

Great numbers of Black-bellied Plovers, Ruddy Turnstones, Least and Semipalmated Sandpipers, Pectoral Sandpipers, and in fact, all of our migrating shorebirds may be observed here. The Snowflakes and the Snowy Owl have been observed. A Golden Eagle was found dead on the shore.

While taking a walk last fall with Mr. Samuel Harper, we noticed a flock of small gulls in the upper end of Belmont Harbor. As it was too late for the Bonaparte Gulls we were curious to know what they were, and I had the pleasure of seeing my first flock of Franklin Gulls. As we stood on the high bank, a short stocky gull left the flock, and as it slowly sailed under us we noticed a V-shaped patch on the back—our second record of the Kittiwake Gull, the first record being one that I shot twenty years ago.

CHICAGO ACADEMY OF SCIENCES,
LINCOLN PARK, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF FRANKLIN LORENZO BURNS

My life and ornithological experiences have been so far from the spectacular that I have little of general interest to communicate, though some incidents of my life-long and for the most part solitary novitiate, representing a supposititious investment of one hundred thousand dollars in energy and an actual expenditure of ten thousand dollars in cash, may not be devoid of novelty, especially as I have retained the status of a bona fide amateur, never having sold an egg, skin, manuscript or derived material benefit in the way of business.

My earliest remembrance is that of a frightful childhood dream which still clings vividly to my mind. I thought that I ran in a panic through my dear old Quaker grandmother's herb and flower garden to the yard only to encounter a number of gigantic pachyderms, swart and sextuped, and though they paid not the slightest attention to the terrified boy in the Dolly Varden dress as he dashed through the herd and pattered over the flagstones to the Dutch door, he expected any moment to be caught up in the curling probosis of one of the monster Bulljacks, which became in my imagination the symbol of publicity.

My ancestors were mostly of Anglo-Saxon origin with an infusion of Welsh, Scotch-Irish and a dash of Gallic blood. Bern or Burn was the original surname, probably derived from the Norman Bjorn—a bear; of North England, transplanted in Wicklow, Ireland, about the time of James II as adherents of the Established Church, and South-eastern Pennsylvania in the Colonial period. My father's mother, an

Orthodox Friend, descended from Mary Culcop the first female born of English parents in Philadelphia. My mother's father, the only comparatively recent immigrant, was the son of a Yorkshire textile operator, and I have a few examples of his crude watercolors of birds painted for the amusement of his little daughter on the lonely banks of the Juniata. Therefore I cannot account for my early persistence on the ground of heredity though in my genealogical researches I find that I may lay claim to lineal descent from the eloquent Quaker preacher John Williamson, who in the instance of Benjamin West, early won tolerance for the fine arts from a most ascetic people; also to collateral kinship with John Cassin the systematic ornithologist.

I was born near the present village of Berwyn in Chester county, January 18, 1868, the fifth of eight children of Peter J. and Ellen J. (Dyson) Burns, and my earliest recollection of a desire to possess objects of Nature was due to the family doctor's promise of a "rabbit's egg" if I would take his allopathic prescription, and I pictured the shell as of a beautiful sky blue! Two or three years later I tagged after some older lads in their egging incursions and well remember the taking of the lovely blue eggs of the Dickcissel. At this time I was a frequent visitor at Hawthorn farm where a sportsmans' collection of mounted birds was a great attraction and here I secretly resolved to form a collection of my own and to learn the names and habits of the various kinds.

In the spring of 1877 we moved back to a part of the ancestral farm now in our possession a century. Unfortunately it necessitated a change from an excellent rural school to an inferior one a mile distant, a cheerless stone chamber crowded with the children of the railroad construction gang, ruled by a careless pedagogue, an intolerable place, how I hated it; and save for its practical arithmetic and my association with the grandsons of John Sartain the engraver, I owe it little. Meanwhile my three older brothers drifted away to occupations and homes of their own and father being engaged in building contracts, to me fell the numerous chores incident to a small farm, labor formerly apportioned to the quartet according to our strength. My solace was the small subscription library, the meeting place on Saturday nights of an agreeable coterie of youths; here I enjoyed Tom Brown's School Days and Trowbridge's juvenile stories, especially "The Scarlet Tanager" and Castlemon's Wild West tales were much in vogue with my associates, one of whom quietly remarked that he was going to see some of that life before it passed away forever and later he was among



FRANKLIN LORENZO BURNS

the dead in the Indian fight at Wounded Knee.

It was in 1884 that I learned of the publication of the "Young Oologist" and with improved methods laid the foundation for a local collection of eggs. I fashioned some malleable iron bars into the shape of climbers and with this crude contraption took my first set of Crow's eggs from a chestnut tree growing out of the old and then unvisited redoubt at Valley Forge. Though I have always been a lightweight and have since done considerable climbing without suffering vertigo, I began as a most timorous climber; however, I do not recollect ever backing down without reaching my objective.

My inseparable boyhood companion through all the youthful phases of fads was the late Willet E. Rotzell, later doctor and lecturer of biology at the Hahnemann College of Philadelphia. Many times he helped me finish some allotted task that we might have a few hours afield. I remember that when we later discovered an old edition of Coues' Key in town, I gave up a winter overcoat to possess a copy of my own.

I wish I could say that I had the parental consent to collect but it would not be true. My early collection of eggs was placed in cigar boxes, bedded in hair; the family quadrupeds were assiduously carried upon every accession to my stock and the boxes stowed under the barn eaves until in my judgment it was safe to remove to more commodious quarters in the attic. Wiseacres seriously questioned the utility of my endeavors and the ignorant queried: "Are you going to eat 'em or set 'em"—no other disposition being thought tenable.

The following year I began an abbreviated report to the A. O. U. committee on migration and a collection of bird skins. My first specimen, that of the Short-eared Owl, was preserved with "Rough on Rats," for I was forbidden to bring arsenic on the place! I made the common mistake of the tyro when I severed the leg bone at the heel, but the skin is still intact. I withdrew my little from a saving fund to take some lessons in taxidermy with Krider and also visited the museum of the Academy of Natural Sciences where I doubt not my impressions were similar to those of a recent guest at Tutankhamen's tomb. At this age my only text book was Porter and Coates' cheap edition of Wilson's American Ornithology more than a half century out of date, found in the village library; luckily the vernacular names were similar to those taught me by my father who was fond of hunting and never very consistently opposed my study.

I had not far to go for specimens, my favorite ground within three minutes walk was a worn-out clearing with a second growth of cedar

and berry bushes connecting a slashing of virgin soil, a jungle in luxuriance of sapling and vine, and the adjacent woodland of hill and ravine for miles along the slate ridge. Indeed my work has been confined mainly to this section, with a never-to-be-forgotten vacation with Lionel F. Bowers to Great Egg Harbor Bay, New Jersey, the type locality of some species of Wilson, Ord, Audubon and other worthies of times gone by. My friend recently reminded me of the occasion when I pulled him out of a slough in which he was fast sinking, but I remember best another rescue, when marooned on an islet in the gathering dusk and incoming tide, my friend appeared in a boat.

My earliest endeavors were linked with the Wilson Ornithological Club and I believe that I have served in every office except that of vice president. This club is the outcome of an earlier boyish organization away back in 1885, a period when amateur journalism flourished. Many youths combined the craze for printers' ink with the oological fad. The "Young Ornithologist" published in Boston, became the organ of the Young Ornithologists' Association which expired with the "Curlew" in 1889, to leaven the newly organized Wilson Ornithological Chapter of the Agassiz Association; of the original coterie, Drs. Pindar, Jones, Strong, and myself *sans* title, remain.

These organizations, followed by the Wilson Ornithological Club, long exponent of co-operation and specialization, conducted a generation of bird lovers from kindergarten to college. Late in 1900, soon after Jones had brought out my monograph of the Flicker, he wrote me that he would be unable to publish the BULLETIN the year following and suggested that I take up the burden for that period. The treasury was exhausted and my own time occupied with ten or more hours of physical labor beside evenings of accounts, estimation and correspondence, but I probably saved the little journal for the time being at some expense to myself.

The same year I brought out my sectional bird census, the pioneer attempt to enumerate a definite square mile of bird life and I say not in criticism of later efforts in this line but as a matter of record, that this work was not blithely consummated on a fair day in June but in a conscientious attempt to locate the individual nesting places, the labor of a season. Often, wet to the shoulders, I came in for a hurried breakfast and then rushed off to work without change of clothing, doubtless the source of later sciatica.

Personally I know that the difficulties of expression are enormously increased by a lifetime of manual labor and in all probability

I never would have attempted composition had I not become convinced that it was my duty to add my mite to our knowledge.

Though solitary observation has its disadvantages I have always felt that I could get better results alone. My study of the domestic economy of our local Wood Warblers, quoted in Chapman's Warbler book, was accomplished single-handed. I searched ten years before I found the Worm-eating Warbler nesting plentifully almost at my back door and therefore I was much gratified by the assurance of the late Thomas H. Jackson that mine was the most accurate biography of the species he had ever read.

When I intimate the advantages of lone observation perhaps I make the most of the peculiar situation which the dilettanti of scant means and remoteness experience. Soon after Dr. McCook moved into our neighborhood he appealed to me for a list of advanced students in all branches of Natural Science, with the object of forming a local society; my canvass revealed the species as quite rare. It is otherwise in antiquarian lore and I here confess to a love of local history in which I have had for a score of years the comradeship of the late Rev. Dr. Quimby, author of "Valley Forge", who first performed his ecclesiastical duty and a wide charity, yet had the energy to do upward of fifty miles on foot for the pleasure of historical research. I yet have to redeem my promise that I would gather in permanent form my own researches in local tradition and fact, which he thought more extensive than his own.

My good mother had often predicted that sometime I would fall from a lofty tree in some remote place and perhaps perish before found, but when I fell it was from the high gable of a building and during my five weeks' convalescence I found time to start a compilation of some sketches on Alexander Wilson.

I had long desired a small detached building in which to house my specimens and books as well as to serve as a quiet place for study. When this was accomplished in 1904, I found I had placed it too near the road, for some leisurely person was sure to drop in for the evening. Children would peep in at the window and often run away when I opened the door to bid a possible future ornithologist enter. Now and then I have a most welcome visitor, some one perhaps from afar. Once it was the late Frederic B. McKechnie from down East, who had loaned me a great mass of original material relating to our earlier ornithologists; later R. M. Barnes, of the *Oologist*, spent an afternoon in discussion of my contemplated bibliography of ornithological periodicals, which he so generously offered to publish. And I have guided

to the habitat of some of our local rarities some keen oologists. About this time I often had the company of Charles H. Rogers, Alfred C. Redfield, and Leonard Pierson, high school boys, non-collectors, good observers; one an excellent photographer; but they soon departed for college; later Guy L. Eadie, now with the National Zoological Park.

Years ago I planned an exhaustive study of the nesting habits of our birds, the printed forms called for an appalling amount of detail and the material returned proved inadequate; nevertheless the resultant papers on comparative periods of incubation, nestling life and nest-building appeared worthwhile as preliminary studies.

My business for the past thirty-five years has been that of a contracting painter. Twice I have had the labor unions' well nigh impossible demands disperse the shop in which I had tried to instill the *esprit de corps* so essential to efficient work. During the trying summer of 1919 I carried on with a single aid, a veteran color-bearer of the Civil War. Early in my business life I fixed upon a modest sum at which I could retire and devote more time to the birds, bees and garden; when this seemed within reach I found that the dollar had shrunk in purchasing power.

My public services have been small and extremely local. I served for a term of years as financial secretary to the volunteer fire company, beginning at a time when the organization was at its lowest ebb and ending when an efficient gasoline engine supplanted the primitive handtruck. I have also served for many years as a director of the building and loan association, and with the court of honor for the boy scouts, but have been absolutely unequal to public bird talks. As this is in the nature of a confession I will plead to an unmarried state, perhaps because of an incurable egoism, congenital shyness, failure to discover my ideal, prior claims of relatives or a combination of circumstances, who can say? I am fond of children and dogs—some children and some dogs—and can generally make friends with them.

For some time I had contemplated an avifaunal list of my native county and when the opportunity came to have it published in a desirable form, the World War, a strike, and the plague delayed the printing, necessitating proof-reading at a most inopportune time when burdened with a press of work in the heat of summer and resulted in some unfortunate typographical errors in technical names. Inadvertently I trampled some of the morning-glories! I had thought my work meritorious in comparison with like publications and the faults

superficial, nevertheless I purchased the remainder of the edition and withdrew it from circulation.

I have taken relatively few specimens in the last twenty years, not that I ever have been a great destroyer of bird life, for my collection is very incomplete, but because I am more concerned with data obtainable from the living bird; at the same time I regard all assertions that the public museum renders private collections superfluous as pure buncombe.

I have not attempted to analyze my preference for the study of birds, though undoubtedly I have followed my inclinations, and my persistence was not unmixed with a desire to prove that it is open to all; herein I erred, for the multiplicity and cost of the literature almost indispensable to keep abreast of the times has become prohibitive to the student of humble means. And then there is the matter of permits; Pennsylvania for instance provides a license for the professional teacher and a special one for the person "of known scientific attainments in ornithology," obtainable through the Game Commission! The beginner and would-be-collector may therefore condole with the heroine of that ancient ditty:

"'Mother, may I go in to swim?' 'Yes, my darling daughter!
Hang your clothes on a hickory limb and don't go near
the water!'"

Our Commonwealth is vastly more liberal in the matter of gunners' licenses since it permits anyone to kill a liberal number of every kind of game provided he can do so. With over half a million sportsmen in the field it is possible to exterminate every game animal in the State without the average hunter taking his legal quota.

It is probable, especially in my earlier years, that there has been a great deal of misdirected effort upon my part. Properly directed as a training for accurate observation and logical thought, ornithology is a great study. It is always possible with one of the several low-priced and excellent textbooks, field glass and notebook, to derive much pleasure in bird study as a pastime and by specialization gain some knowledge not laid down in books.

One can truly state that notwithstanding a more or less tentative classification and a rather unstable nomenclature, ornithology has advanced steadily in recent years. Its popularization without deprivation of the essence of science by some of our leaders, has enormously increased the number of laymen and their interest, and has opened the way for an exhilarating relaxation from the daily grind.

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