

song, which for some reason is frequently heard as background music in television commercials, is often described as a burry *churry*, *churry*, *churry*, *chorry*, *chorry*. The song of the Connecticut sounds more like a loud, ringing *chip-a-dilly*, *chip-a-dilly*, *chip-a-dilly*, *quoit*. Can you tell that I enjoy typing *chip-a-dilly*, *chip-a-dilly*, *chip-a-dilly*, *quoit*? Well, I do. Perhaps too much. Connecticut warbler is correct.

24. *MBT witnesses a peculiar performance on 31 October 1925, when two whitish birds on a brown mudflat noticed a Cooper's Hawk overhead. The whitish birds ran to a small patch of snow and remained motionless until the hawk had passed. Choose from: A. Piping plover, B. Sanderling, or C. American white pelican. If you chose the pelican, you probably also chose kingfisher for the previous question. The plover and sanderling are better choices, but most individuals of the rare piping plover would have already passed through between mid-July and mid-September. October 31 would be extremely late for the plover, but only marginally late for sanderling. Sanderling is correct.*

25. *MBT describes the fall nocturnal flight calls of another species, which peaked in August. He found the 'puttie-putt-putt' notes of the southbound migrants as pleasing as the prolonged whistles of the species in spring. Choose from: A. Eastern meadowlark, B. Swainson's thrush, or C. Upland sandpiper. We may not all find puttie-putt-putt sounds pleasing, but that is not the point. Instead, here is yet another case of a formerly common bird that has become quite rare today. Upland sandpiper is correct; neither the meadowlark nor the thrush produces the described vocalizations, and the August migrational peak is also inappropriate for both, with the meadowlark peaking in October, and the thrush in September. We need more upland sandpipers—what a great bird.*

That's all I can stand. I hope this clears up any lingering questions concerning the original column. If not, let me know. And you really should try and track down Trautman's *The Birds of Buckeye Lake, Ohio*, published in 1940 by the University of Michigan Press. It's worth the effort, and as you can tell, Milt writes better than I. Much better. ♣

Early Ohio Ornithologists: John Maynard Wheaton, 1840-1887

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A number of years ago, as a fledgling employee of the Ohio Historical Society I was examining some of our bird study skins. While the OHS natural history collections are small compared to some other collections in Ohio, there are some interesting items among the 2300 or so bird specimens we maintain. As I went from drawer to drawer, I came upon one that held a sheet of metal, roughly 18 x 24 inches. One side was painted black, edged narrowly in gold, with gold letters reading "Doctor Wheaton." It was obviously quite old and well worn. As I looked further, I noticed a number of the oldest specimens in our bird collection carried an extra label: "Wheaton Collection." I have since learned that OHS has 100 birds from the Wheaton Collection in our facility, and has placed another 500 on long-term loan to The Ohio State University. In those early days, as a novice Ohioan I had no idea who this man was, but the doctor's shingle and two folding insect nets tucked into a cabinet of bird specimens captured my curiosity. I have found out over the years that Wheaton was a truly fascinating man. He was one of Ohio's premier nineteenth-century students of ornithology. Among the dozen or so works Wheaton published on birds, he is best known for his 1860 *Catalogue of the Birds of Ohio*, and his updated 1882 *Report of the Birds of Ohio*. But that is just the start of a look at his life and influence.

Wheaton was born in Columbus, Ohio on 18 May 1840. Even early in his youth he had a strong interest in birds as well as other animals. His father having died while he was quite young, his mother often had to reprimand him for not finishing work he had promised, instead spending his time in the woods.

Upon completing public schooling in Columbus in 1857, J. M. Wheaton entered Denison University in Granville. Denison had no gymnasium, but he got plenty of exercise from long walks in the countryside. Frequently he returned from such walks with insect or bird specimens collected along the way. In 1860 Wheaton graduated from Denison, and then joined the Starling Medical College, the forerunner of the University Hospitals at The Ohio State University.

Upon completing his studies at the medical college, Wheaton enlisted on 4 March 1865 at Camp Chase in Columbus as assistant surgeon to the 188th Ohio Volunteer Infantry to serve in the Civil War. At least one biographer suggests he was tempted to enlist earlier, but felt he would be more useful as a surgeon than a regular soldier. Wheaton's tenure in the military was short. Lee's surrender at Appomattox was just over a month away. He was mustered out on 21 September 1865, having served less than seven months.

After the war, Wheaton returned home and set up medical practice in his parents' home on the northeast corner of Fourth and Oak Streets in Columbus. I found it interesting that he was born, raised, conducted his medical practice, stored his natural history specimens, and finally died all in the same house. His mother continued to live

there with him and his wife and son until her death in 1884. The house has long since been eradicated by modern downtown businesses such as the City Center Mall.

Wheaton soon joined the staff of the Starling Medical College as a “demonstrator of anatomy.” In 1867 he was promoted to professor of anatomy. He maintained his private practice in his home while on the staff at Starling. In 1876 he married Lida Daniels, and three years later she gave birth to their only child, Robert J. Wheaton. He continued his medical practice, his teaching, and his natural history studies until his death from tuberculosis on 28 January 1887, just a few months short of his 47th birthday.

When Wheaton returned from the Civil War to set up medical practice in his home, some space had to be renovated to accommodate his practice. When it was set up the way he wanted, one room was reserved for bird cases and a second room for butterflies, beetles, snakes, and other natural history objects. Osman C. Hooper, reminiscing about Wheaton some twenty years after his death, recalled the following:

Dr. Wheaton's private office was a museum, in which at night he often worked late. Sometimes he slept in that back room, after hours of study, with living birds or reptiles as his companions. It is related of him that one night, while sleeping on the office couch, he was awakened by an extraordinary pressure on the bedclothes. Wondering what was the cause of it, he suddenly remembered a box of venomous snakes that had arrived that day from the West. While he slept, the reptiles had escaped and one of them had coiled itself upon him. It was an anxious moment, but he was equal to the emergency. Hastily throwing the covers over the snake upon him, he leaped to the middle of the floor and escaped to the adjoining room. There he secured a light and, returning, captured the snakes and restored them to their box . . .

I have not found much else about Wheaton's interest in reptiles and insects. They were obviously at least secondary to his work with birds. Still, in the collection of the Ohio Historical Society we have not only many of his bird skins, but also two insect nets that he used during his life. When his son donated the bird specimens and other objects a few years after his father's death, Robert commented that he and his mother still retained a butterfly collection at their home. The whereabouts of this collection is unknown.

Wheaton's fascination with insects was carried into his publication in 1875 on the food of birds as related to agriculture. In this paper he not only mentions insects as a source of food for birds, but also notes how many of them also eat other insects. He comments that in fact these “beneficial” insects probably eat more “injurious” insects than birds, so that “the destruction of insects by birds sinks into comparative insignificance.” He further notes with regret that while the state legislators “have shown sufficient zeal in protecting birds” that they needed to set up a State Entomologist, as other states had done by that time.

Wheaton's 1860 *Catalogue of the Birds of Ohio* was published in the same year as his graduation from Denison. This was no small work, and in it he expanded the 222 species of birds from Kirtland's 1838 list with 63 additional records for Ohio. Twenty years later his updated *Report* added only another 13 species.

Despite the obvious effort and attention to detail reflected in the 1860 *Catalogue*, there are some comments that puzzle us today. One wonders if some of these reflect his youthful 20 years, or merely the general attitude of the day. Within the *Catalogue* he comments on the game laws recently (1857) enacted by the Ohio Legislature. These were the first significant game laws in Ohio — preceded only by various wolf bounties,

the famous squirrel scalp tax of 1807 and an 1829 act to prohibit trapping of muskrats between May and October. There was no agency in charge of these laws until 1873; the first part-time wardens started in 1886, and the first full-time wardens not until 1901. Nevertheless, the 1857 laws offered what was then considered sweeping protection for numerous game and non-game animals. Wheaton commented on potential additions to these protections.

The yellow-hammer or flicker may be included and receive protection though its eatable qualities certainly do not rank very high . . . The meadow-lark . . . though not strictly a game bird, is yet quite eatable. The passenger pigeon needs no protection.

The 1882 *Report on the Birds of Ohio* not only added species newly discovered, but revised the nomenclature to reflect current work by national experts, and expanded information on the life history of the birds — based mostly on his own field observations. Elliot Coues, C. Hart Merriam and other nationally known ornithologists praised Wheaton's report for both his thoroughness and the quality of his writing.

Wheaton was one of the founders of the American Ornithologists' Union. In addition to his accomplishments as an ornithologist, he was an esteemed physician and teacher and a dedicated and active member of his church. His influence has carried on after his death, and not just for the important publications on birds and the specimens he left behind. In central Ohio today one of the most noted organizations for both amateur and professional naturalists is the Wheaton Club, named in his honor. The constitution of this club, voted on at its first meeting on 14 February 1922, says that the “object of this club shall be to provide a means for the interchange of ideas among those interested in ornithology and related branches of natural history.” Dues at that time were \$1.00 a year. Ten members were recorded as present at that first meeting, including prominent names in the natural history of Ohio as James Hine, James Hambleton, Robert Gordon, C.F. Walker and Edward S. Thomas. By March, Milton Trautman had also become a member. The Club continues to this day to promote the study of natural history. It serves as a fitting tribute to one of Ohio's noteworthy ornithologists.

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