

RUSSELL W. HENDEE

WITH ONE ILLUSTRATION

By ALFRED M. BAILEY

Russell W. Hendee, an active member of the Cooper Ornithological Club since 1923, and for the past ten years a skilled field naturalist, died in a French hospital in Viene-tiane, Indo-China, from a virulent form of malarial fever, while serving as mammalogist of the Kelley-Roosevelt Expedition of the Field Museum. By his untimely death, the scientific world lost one of its most promising young naturalists. He had traveled and collected extensively in three continents and he had gained a wide knowledge of the animal life of these remote places.

He was born February 5, 1899, in Schuyler, Nebraska, the son of Elizabeth Russell and Reverend Alvin M. Hendee of Hansen, Nebraska. His education began in the public schools of Sumner and Hopkinton, Iowa; he also attended Lenox Academy in Hopkinton, and graduated from the Academy of the University of Dubuque, in Dubuque, Iowa, in 1917. In 1921, he received his Bachelor of Arts degree *in absentia* from the State University of Iowa.

While in the University of Iowa, he specialized in zoology and museum training under Professor H. R. Dill, and accompanied one university expedition to the mountains of Washington to collect zoological specimens. He became proficient in preparing specimens for exhibition, but his love of the outdoors, and his ability as a writer and observer fitted him for the life of a field naturalist rather than that of a laboratory man.

In June, 1921, Mr. Hendee and the writer sailed from Seattle for Arctic Alaska on an expedition for the Colorado Museum of Natural History. We reached Nome late in June and worked the tundras of that vicinity until early July, and then set sail on the old coast guard cutter "Bear" for the islands of Bering Sea and the eastern shores of Siberia. Collections were made on King and St. Lawrence islands, and Hendee remained on St. Lawrence Island for one week, while the "Bear" cruised Providence Bay. Early in his collecting career, Hendee proved his resourcefulness and ability as a student, naturalist, and out-of-doors man. The opportunity to work the islands of Bering Sea had been unexpected, and as our camp equipment had been sent on a schooner to another port, our outfit for working St. Lawrence Island was utterly inadequate. Hendee asked to be allowed to work with the island natives, even though blankets could not be spared from among the ship's stores. He solved these sleeping difficulties by resting a few hours when the sun was at its highest, and spending the cold hours of the day in hunting and preparing his specimens.

Later, in the winter, while hunting caribou ten days' journey inland from the Arctic coast near the northern base of the Endicott Mountains, he was overtaken by darkness while many miles from camp. He had just killed a big bull caribou, and realizing that it would be impossible to find his way over the flat tundra with its many snow-drifted coulees, he skinned out his animal and rolled up in the hide, with the intention of spending the night. After he had been resting a few hours, the moon came up above the horizon, and he then backtracked for ten miles across the wind-blown waste to his camp. He related with amusement how he had found his badly frightened old Eskimo companion, Kogmuk, sitting with a lantern on the highest knoll, awaiting his return, and how relieved the old fellow was when he heard Hendee's footsteps.

Winter headquarters were made at the little Eskimo village of Elronik, known on the map as Wainwright. This is about one hundred miles down the coast from Point Barrow. We spent the fall and winter collecting in that vicinity, with the Eskimos and one other white man, James Allen; and then in the spring, while the writer dropped down the coast to Cape Prince of Wales, Hendee worked with Allen



Fig. 50. RUSSELL W. HENDEE; WAINWRIGHT, ARCTIC ALASKA, NOVEMBER, 1922.

far out on the ice floes, making notes on the off-shore migration of birds and sea mammals, and collecting series of rare sea birds. The white men, with their Eskimo crews, pitched camp at the edge of the flaw and hunted the great bowhead whales. (The accounts of his observations on birds were included in one general report, and

were published by the writer in the *Condor*, xxvii, 1925, pp. 20, 62, 101, 164, 197 and 232, and xxviii, 1926, pp. 31, 84, 121 and 165.) The following summer when the ice receded from the coast, he loaded all his specimens on the "Bear", and after again being given the opportunity to work on King Island and at Dutch Harbor, he returned to Seattle.

During the next four years, Hendee was associated with the Colorado Museum of Natural History, and was given many opportunities to become familiar with the animal life of Colorado. With various members of the staff of the Museum, and with W. C. Bradbury, the well-known oologist and former member of the Cooper Club, he covered the state from the highest peaks to the lowest prairies, and as the work of the museum covers all fields, he gained a wide knowledge of field work and museum preparation.

His experience in the Arctic and in Colorado fitted him for the leadership of important museum trips, and in April, 1925, he sailed from New York for Peru to collect mammals for the British Museum. While his efforts were directed toward securing the varied mammals of Peru, his notebooks were filled with interesting data on the habits of the birds of the different zones of that mountainous country. Hendee was a tireless worker, and fearless in the extreme. He was always thoughtful of the people about him, of a quiet temperament; and as he adapted himself to all conditions, he was very successful in his pursuits. He was an adept at languages. In the Arctic he picked up a surprising command of the Eskimo tongue in a winter and two summers among the natives, and in South America he quickly learned Spanish. I am told that he was able to converse in French, at the time of his death, even though he had been in Indo-China but a few months. While it is true that he learned languages quickly and was skilled in writing, he did so because he had learned to apply himself. He never allowed physical discomforts to interfere with any of his plans, and he never complained when difficulties were to be overcome. In Peru, he was often in out-of-the-way places with but a single native companion, and although working under the greatest difficulties, he carried his three years' program to a successful conclusion.

Even in early life, he showed strong will power. As a youngster in Iowa when about twelve years of age, he lost his footing along a precipitous wall and fell upon a mass of rocks. At supper that evening he was very quiet, and retired to bed early. The next day he was unusually quiet and his mother questioned him. She found he had a broken collar bone. These qualities of grit and dogged determination were reflected in his work in after life. He was not powerful physically, but he was able to do more work than most men of superior strength.

His work in Peru was especially successful, and Oldfield Thomas characterized him as being the most skillful field man he had ever employed. He collected many new species of mammals, and one new genus, in regions which had been searched by other mammalogists, including such well known collectors as Dr. W. H. Osgood and Mr. Edmund Heller.

After his return from South America, Hendee served temporarily on the staff of the Record Press of Marlborough, and as the editor of the *Highland Post* of Highland, New York, and then, in the autumn of 1928, he joined the staff of the Field Museum and sailed with four companions for Indo-China. Mr. Harold Coolidge, one of his companions, states that on May 14, Hendee left the members of the expedition who had been working together, and began the twenty-day journey to Hue and three days to Saigon where he was to join the Roosevelts on the other section of the expedition.

For eight days he traveled down the river in a convoy of seven medium-sized native canoes. There were numerous rapids, and at one place a canoe capsized, but everything was eventually saved. Hendee arrived in Luang Prabang in good health, and the fifty boxes he had with him were safe. The canoe that capsized contained his own personal effects.

Hendee spent a few days at Luang Prabang and then continued his journey down the Mekong River on a large raft. Sharing his raft with him was a French school inspector who reported that Hendee was well when they left Luang Prabang, and that he had his first fever on the 27th. He grew worse and the raft was hurried as fast as possible to Viene-tiane, which place they reached on the night of June 3. Early in the morning of June 6, he seemed to be resting quietly, but at 11:00 o'clock the doctor was called hurriedly and he found that there had been a violent cerebral attack (sometimes characteristic of the typho-malarial fever which he had) and that this had resulted in probably instantaneous death.

The funeral was held in a small bamboo shelter, and the services were read by the Reverend M. Roffe, a young Canadian pastor who was doing missionary work under the Interdenominational Missionary Alliance. It was attended by the other members of the expedition, by the Governor of the Province, the French government officials, and a delegation of two hundred school children. The King of Luang Prabang, in recognition of the scientific work accomplished by Hendee in his kingdom of Laos, made him, posthumously, a Chevalier of his Royal Order.

The body was cremated, and the ashes, accompanied by Mr. Coolidge, arrived in Schuyler, Nebraska. Burial services were conducted here, with interment in Schuyler cemetery where rest the remains of the father and a sister.

While in Peru, Hendee became engaged to Miss Edelmira Diaz, a director of the schools of that country. It was impossible for Miss Diaz to accompany Hendee on his long zoological exploration trip down the eastern slope of the Andes, to the headwaters of the Amazon, so it was arranged that she should join him in New York. In order that there should be no difficulty, a marriage ceremony was performed in February, 1929, in Iquitos, Peru, in which an uncle of the bride legally represented Hendee. Mrs. Hendee left at once for the United States, with the expectation of meeting her husband in London, and since early in April, had been making her home with her husband's mother in Brooklyn, New York.

Surviving Hendee are his bride, his mother, Mrs. Elizabeth R. Hendee of Brooklyn, New York, and his sister, Mrs. Elizabeth H. Plank of Marlborough, New York.

Hendee was taken from his work before he was able to put the results in writing, so his publications are few. His well-filled notebooks are stored with information on the plants, animals, and people of different lands, but he did not have time to compile the notes in manuscript form. That he was a writer of ability is proven by the fact that the Atlantic Monthly had contracted for a series of articles on his work in Peru and Alaska, and the few stories which were completed are now awaiting publication.

In addition to the notes of Hendee, which were included in the report of the Alaskan expedition mentioned above, he was joint author with the writer of "Notes on the Mammals of Northwestern Alaska," published in the Journal of Mammalogy, (vii, 1926, pp. 9-28). His report on an expedition for the Colorado Museum of Natural History in northwestern Colorado, "Notes on Birds Observed in Moffat County, Colorado," was published in the Condor (xxxI, 1929, pp. 24-32).

Russell Hendee accomplished more in his short span of life than most men who live their allotted time. He was always conscientious and considerate, and I can think of no better eulogy than the words of an Eskimo of the little village along the Arctic coast where Hendee carried on his first extensive field work. The grizzled old native had come in contact with many types of people, and his short description is one worth while. He said, "What Hendee says—he does."

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