



LESTER L. SNYDER, 1894-1968  
(From a photograph taken about 1961)

## IN MEMORIAM: LESTER L. SNYDER

R. CHARLES LONG AND JON C. BARLOW

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Lester Lynne Snyder, the youngest child of John Theodore and Dora B. Snyder (née Miller), was born at Panora, Guthrie Co., Iowa, on 11 July 1894. A Life Fellow of the American Ornithologists' Union, Snyder died, age 74, of a stroke on 26 December 1968, in York Co. Hospital, Newmarket, Ontario.

He attended public school in Panora, then spent 3 years (1909-1912) at Guthrie High School. In his senior year Lester transferred to Mason City High School, and lived with his older sister Aimee. In September 1913 he enrolled in a 4-year liberal arts program at the State University of Iowa in Iowa City. He came under the influence of Professor H. R. Dill and

enrolled in the University's museum training course. He received training in basic museum techniques, ornithology, general zoology, and entomology. He also completed courses in graphic and plastic arts (from the Fine Arts College), technical English (from the College of Engineering), and harmony (from the School of Music), all of which were to prove useful in his professional work in ornithology.

In September 1917, with sufficient course credits for a B.A., he successfully competed for a position as technologist at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) of Zoology in Toronto, Ontario, and thus never officially completed his undergraduate degree. Snyder went to Toronto

on 17 September to join the curatorial staff of three other persons in the Zoology Museum. Thus was initiated his career of 46 years at the ROM, first as technologist in gallery work and then as technologist in ornithology. In September 1935 he was appointed curator of birds, serving in that capacity until his retirement on 30 June 1963. Concurrent with his curatorship, he was assistant director (1938–1949) and associate director (1949–1955) of ROM Zoology, one of five curatorial divisions within the Museum complex.

He married Florence Ethyl Steece of Mason City, Iowa, in Toronto on 2 January 1918. Their one son, Richard Lynne, born 18 February 1927, is at present science librarian at Drexel University, Philadelphia.

Snyder's major contributions to ornithology in Ontario and concomitantly in Canada lay in three areas: (1) He initiated a faunal survey of Ontario that was conducted during most summers until 1952. (2) He developed a magnificent ornithological library as well as the research collections of bird specimens (and in part those of mammals) at the ROM. During his tenure the collection increased from 5,000 to approximately 100,000 skins, eggs, and nests. (3) He actively encouraged the study of birds by individuals and groups.

He had special insight concerning the responsibilities of the museum ornithologist for exhibition, teaching, and scientific investigations. He led numerous field expeditions to diverse parts of Ontario, from Point Pelee and Long Point on Lake Erie north to Fort Severn on Hudson Bay. These field ventures produced data and specimens for exhibits, especially habitat groups, and representative samples of bird species such as Ruffed Grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*), Sharp-tailed Grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus*), Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*), and Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*) for taxonomic and biogeographic studies.

Snyder was responsible for the first dioramas in ROM history, and played the central conceptual as well as an artistic role. Today none of these displays survives in the much altered and expanded museum, but the guiding principles enshrined by Snyder still have currency.

The thousands of research specimens acquired during the surveys provided material for two important books: "Ontario Birds" (1951), chosen as the book of the year by the *Toronto*

*Daily Star*, and "Arctic Birds of Canada" (1957). One substantial disappointment was his inability to complete the 1,000-page typescript account of the distributional and taxonomic aspects of Ontario avifauna. Tentatively titled "Ontario ornithological manual," he began this work in 1956 and continued it in the bird department for two years after retirement.

In addition to faunal surveys in Ontario, Snyder was instrumental in enlarging the Museum's holdings in other ways. Through his encouragement the private collections of J. H. Fleming (32,267 specimens of worldwide origin), J. A. Munro (8,461), and Hoyes Lloyd (4,726) were donated to the ROM. The Fleming material included 80% of the world's species as recognized in 1940 and representatives of all families of birds except Atrichornithidae. The collections of Munro and Lloyd greatly enriched species representation from across Canada and selected parts of the United States.

Snyder published 183 papers, including species lists from his many field surveys, records of unusual birds, taxonomic reviews of bird species, popular papers for naturalists, and 23 about mammals. He chronicled the history of the two recognized song types of the *Empidonax alnorum/traillii* complex, noting the arrival of "fitzbeu" near Toronto in 1950 with its trenchant differences in nest construction, habitat, plumage, and mensural characters and paving the way for R. C. Stein's subsequent studies.

In founding the Brodie Club in 1921, which continues as the senior natural science organization in Ontario, Snyder noted that the meetings were "... for the purpose of studying natural history, and at the same time to have a sociable evening together." He had a hand in establishing the Toronto Field Naturalists (1923) and the Federation of Ontario Naturalists (1931), which he served as a director until 1947.

L. L. Snyder joined the A.O.U. in 1919 but did not attend an annual meeting until 1924. He was elected a Member in 1929, the year he gave his first paper in Philadelphia. Snyder became a part of the Canadian inner circle of the A.O.U., known as the Appleton Club, with Hoyes Lloyd, J. H. Fleming, P. A. Taverner, and W. E. Saunders. Association with these men facilitated his appointment to a number of committees and his election to Council in 1951–1953 and 1959–1961. He served on the local committee for the three Toronto A.O.U. meet-

ings in 1935, 1947, and 1967. He was chairman of the Snowy Owl committee from its inception in 1938, reporting in the *Wilson Bulletin* in 1943, 1947, and 1949 on the periodic southern invasions. In 1947, in recognition of his contributions to Ontario ornithology and his seminal role in the development of the ROM bird collection, he was elected a Fellow.

He was active in the Ontario Research Council's Wildlife Advisory Committee, the committee of 100 of the International Ornithological Congress, and the General Committee of Toronto City Council for the establishment of

zoological, botanical, and horticultural facilities in that city.

Snyder retired in 1963. Apart from participation in the local committee for the 1967 A.O.U. meeting, he ceased all formal scientific activity in 1965. Returning to his rural home near Pottageville, Ontario, he contented himself with his lovely wife and a home-based chickadee study until the end.

EDITOR'S NOTE

R. Charles Long died on 1 April 1986.

## IN MEMORIAM: FINN SALOMONSEN, 1909–1983

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Finn Salomonsen, Corresponding Fellow of the American Ornithologists' Union, died suddenly on 23 April 1983. He was best known in North America for his contributions to Greenland ornithology. His association with the people and birds of that vast island began when Finn was 16 years old when he accompanied Lehn Schioler to the Upernavik District.

Finn Salomonsen's ornithological interests resulted in over 200 scientific publications, and authorship or co-authorship of 19 books. Besides Greenland and the Arctic, he made expeditions to the Philippines (1951–1952) and to the Bismarck Archipelago, New Guinea (1962).

Finn played an active role in affairs of the International Committee for Bird Preservation, the World Wildlife Fund, and the International Ornithological Congresses. He was an honorary member of half a dozen foreign ornitho-

logical societies. He was President of the Danish Ornithological Society for 12 years (1959–1971) and Editor of its journal from 1942 to 1961. He joined the Zoological Museum in Copenhagen in 1943 as an assistant responsible for the bird collections, in 1952 he became curator, and in 1958 chief curator, a position he held until his retirement in 1978.

Finn's greatest contribution may have been as a result of his dedication to the well-being of the people and avifauna of Greenland, his unique banding scheme, and in 1977 the passage of a bird hunting law to help control excessive hunting in a traditional hunting culture.

A more complete statement of Finn Salomonsen appeared in *Ibis* 127: 391–393 (1985). This brief statement does not do justice to the man or his contributions.