

IN MEMORIAM: WALTER KENRICK FISHER

BY JOHN DAVIS

WALTER KENRICK FISHER, a Fellow Emeritus of the American Ornithologists' Union, died at Carmel Valley, California, on November 2, 1953. He was born at Ossining, New York, on February 1, 1878, the son of Albert Kenrick and Alwilda (Merritt) Fisher.

Walter Fisher's interest in zoology undoubtedly resulted, in part, from the influence of his father, who was a co-founder of what is now the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and who, for over 46 years, was connected with the various agencies that preceded the establishment of that service. In early boyhood, Fisher became interested in painting and sketching, and for a time he considered becoming an artist. After turning to biology, he combined his skills as an artist and scientist, beautifully illustrating his own scientific papers.

Fisher attended Stanford University, where he received the A.B. in 1901, M.A. in 1903, and Ph.D. in zoology in 1906. While an undergraduate, his scientific interests lay mainly in the field of ornithology. He joined the American Ornithologists' Union as an Associate Member in 1899, and he was elected a Member in 1901, a Fellow in 1905, and a Fellow Emeritus in 1920. He joined the Cooper Ornithological Club in 1900, and served as both President and Vice-President of the Northern Division of that organization. He also served as Associate Editor of the *Condor* in 1901 and 1902, and as Editor from December, 1902, until the end of 1905. He was elected an Honorary Member of the Cooper Ornithological Society in 1952. His skill as an artist was manifested in his design for the cover of the *Condor*, which was used from 1902 through 1946. He also published in the *Condor* for 1901 a series of six cartoons, lampooning such leading ornithological figures of the day as Merriam, Chapman, Dwight, Sage, Deane, A. K. Fisher, Mearns, and others. Younger ornithologists, to whom such names are but legends, will be rewarded by an examination of these cartoons, with their reminder that scientific ornithology was not always the rather humorless pursuit that we know today.

Despite his interest in ornithology, Fisher turned to other fields of biology for his graduate work. He worked briefly in botany, but soon returned to zoology, specializing in invertebrates, especially the echinoderms. He quickly became a leading authority on this group and achieved international recognition as an expert not only on the Echinodermata, but on the Sipunculoidea and Echiuroidea as well. Although the greater part of his published writings deal with invertebrates, Fisher published a number of papers on birds in the *Auk*, the *Condor*, and in various



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(From a kodachrome taken August, 1953 by Dr. A. R. Moore.)

publications of the U. S. Government, and he retained a keen interest in ornithology until his death.

Throughout his academic career, he was associated with Stanford University. He was an assistant in zoology from 1902 to 1905; acting instructor, 1905–1907; instructor, 1907–1909; assistant professor, 1909–1920; associate professor, 1920–1925; and professor of biology, 1925–1943. He was Director of the Hopkins Marine Station (of Stanford University) at Pacific Grove, California, from its establishment in 1917 until his retirement in 1943. Under his administration, there was a great expansion of research program and facilities, leading to the international reputation in marine biology that the Station now enjoys.

After his retirement in 1943, Fisher continued research in invertebrate taxonomy, and he remained active in this field up to the time of his death. During this period, he returned to his first love, painting, and he painted many portraits and still-lives.

In 1922, Fisher married Anne Benson, who became a novelist especially well known for her books about the Monterey region and the Salinas Valley of California. She survives him, as do a sister, a nephew, and a niece.

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