



## *In Memoriam*

*The Auk* 111(4):991-993, 1994

### IN MEMORIAM: BEN B. COFFEY, JR., 1904-1993

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**BEN B. COFFEY, JR., 1904-1993, AND LULA E. COFFEY**

Ben B. Coffey, Jr., a member of the AOU since 1929, an Elective Member since 1950, and a Fellow since 1991, died in Memphis, Tennessee, 22 August 1993. He was 89. Born 28 April 1904, and raised in Nashville, Tennessee, Ben attended Vanderbilt University and Armour (now Illinois) Institute of Technology, and was employed by the Tennessee Inspection Bureau as a fire protection and rating engineer.

Ben became interested in birds as a Boy Scout working on Bird Study merit badge. He earned Scouting's highest rank, Eagle, and remained active in Scouting as a scoutmaster and volunteer. For his contributions as an adult leader, Ben was given Scouting's highest recognition in 1934, the Silver Beaver Award.

In 1928 Ben was transferred to Memphis, where he met and, in 1930, married Lula Evelyn Cooper. Lula always shared Ben's interests and enthusiasm for birds and bird study and was his constant collaborator in ornithological endeavors. Their home in Memphis, labeled with a sign as "Coffey Grounds," was a long-term banding station and meeting place for birders. The attractions of "Coffey Grounds" included not only the companionship and combined knowledge of the Coffeys, but also an incredible library and file of regional records, which Ben was always eager to share. When I first arrived at Mississippi State University in 1970, among the first to welcome me to the area was Ben Coffey who sent me copies of important regional publications and offered assistance in whatever field endeavors I might have. Over the years he regularly sent reprints, journals, books, data, and critiques that have benefited me and my students.

Through scouting Ben brought dozens of young men into both professional and amateur ornithology. He shared with his scouts his field studies of herons and egrets in the Mississippi Delta and the phenomenal effort that resulted in banding of more than 113,000 Chimney Swifts, a contribution that greatly increased our understanding of the species' migratory behavior. When 13 banded Chimney Swifts were found on their South American wintering area, 5 were ones banded by Ben and Lula Coffey.

Bird distribution patterns and the phenology of migration and nesting in the mid-South were life-long focal points of Ben's interests and contributions. Before there was a Mississippi Ornithological Society or an Arkansas Audubon Society, Ben nurtured growing interests in the

birds of the mid-South. One of Ben's greatest assets, with which he continually served scientific ornithology, was his ability to focus the efforts of others into meaningful data collection. Ben was always ready to assist, and to recruit others to assist, with major efforts that could further our understanding of birds, such as George Lowery's studies of nocturnal migration. He kept detailed records and inspired others to do the same. From 1952 to 1956 Ben wrote, mimeographed, and distributed "Mid-South Bird Notes," soliciting information from birders throughout the region. These were reissued in 1981, along with biographic information, as Special Publication No. 1 of the Mississippi Ornithological Society. Ben's and Lula's efforts in the region resulted in well over a hundred publications in journals such as the *Auk*, *Wilson Bulletin*, *Bird-Banding*, and the *Migrant*. Long-term studies of distributional changes in mid-South caprimulgids by the Coffeys are detailed in regional reports in *Audubon Field Notes* and *American Birds*. Ben and Lula ran countless Breeding Bird Surveys. Through 1991, he organized and had taken part in 232 Christmas Bird Counts—including one centered on the Mississippi town of "Rara Avis," which earned commentary in national media.

Ben was intimately involved in many ornithological and conservation organizations other than the AOU and was a life member of most. He joined the Wilson Ornithological Society in 1927 and was also a long-time member of the Inland and Northeastern bird banding associations, the Nature Conservancy, and Wilderness Society. Ben helped organize the Memphis Chapter of the Tennessee Ornithological Society. He served as its President, and later as President of the state organization and as Editor of the *Migrant*. The Coffeys' support of regional organizations continues, for example, through an endowment to support publication of the *Mississippi Kite*.

Beginning in 1946, Ben and Lula took their annual vacations to bird in Mexico. Without the benefit of field guides, they learned the birds through use of the collections at Louisiana State—a connection made through former Boy Scouts. The Coffeys in turn provided the growing Louisiana State museum with a wealth of data. In 1964 Ben began recording the songs of tropical birds. The trips to Mexico continued, and following Ben's retirement in 1969, the trips increased and expanded to include Colombia,

Ecuador, Peru, and other areas. These efforts resulted in the publication of several tapes produced in collaboration with J. W. Hardy. Ben and Lula became Field Associates in Ornithology and Bioacoustics at the Florida Museum of Natural History at the University of Florida, where many of Ben's tapes now constitute the Coffey Neotropical Collection in the Museum archives. As a tribute to Ben and Lula, the Arkansas Audubon Society paid for publication of "Cantos de Aves Mexicanos," a tape, narrated in Spanish, including 60 species recorded by the Coffeys. These tapes were sent to ornithologists and schools throughout Mexico to increase awareness and interest in Mexican birds.

Ben Coffey will be remembered for many contributions and in many arenas. No better

example could be found than the life of Ben B. Coffey, Jr., to illustrate the significance of the contributions of amateurs to scientific ornithology. My choice of words here is deliberate. Ben Coffey was an amateur in the sense that he was not trained as an ornithologist in an academic setting, and he was not paid for his work as an ornithologist. However, the quality of his scientific contributions, as reflected by his election as a Fellow of the AOU in 1991, meets a standard that few professionals achieve. While there is no question that the value of Ben's scientific contributions will endure, the greatest legacies that Ben leaves us are the ways in which he, through birds, influenced the lives of those around him.

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*The Auk* 111(4):993-995, 1994

## IN MEMORIAM: FRANÇOIS BOURLIÈRE, 1913-1993

### FRANÇOIS VUILLEUMIER

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François Bourlière, a Corresponding Fellow of the AOU since 1954, died suddenly in Boulogne, France, on 10 November 1993. He is survived by his wife, two sons, one daughter, and eight grandchildren. With his passing the French and international scientific communities have lost a remarkable scientist who pursued two careers simultaneously. He was one of the most influential French ecologists and one of the best-known French gerontologists of the second half of this century.

Born 21 December 1913 in Roanne (Loire, France), François Marie Gabriel Bourlière studied medicine at the University of Paris, where he obtained his Doctorate in 1940 and his Agrégation in 1949. After being Professor of Physiology at Rouen's School of Medicine (1946-1949), he moved to the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Paris, where he became Maître de Conférences (Assistant Professor; 1949-1959), then Full Professor (1959-1968) of Experimental Medicine, and Professor of Gerontology (1969-1983). Concurrently, he taught mammalian ecology as Chargé de Cours (Adjunct Professor) at the Faculty of Sciences of the Uni-

versity of Paris (1962-1980). In addition, Bourlière founded in 1972 and directed until 1983 the Gerontology Research Unit (U 118) of INSERM (Institute of Health and Medical Research), and was a staff member of the Paris Hospitals (1963-1983). As a practicing gerontologist who taught and headed an important research institute, Bourlière published numerous articles and wrote or edited several books, including *Précis de gérontologie* (1955, Russian translation 1960), *Sénescence et sénilité* (1958, Russian translation 1962), *Progrès en Gérontologie* (1969), and *Gérontologie: Biologie et clinique* (1982). He was coeditor of the journal *Gerontologia* from 1957 to 1970, and editor-in-chief of *Gerontology* from 1971 to 1983.

If Bourlière had been only a gerontologist with an international reputation, his career would have been considered successful enough. However, he was also an ornithologist, a mammalogist, and an ecologist who pursued his hobby, as he called his nonmedical career, just as vigorously. During his parallel career he was editor-in-chief of *Revue d'Ecologie* (formerly *La Terre et la Vie*) from 1949 until his death, and