

## OBITUARY

Edward Sinclair Thomas was born in Woodsfield, Ohio on 22 April 1891 and died of heart failure at his residence in Columbus, Ohio on February 16, 1982, age 90 years. He was the son of Edward Barton and Tempe, *nee* Sinclair, Thomas. Shortly after his birth the family moved to Columbus, Ohio, where he completed his elementary education, and in 1909 he graduated from East High School. Attending The Ohio State University, he received an A.B. in 1913 and an L.L.B. in 1916. Immediately after graduation he began the practice of law in the firm of Williams, Nash, Hays, Thomas, continuing in law until 1931. In 1931 he was appointed Curator of Natural History of the Ohio Archaeological and Historical Society, Columbus, a position which he retained until retirement in 1962.

Thomas as a boy had an unquenchable desire to learn about nature and the natural world, a desire he retained throughout his life. At 30 years of age he was a recognized authority concerning the glacial geology, flora, and fauna of Ohio. He was a natural teacher, ever willing to instruct patiently or answer questions, no matter how trivial these questions were or how young or inexperienced the individual who asked them.

On 5 March 1922, at the request of the managing editor of *The Columbus Dispatch*, Thomas began to write a series of six weekly nature articles. These were so successful that he was requested to continue these articles, which he did until a few months before his death, amassing a total of more than 3,000. It was through these articles, and innumerable public lectures, that he converted obscure scientific facts and concepts into a medium that the general public could understand and appreciate. It was this nature popularizing and educating of several generations of central Ohioans that was one of his major contributions. In 1958 he began writing the text for a weekly cartoon strip entitled *Professor Nature Bug*, which he continued until a few weeks before his death. In 1981, 100 of his *Dispatch* articles were published in a book entitled *In Ohio Woods and Fields*. To the public of central Ohio, Thomas was the ultimate authority on the natural world.

About 50 articles, usually brief, were published in various scientific journals, him as author or co-author. Of these, 16 primarily concerned birds or bird banding, the remainder dealing with reptiles, amphibians, insects (especially Orthoptera), botany, geology, fossils, ecology, conservation, or general distribution of plants or animals.

Thomas was an ardent promoter of and had a devout interest in the preservation and proper development of areas of natural promise. In 1921 he acquired an 80-acre tract of hill country in Hocking County that for many years has been utilized by members of The Ohio State University, primarily for research in microclimatology. The tract is now controlled by the Metropolitan Park Board. Thomas was largely instrumental in acquiring the unique Cedar Bog for the State of Ohio. He assisted in organizing the Ohio Chapter of Nature Conservancy. In 1945 he became Chairman of the Columbus Metropolitan Parks District, a position he held until 1967.

Thomas was a founder or member of several nature and scientific organizations; a past treasurer, president and Honorary Life Member of the Ohio Academy of Science; past president of the Columbus Audubon Society, Wheaton Club, and Kit Kat Club; elective member of The American Ornithologists' Union; fellow, American Association for the Advancement of Science; fellow, Entomological Society of America; member, Wilson Ornithological Society, American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists, Lepidoptera Society, Phi Beta Kappa, Sigma Xi, Sigma Delta Chi, Phi Delta Phi, and Delta Tau Delta. His honors were many, including an Honorary Doctor of Science degree from Capital University, 1944. In 1975 more than 300 acres in Sharon Woods Metropolitan Park were dedicated as the Edward S. Thomas Nature Preserve, and in 1979 the Inland Bird Banding Association honored him as a member for 50 years.

In 1938 he married Marion Louise Washburn, who died in 1979; he is survived by a daughter, Elizabeth Thomas Smith, and two grandchildren.—MILTON B. TRAUTMAN.