the first name for the species. This resulted in many well-known scientific names being replaced with ones that were not familiar to many ornithologists of the time. The species were not numbered as in previous editions, and accents were added to scientific names to help with pronunciation. In his review, Allen compared all three editions, noting that the third edition covered 802 species and 394 subspecies, which is only 3 more species than the edition 15 years earlier. He also noted the "elimination of all the species resting solely on the unconfirmed records of Giraud's 'Birds of Texas'"—a reference to a mysterious publication made by Jacob Post Giraud, Jr., in 1841, in which he claimed to have discovered 14 new species from Texas in 1838 (for full details, see Stone 1919). Although Giraud claimed until his death that the specimens came from Texas, most suspected that they were from Mexico.

A major event in 1910 was the Fifth International Ornithological Congress (IOC), held in Berlin from 30 May to 4 June, with Anton Reichenow (1847–1941) serving as president. An Honorary Fellow in the AOU since 1891, he was an authority on African birds and published a controversial systematic approach to the Class Aves, leading Witmer Stone to state in his review of the work that "we can see no reason for a system such as Dr. Reichenow advocates" (32:119–121).

Apparently, the only American who attended the congress was William Dutcher. At the time, he was president of the National Association of Audubon Societies, and he was the official representation of the U.S. government, the Smithsonian Institution, the U.S. National Museum, and the AOU. His mission was to suggest the formation of an international organization for the conservation of birds, specifically for an international agreement for the suppression of traffic in the plumage of wild birds for millinery purposes. This was met with enthusiasm, and the International Committee for the Protection of Birds was formed at the congress. Dutcher and T. S. Palmer, future editor of *The Auk*, were

The Auk, Vol. 127, Number 4, pages 964–965. ISSN 0004-8038, electronic ISSN 1938-4254. DOI: 10.1525/auk.2010.127.4.964

named as delegates from the United States. Dutcher also carried an invitation from the AOU to hold the next congress in Washington, D.C., in 1915, but Sarajevo in Bosnia was chosen for the sixth IOC. Unfortunately, that meeting and the next were canceled because of World War I, and the sixth IOC actually occurred in 1926 in Copenhagen.

Although it is generally agreed that the last wild Passenger Pigeon was seen in 1900, Colonel Anthony Kuser, a well-known bird philanthropist, offered $100 for a freshly killed specimen in 1909. On the second day of the annual meeting of the AOU in December, C. F. Hodge, a biology professor at Clark University, gave an impassioned talk, stating that he wouldn't shoot a Passenger Pigeon for even $1,000. Kuser was in the audience, and seeing the error of his ways after talking with Hodge, he changed his reward to $300 for evidence of breeding (Jones 1910). At the start of the third day, the reward was announced in a letter from C. William Beebe, Curator of Birds at the New York Zoological Park. In 1910, the $300 reward for an undisturbed nest was announced in *The Auk* (27:112), accompanied by the withdrawal of the offer of an award for a dead bird "because of the great danger of complete extinction." Because Beebe had left for a year-long expedition around the world to study the pheasants of Southeast Asia (27:241–242), information was to be sent to Hodge. On 4 April 1910, *The New York Times* ran an article with the headline "Reward for Wild Pigeons—Ornithologists offer $3000 for the discovery of their nests." In this article it was reported that the AOU was offering $3000 in rewards for evidence of breeding wild birds. Both of these claims are false, but this mistake has been perpetuated by the mention of the *Times* article in almost every Passenger Pigeon account available online today. The AOU was not offering any rewards. Initially John Lewis Childs did contribute $700 more, making the reward $1000 (Hodge 1910). There were numerous rewards offered for evidence within a state or province (listed in Hodge 1910, 1912), and the total of all offers is just over $2000. Although many reports were received during 1910 and 1911, sadly, of course, no one claimed any reward and all offers expired on 31 October 1912 (Hodge 1912).

Clifton F. Hodge (1859–1949) was a fascinating person. Trained as a neurologist, he performed early experiments on homing behavior in pigeons by sitting in a boat in a lake in Wisconsin and drawing the patterns of movement of released birds, concluding that homing was accomplished by birds learning landmarks in the environment (Hodge 1894). His drawing approach formed the basis for the Ball and Field Test, used primarily in psychological testing of children (Littman 2004). His book, *Nature Study and Life*, published in 1902, is generally considered the first great nature-study textbook. On 26 November 1905, the *New York Times* did a full-page story on his attempts to domesticate Ruffed Grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*) and other birds and animals. In 1913, he left Clark University to become head of the Department of Biology at the University of Oregon. His high school textbook, *Civic Biology*, published in 1919 with Jean Dawson, was the last pro-Darwin evolution text written before the anti-Darwin period of the 1920s (Larson 1987).—Kimberly G. Smith, *Department of Biological Sciences, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas 72701, USA. E-mail: kgsmith@uark.edu*

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