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IN MEMORIAM: MILTON BERNHARD TRAUTMAN, 1899-1991

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MILTON BERNHARD TRAUTMAN, 1899-1991

(Photograph taken in 1968)

Milton Bernhard Trautman was born on 7 September 1899 in Columbus, Ohio, and died in that city on 31 January 1991. It will surprise some people to learn that Milt Trautman was an ornithologist, for in some scientific circles he is remembered as an ichthyologist, whose name is immortalized in the name of a species of fish he discovered, the Sciota Madtom (*No-turus trautmani*). His classic *The Fishes of Ohio* (1957, revised 1981, Ohio State Univ. Press, Columbus) has been called an indispensable reference for anyone studying the freshwater fishes of North America. His fame is wider for his work on fishes than for his contributions on birds, but he was an important figure in ornithology. Of his more than 150 published papers,

two-thirds are about birds. His most important work was the monumental *Birds of Buckeye Lake* (1940, Univ. Michigan Press, Ann Arbor), which James L. Peters described as the most comprehensive study of the bird life of a limited area in the United States. This book is much more than its title promises. It offers not just the usual report on local birds but a detailed account of the natural history of a region from glacial times to the present.

For decades, Milt Trautman was the authority on the distribution of the birds of Ohio; he published state lists in 1932 and 1935, and, with his wife Mary, the "Annotated List of the Birds of Ohio" (*Ohio J. Sci.* 68:257-332) in 1968. His interests in bird distribution, ecological rela-

tionships, and changes through history were all revealed in his *The Ohio Country from 1750 to 1977—A Naturalist's View* (1977, Ohio Biol. Surv. Notes No. 10, Ohio State Univ., Columbus). He served as treasurer of the Wilson Ornithological Society from 1943 to 1945.

Milt's fascination with nature appeared early in life. He told me that he was five years old and recovering from whooping cough when his family took him to recuperate on Lake St. Clair. There, sitting on the dock, he saw fish swimming in the clear water. He was enthralled and could not be drawn away until provided with fishing equipment so he could transfer some of the fish to his bathtub. This interest never abated, and he continued to seine local streams and ponds for fish in spite of chronic poor health. His illness forced him to leave high school after his second year, and it continued to trouble him until a Meckel's diverticulum was corrected by abdominal surgery in 1930. In spite of this handicap, he worked in his father's plumbing business and became quite skilled, qualifying as a master plumber. His health promptly improved, but physicians advised him he could not continue to work night and day at two occupations, but should choose one. He chose biology. Already he was doing work that would have been a credit to a graduate student.

Milt joined the Ohio Department of Conservation in 1930 as a fish biologist. In 1934 he moved to the Museum of Zoology at the University of Michigan, working with both fish and birds. He accompanied the distinguished ornithologist Josselyn Van Tyne on a collecting expedition to Yucatan in 1936. He returned to Ohio in 1939, where he remained at Ohio State University's Stone Institute of Hydrobiology at Put-in-Bay for 16 years. In 1955 he transferred to the main campus at Columbus, where he was a lecturer and curator of vertebrate collections. He was named professor in 1969 and professor emeritus in 1972. Officially, he retired in 1970, but that event brought little change in his life. He and his wife continued working in the museum without pay. He described himself as a "compulsive worker."

He spent three summers in Alaska during 1959, 1961, and 1965, first with the U.S. Bureau of Commercial Fisheries and then with the University's Institute of Polar Studies. There he became interested in the relation of the Alaskan brown bear and salmon.

He was a naturalist of the old school. Most

of his evidence came from specimens and field observation. When he heard of an interesting bird, he reached for his shotgun. Personally, he added 2,757 bird specimens to the Ohio State University collection in addition to many he gave to the University of Michigan. His curiosity extended to everything in nature—mammals, reptiles, insects, and plants.

Unconfined by the usual occupational and family obligations throughout much of his life (he was a bachelor until past 40), he had exceptional freedom to follow his own inclinations. Later, he had a wife to help. His friends used to joke that he did his best work on fishes when he was supposed to be working on birds, and his best work on birds when he was supposed to be working on fishes. While at the University of Michigan, he lived in a cabin on Whitmore Lake, north of Ann Arbor. Of course, he fished the lake diligently and came up with a detailed publication of a five-year study of the relation between predator and prey species.

When we try to account for Milt Trautman's accomplishments in spite of handicaps, and especially his earning an honored place among his academic colleagues without educational credentials, we think first of his driving enthusiasm. He threw himself into every subject with total dedication. He radiated zest for his work. Every friend will recall his voice rising an octave in pitch as he discoursed on the topic of the moment. He had a theory to explain every mystery.

His enthusiasm provided the fuel for his dogged persistence. In pursuit of his goals, he was tireless. Although slight of stature, he was wiry and relentless in the field, tramping the woods by day and seining the waters by night, while younger companions marveled. His journal, begun in childhood, contained, some say, 30,000 pages, and it now reposes in the Ohio State University Special Collections.

Milt's attention to detail was phenomenal. He carefully recorded facts other people dismissed as unimportant, as indeed many of them were. He noted how many dots he used in stippling the scales of fishes in his illustrations. He counted the dots in his range maps. He noted how many strokes of his bicycle pedals it required to go to work under different wind conditions. He measured the growth of his daughter in millimeters. No illustrator could draw pictures of fish in sufficient detail, and so he drew his own, based on thousands of measurements.

It is common to refer to Trautman as self-taught, because he had little classroom education, but this is misleading. He received tutelage from scientists of the highest order. He assisted Josselyn Van Tyne in bird work, and Van Tyne was a paragon of scholarship and meticulous procedures. He worked with Carl Hubbs, a giant among fish scholars. His constant field companions from youth were distinguished naturalists and scientists in various fields who were also experts on birds. These included Edward S. Thomas, a naturalist who specialized in insects, and Charles Walker, an authority on amphibians. His tutors in ichthyology were numerous—at Columbus, Ann Arbor, and at Put-in-Bay.

He displayed an active mind in everything he did. His manner with associates was jocular and his sense of humor, whimsical. Astonishingly, he was a competent pianist. Where did he find the time?

Milt had been labeled a confirmed bachelor until he met Mary Auten. With a Ph.D. in entomology, she was teaching biology at Ashland College. There she had directed a class to collect fishes from local streams and to preserve the specimens. For help in identification, she needed Milt, the expert. He was amazed at the elegant display. Here he had found someone as precise as he. Within a year they were married. They remained almost inseparable until her death in 1986. She participated in all his work. Their one child, Beth (Elizabeth Mary), was born in 1943, and is now Mrs. R. H. Rudolph of Bellevue, Washington.

I am grateful for personal reminiscences and reading of this manuscript by Louis W. Campbell of Toledo, Ohio, and Ronald L. Stuckey, a longtime associate of Trautman at Ohio State University, who shared his memories and voluminous files at the University.

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IN MEMORIAM: BERNHARD RENSCH, 1900–1990

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Bernhard Rensch, a Corresponding Fellow of the AOU since 1932 and an Honorary Fellow since 1975, died on 4 April 1990, two months after his 90th birthday (21 January). Internationally celebrated as one of the architects of the evolutionary synthesis and for his many contributions to allometry, learning and memory in animals, climatic rules, the evolution of man, and the philosophy of biology, Rensch also made numerous contributions to ornithology. As a student, he experimentally tested the tolerance of birds to incubate eggs, the appearance of which had been altered in various ways. Species that accepted cuckoo eggs were more tolerant of artificial manipulations than those that normally rejected them. His Ph.D. thesis dealt with feather structure (*J. Ornithol.* 71:269–276, 1923).

In 1925 Rensch joined the Berlin Zoologische Museum and two years later undertook a very successful expedition to the then poorly known Lesser Sunda Islands (Lombok, Sumbawa and Flores). He expanded the zoogeographic results

into a major book on the history of the Sunda shelf and the significance of Wallace's Line. In 1929 he published his classic on species and speciation (*Das Prinzip geographischer Rassenkreise und das Problem der Artbildung*, Borntraeger Verl., Berlin) in which he proposed many ideas that later were to become the basic principles of the new systematics. At this period he published numerous ornithological papers and participated in the pre-war International Ornithological Congresses.

When the Nazis came to power, Rensch was dismissed by the Berlin Museum because he refused to join the Nazi party. He found a position at the Zoological Garden in Münster and after the war became a professor of zoology at the University of Münster. He was a very successful teacher and remained scientifically active until his 90th year. Rensch published an autobiography: *Lebensweg eines Biologen in einem turbulenten Jahrhundert* (1979). A short memorial was published in *Verh. Dtsch. Zool. Ges.* 83:673–675 (1990).