

REVIEW

On the Wings of Cranes—Larry Walkinshaw's Life Story. Lowell M. Schake; edited by James R. Walkinshaw. 2008. iUniversity Inc. ISBN: 978-0-595-48497-3 (paperback), ISBN: 978-0-595-7199-0 (cloth), ISBN: 978-0-595-60589-7 (ebook).

Dr. Lawrence Harvey Walkinshaw (1904-1993) was by profession a dentist. In the course of this biography, written by his son-in-law and edited by his son, one realizes that he was also a professional ornithologist in every way except one: his income came from elsewhere. In addition to a thriving dental practice, Dr. Walkinshaw dedicated a great deal of his free time and discretionary funds to the study of birds. His landmark books *The Sandhill Cranes* (1949), *Kirtland's Warbler—The Natural History of an Endangered Species* (1983), and *Life History of the Eastern Field Sparrow in Calhoun County, Michigan* (1987) were seminal to our understanding of those species. He increased the present-day knowledge of Whooping Cranes (*Grus americana*) and the rest of the cranes with his many other publications, especially his book *Cranes of the World* (1973). His penchant for meticulous note-taking served him well, as he published an additional 400 or so articles on over 70 other species of North American birds.

One of the first 'outside' scientists I met after I began working as a wildlife biologist with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission in the fall of 1971 was Dr. Walkinshaw. When I asked my grandfather, also in the wildlife field, if he knew Dr. Walkinshaw he told me with obvious respect and admiration that, though a dentist, Walkinshaw's accomplishments in ornithology matched or exceeded those of most of his contemporaries. I assumed that they knew each other only through AOU meetings and other ornithological gatherings. I learned they had, at the least indirect, contact in the field. In 1941 my grandfather apparently collected (shot) a male Kirtland's Warbler (*Dendroica kirtlandii*) banded by Walkinshaw the year before, and Walkinshaw's observations collected during a 1947 "expedition" to Alaska were incorporated into my grandfather's book *Birds of Alaska*.

Walkinshaw had a strong connection to Florida. One of the first birds he focused his interest on was the Greater Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis tabida*). They nested in the area of Michigan where he grew up and where he lived most of his life, and they migrate to Florida for the winter. In later years Larry and his wife Clara had a winter home in Lake Wales, and when there he spent time studying the Florida Sandhill Crane (*G. c. pratensis*) of south-central Florida.

This book is more than simply a biography of an amazingly prolific *amateur* ornithologist; it is in fact a chronicle of the beginning of endangered species conservation in North America. Walkinshaw realized during the early part of 20th century that Sandhill Cranes and Kirtland's Warblers were both in decline and set about to change that trend. We learn of his primary role in the conservation and restoration of both Sandhill and Whooping Cranes and how, early on, he realized what needed to be done to prevent the Kirtland's Warbler from becoming extinct. His systematic life history studies came at a time of transition in field biology, when goals were changing from finding out which species were where, to finding out what they were doing while they were there. In the course of this book we realize what an impact this one dedicated individual had on the species he chose to champion. The author compares Walkinshaw to the likes of Aldo Leopold and Rachel Carson, and I think justifiably so.

In addition to his study of birds Dr. Walkinshaw maintained an abiding interest in family genealogy. Ironically, within a few meters of my grandfather's grave in Northern Virginia is one bearing the name Walkinshaw. When I mentioned this to Dr. Walkinshaw he knew exactly which family member that was.

The book has a few minor editorial details amiss; some between-words spaces are missing and in other places words are missing. There are some errors of fact; on page 205 Carroll D. Littlefield is referred to as female (this well known Sandhill Crane authority is assuredly male), on page 226 the location of one of the Kirtland's Warblers is identified as "Kazadazua", Quebec (I suspect this should be Kazabazua), and on page 328 editorship of *Rare and Endangered Biota of Florida* Volume V is listed as James A. Rodgers, Jr., Herbert W. Kale II and Henry Schmidt (it should have read Henry T. Smith). These are minor errors that do not detract from an interesting life story or from the flow of natural and conservation history that proceeds from these pages, making for a very enlightening read. Dr. Walkinshaw is described in these pages as *birdman of the world*; he could just as appropriately been referred to as birdman *to* the world. Birds were always the center of his life, which is quite understandable, for, after all, they are the most fascinating of creatures.

Stephen A. Nesbitt
5407 SW 86th Drive
Gainesville, Florida 32608