

NOTES AND NEWS

Herbert Newby McCoy was born in Richmond, Indiana, June 29, 1870, and died in Los Angeles, California, May 7, 1945. He was the son of James Washington McCoy, a Civil War veteran, of old Presbyterian stock, and Sarah Newby, of a North Carolina Quaker family. The early death of his father left young Herbert, his mother and younger brother facing a hard struggle for existence. It is probable that the energy and self-reliance acquired through early economic necessity were potent factors in the brilliant success of his later career.

McCoy's first scientific interest was biology—particularly ornithology—and his intention was to study zoology under David Starr Jordan at



Fig. 32. Herbert N. McCoy, 1870-1945.

Indiana University. However, when Jordan moved to Stanford University, McCoy changed his plans and began the study of chemistry. By taking special examinations he was permitted to enter Purdue University as a sophomore in the autumn of 1889. He received his S.B. in 1892 and M.S. in 1893.

While working as a chemist for Swift and Company, and later as instructor at Fargo College, North Dakota, he prepared for further graduate work. In 1895 he went to the University of Chicago, and he received his Doctor's degree there in 1898. During the following years his outstanding work in scientific and commercial chemistry became well known in the chemical world and resulted in the publication of forty or more papers on organic amalgams, radio-activity and other specialized subjects. In 1937 he was the recipient of the Willard Gibbs Medal, the highest American honor for chemical research. More extended accounts of his life and accomplishments may be found in chemical publications (*Indust. and Engin. Chem.*, 13(13), 1935:280; *Chem. Bull.*, 24(5), 1937:171-174).

In 1922 McCoy married Dr. Ethel M. Terry, Associate Professor of Chemistry at the University of Chicago, with whom he had cooperated in writing a text-book on general chemistry, and who survives him.

My first acquaintance with Herbert McCoy came in July, 1928, when he called at my office and introduced himself as a retired chemist, recently moved from Chicago to Los Angeles, and interested in birds. He mentioned his acquaintance with various eastern ornithologists and told of trips made to Florida, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Panama and other regions, where he had studied the native bird-life. Impressed by his very pleasing personality and keen interest in birds, I was happy to submit his application for membership in the Cooper Club. Some time later, while McCoy's guest at a luncheon meeting of the American Chemical Society, I was impressed by the deference shown him by well-known visiting chemists, and I began to realize his standing in his profession.

As our friendship deepened, the McCoy's and the Willetts shared frequent camping trips to near-by desert and mountains. McCoy joined with enthusiasm in the collecting and studying of birds and mammals, and in the evening bridge games which often followed. In 1932, we were invited to accompany the McCoy's on a collecting trip to Guatemala. The ensuing expedition resulted in as pleasant an experience as any naturalist could wish for and in a fine collection of birds which was presented to the Los Angeles Museum. Our happy excursions together continued until the beginning of World War II and will remain among my most cherished recollections.

In the meantime, McCoy kept up his chemical research in a laboratory at his home, devoting much of his time to the study of rare earths

and their properties. Early in 1942 he was called back to the University of Chicago by the National Defense Research Committee to assist in the solution of problems important to the war effort. The success of his part in this project afforded him great satisfaction, but it is probable that the extended period of concentrated effort was detrimental to his health, as shortly after returning to California he suffered a stroke from which he never fully recovered.

Herbert McCoy's interest in the Cooper Ornithological Club was a sincere one. He did much for the organization and greatly valued his many friendships among its members. He served as President of the Southern Division in 1938 and was a member of the Board of Governors.

Modesty and generosity were among his most prominent characteristics. Many of the world's greatest scientists were his personal friends, but prominence had no part in his choice of friendships. He seldom referred to the merited recognition he had received in his profession. Much of his research was conducted without any desire for pecuniary profit, the results being at the disposal of any one whom he considered to be working for the advancement of science. He invariably welcomed an opportunity to be of service to his friends or to institutions and organizations in which he was interested, and he was always ready to give a helping hand to a deserving student.

Herbert McCoy loved birds. He never tired of watching them, and few things could delight him more than observing a species previously unknown to him. He will be sorely missed, not only by his human friends, but by his avian guests for whom he scattered daily food right up to the time of his final illness.—GEORGE WILLETT.

The paper stock used in publishing the *Condor* has again been reduced in weight in conformity with governmental regulations. This change took place in the May issue of this year.

An ornithological publication of distinct value which might easily be overlooked is the section on birds in "A Report upon the Biota of the Santa Ana Mountains" by Willis E. Pequegnat (*Jour. Ent. Zool. Pomona College*, 37, 1945:25-41). The avifauna of this group of mountains in southern California is compared with that of the near-by San Bernardino and San Jacinto mountains. One hundred and thirty-nine species are listed with notes on abundance, habitat, and seasonal movements.—A.H.M.

Your readers may be interested to know that satisfactory progress is being made in producing manuscript for future *Bulletins on the Life Histories of North American Birds*. The material

for four volumes, including all the birds on the A. O. U. Check-list from the jays to the vireos, has been in Washington for a long time, awaiting publication after the war. Two volumes on the wood warblers are now nearly completed, waiting for a few contributions from others. I am now starting work on the next volume, to include birds from the weaver finches to the tanagers, and am taking this opportunity to solicit contributions of notes on habits and photographs relating to birds in the three families, Ploceidae, Icteridae and Thraupidae. Previous contributions have been very helpful, and I hope they will continue.—A. C. BENT, *Taunton, Mass.*

PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

"Modern Bird Study" (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, xii + 190 pp., \$2.50), by Ludlow Griscom of the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard University, is addressed to the layman and to the amateur ornithologist. According to the preface, "this book is an outgrowth of a series of eight lectures given . . . in January, 1944. . . . The main object of the book . . . is to show that the study of birds is not only a branch of scientific research, . . . but that it also contains many topics of interest to the layman, and that the growing army of bird watchers have and can really assist the ornithologist in solving problem after problem by controlled, careful, and thorough observations."

The first five chapters are written for the layman with a general interest in birds; they deal with field ornithology, capacity (definable, apparently, as demonstration of free will or choice in conduct) and intelligence of birds, adaptability, and migration. No attempt is made to deal with the topics of bird-banding and life-history. These chapters, representing the contents of lectures, are written in a loose and informal narrative style. They contain much interesting information presented in simple, direct terms.

From the standpoint of the author's objective to present some notions of the science of ornithology to the layman, the treatment accorded these topics includes some puzzling items, as, for instance, his interpretation of adaptability and adaptation. At Wake Island, there was a flightless rail confined to two of three small, low islands; the rail did not spread to the third island even though it was connected to one of the other two by a bare flat exposed at low tide. This case is regarded (p. 46) as "possibly the world's record for no adaptability . . ." In the author's terms, is not the same true also of those Hawaiian honey-eaters (p. 49) which refuse to cross an open space occupied by a road that cuts an otherwise dense, dripping forest? What is more surprising is the author's example of a "truly remarkable and marvelous case of adaptability,"