

## IN MEMORIAM: FRANK B. SMITHE (1892–1989)

DEAN AMADON

*American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street,  
New York, New York 10024 USA*

Frank B. Smithe, a Member of the A.O.U. since 1949 and an Elective Member since 1970, died of old age at 96 on 15 January 1989. A life-long resident of New York City, Smithe was born as Frank Bertram Schmidt on 6 November 1892. He graduated from Columbia University in 1914 with a degree in mechanical engineering and for many years was active in the family business, F. L. Smithe Machine Company, which manufactured machines for making envelopes.

An interest in archaeology took him to the Mayan ruins at Tikal, Guatemala. Here his attention gradually shifted to ornithology. In 1963 he published with R. A. Paynter of Harvard University an account of the specimens he had collected in the area (*Bull. Mus. Comp. Zool.* 128: 245–324). This was followed in 1966 by "Birds of Tikal," published by Natural History Press and subsidized by the author. It contains color plates by Wayne Trimm and a photograph of Frank, working at his preparation table with his local assistant. Smithe had his book translated into Spanish and provided free copies to agencies in Central America. He then made the plates available for the "Birds of Guatemala" by

the late Hugh Land (1970) and helped finance that work.

Like so many others, Smithe encountered difficulties in describing colors of birds. When he proposed a color guide, I warned of the pitfalls, but he proceeded with his customary thoroughness. The resulting product, "Naturalist's Color Guide," with "Supplement," was published by the American Museum of Natural History in 1974. Each color is accompanied by specifications in the Munsell Color System, with cross-references to the Hamly and Vallalobos systems and to the terminology in Robert Ridgway's "Nomenclature of Colors." These enable each shade of color to be exactly defined.

Smithe was deeply concerned with habitat preservation and conservation. He joined the A.O.U. in 1949 and became an Elective Member in 1970. He served as Treasurer of the Pan-American section of the I.C.B.P. and as an active and generous member of the board of directors of the John Burroughs Association. As was said of Oliver Goldsmith, Frank Smithe graced everything he touched.