

## IN MEMORIAM: ALFRED M. BAILEY

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IN the death of Alfred Marshall Bailey on 25 February 1978, the American Ornithologists' Union lost one of its longtime Fellows, and ornithology one of its veteran explorers and pioneer popularizers, a leading early photographer and cinematographer. The talents of Alfred Bailey are still reflected today in the excellence of the Denver Museum of Natural History's unique series of "Museum Pictorials" and its habitat exhibits. His many publications include his *magnum opus* with Robert J. Niedrach, "The Birds of Colorado." Yet these are not all of his accomplishments.

Born 18 February 1894 in Iowa City, Iowa, he attended local schools and the University of Iowa. An early interest in taxidermy and his friendship with Homer R. Dill, director of the University of Iowa Museum, led to his first expedition. In 1912–1913, Bailey spent 3 months on Laysan Island, in the Leeward Chain of Hawaii, where the Bureau of Biological Survey (now the Fish and Wildlife Service) sent a party of four to attempt to eliminate the rabbits that were already, early in this century, destroying the vegetation. An exhibit in the Denver Museum developed many years later memorializes the island and its endemic birds, half of which were later to become extinct.

Bailey was curator of birds and mammals at the Louisiana State Museum from 1916 to 1919, and at the Denver Museum from 1921 to 1926, and he was on the staff of the Field Museum of Natural History from 1926 to 1927. He was the first representative of the present United States Fish and Wildlife Service to survey southeastern Alaska from 1919 to 1921. He then became the Director, first of the Chicago Academy of Sciences (1927–1936), and finally the Denver Museum of Natural History (1936–1969). His credo was that fieldwork is the lifeblood of natural history museums, and he himself was a leading fieldman. He traveled over much of the world, including a 3,200-km muleback trip in Ethiopia. A 1,200-km dogsled trip in northern Alaska not only yielded important material at the time, but his training there of both Eskimo and white hunters in the preservation of specimens resulted in an unparalleled wealth of data from a far-northern region over the following years. It is perhaps ironic that this flow of basic data, so valuable now for conservation purposes, was eventually stopped by a Fish and Wildlife Service official on the grounds of "commercialization" in that remote and lonely region. Meanwhile, however, enough information accumulated for a series of papers culminating in Bailey's excellent "Birds of Arctic Alaska."

His Alaskan experience was also written up in popular style in "Fieldwork of a Naturalist." He was one of the early popularizers of ornithology in *Natural History*, *American Forests*, sporting journals, *National Geographic Magazine*, and others, and devoted much of his time in the field to making pictures and films of excellent quality, besides keeping a daily journal. He lectured widely each year and was skilled in enlisting interest and support for natural history museums and field expeditions. The Denver Museum of Natural History was modernized and its halls, exhibits, and study collections greatly expanded under his direction. Recognition to him and his coworkers came from many sides. The A.O.U. met twice in Denver, in 1941 and 1956, an unprecedented occurrence in an eastern-based society that had seldom ventured west even into the Appalachians!



ALFRED M. BAILEY, 1894–1978

(From a photograph taken in 1946)

Bailey joined the Union in 1918, and was elected Elective Member in 1930 and Fellow in 1941. He received the honorary degree of Dr. of Science from Norwich University in 1944, Dr. of Public Service from the University of Denver in 1954, the Regis College Civis Princeps Award in 1967, and the Malcolm Glenn Wyer Award for distinguished service in adult education in 1961. He served on the editorial board of the *Wilson Bulletin* from 1929 to 1932.

Bailey wrote critically on a number of birds, such as *Egretta thula* (1928) and *Pluvialis dominica* (in *Birds of Arctic Alaska*), but he did not claim to be a technical ornithologist or taxonomist. Commonly he sent his more critical specimens to specialists for identification. He did possess, however, a critical eye. One of his favorite stories was of a trip to Durango, Mexico, with Boardman Conover. Their objective was not scientific, but Bailey decided that he ought to take one specimen of each of the common camp birds before leaving. Starting out one morning, he shot several, one of which was badly damaged. He considered discarding it, but decided to prepare it anyway, as he was not sure what it was. This was the bird that led to the description of the Bailey's or Sierra Madre Sparrow as a new genus and species, *Xenospiza baileyi* Bangs!

On this trip, Conover likewise decided that he ought to find out which race of turkey inhabited the region. Accordingly, their host sent his best turkey hunter on in advance. The hunter duly shot a fine gobbler and hen; then, while sitting and waiting for the group to catch up, he went ahead and plucked them! This trip was reported in *The Auk* (1935, 52: 421).

Although Dr. Bailey and his competent coworkers studied birds in various parts of the world, their main contributions were in arctic Alaska and Colorado. His "Birds of Arctic Alaska" (1948) and "The Red Crossbills of Colorado" (1953, Bailey, Niedrach, and A. L. Baily) probably marked his finest contributions to science. But he went on to produce, among other works, the handsome, deluxe 2-volume "Birds of Colorado" (1965), again with the talented Niedrach as coauthor; this remains the most extensive treatment of the birds of any state in the Rocky Mountain-Great Basin region, and is still the standard reference for Colorado birds.

#### SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF A. M. BAILEY

The following among Bailey's 200-plus publications remain of special interest to ornithologists:

- 1928. A study of the Snowy Herons of the United States. *Auk* 45: 430-440.
- 1948. Birds of arctic Alaska. Popular Ser. #8, Colo. Mus. Nat. Hist.
- 1953. The Red Crossbills of Colorado. Mus. Pictorial #9, Den. Mus. Nat. Hist. (With R. J. Niedrach and A. Lang Baily).
- 1954. Canton Island. Mus. Pictorial #10, Den. Mus. Nat. Hist. (R. C. Murphy, R. J. Niedrach, and Bailey).
- 1956. Birds of Midway and Laysan Island. Mus. Pictorial #12, Den. Mus. Nat. Hist.
- 1962. Subantarctic Campbell Island. Proc. #10, Den. Mus. Nat. Hist. (With J. H. Sorensen).
- 1965. Birds of Colorado. 2 vols. Den. Mus. Nat. Hist. (With R. J. Niedrach).
- 1971. Field Work of a Museum Naturalist. Alaska . . . Mus. Pictorial #22, Den. Mus. Nat. Hist.