



REUBEN MYRON STRONG

1872-1964

A Founder of the Wilson Ornithological Society

The death of Reuben Myron Strong on 11 August 1964 in his summer home at Petosky, Michigan, ended a career whose pattern of usefulness to science and conservation had emerged clearly half a century earlier. Born on 8 October 1872, in North Greenfield (now part of West Allis), Wisconsin, of English and Irish stock, his first job was that of a country school teacher near Wauwatosa at a salary of \$40 a month. He used to add humorously, "I was also the janitor!"

In his early career he taught many subjects. Following his graduation from Oberlin College in 1897, he spent the next year at Lake Forest Academy as instructor in chemistry, physics, and zoology—and assistant football coach. Following his graduation from Harvard with the Ph.D. in 1901 he was instructor in botany and physiography in the University of Chicago Academy and coached the football and track teams. His prowess as an athlete was not generally appreciated among his acquaintances. He once observed that he may have had a little to do with Notre Dame's great success in football because he coached the man who coached Knute Rockne! But even at the advanced age of 80 he once astonished the writer with the statement that he had to get home early that evening to go ice skating with Mrs. Strong on the Midway!

He became instructor in biology at Haverford College in 1902 but returned to the

University of Chicago on a Carnegie Research assistantship the following year. He stayed on for 10 years as instructor in the Zoology Department. During this period he was the protégé of Prof. Carl O. Whitman whose interest in the genetics of pigmentation in feathers influenced some of his own research. He was fond of recalling the days with Whitman, and Whitman's death may have influenced him in accepting a professorship of anatomy at the University of Mississippi in 1914. Two years later he occupied a similar position at Vanderbilt University. He became Chairman of the Department of Anatomy in the Loyola University School of Medicine in September 1918. But he actually gathered the staff and literally launched the entire medical school.

Dr. Strong's retirement from Loyola in 1946 probably disturbed his pattern of activity but little. One could find him almost daily in his office on the fourth floor of the Chicago Natural History Museum, where he was engaged in a study of the comparative anatomy of the albatrosses. From this office, too, he administered the affairs of the Illinois Audubon Society and the Chicago Conservation Council, which consists of a membership of delegates from about 60 local and national societies.

His publications numbered about 125, ranging from development of pigment, animal coloration, animal behavior, ossification of the skeleton to gross anatomy and neurology. But he was always engaging in something useful—often a tedious, long-range project of a sort most scientists avoid. His four-volume "Bibliography of Birds" is reasonably complete to 1939 and tremendously valuable to ornithologists. His life of 92 years spanned a most important period in the history of science and of conservation. He was taught neurology by Prof. G. H. Parker, had worked in Edinger's neurological institute in Frankfurt, Germany. He knew Hans Gadow. To a younger anatomist, Gadow was just a name; it was good to know something about him, personally, and Dr. Strong became a link with the past. He was broad enough to grasp the changing trends in science to which he was witness. In conservation affairs he retained his clarity of mind to the end. Be the opposition politician or steel company, he knew the adversary realistically.

His interest in natural history was with him from youth. At eighteen he had already collected most of the flowering plants near his home. He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Illinois Chapter of the Wild Flower Preservation Society since 1923. He was president of the Illinois Audubon Society from 1941 to 1951 and honorary president since. He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Illinois Dunesland Preservation Society and a member of the Save the (Indiana) Dunes Council. Dr. Strong founded the Chicago Ornithological Society in 1912 and was one of the founders of the Wilson Ornithological Society (see *Wilson Bull.*, 51:3-10). He was honorary member of the Nature Conservancy and Friends of Our Native Landscape. He was on the executive council of the American Association of Anatomists from 1916 to 1919, and was a member of the board of governors of the Institute of Medicine, 1935-40.

On 20 June 1907, he married Mary Ethel Freeman, who died several years ago. They are survived by a daughter, Miss Madelaine Freeman Strong, of 88 Morningside Drive, New York.

All of this is the mere recital of facts. Dr. Reuben M. Strong was a bright and cheerful man with a sense of humor and a kindly interest in younger scientists. What strikes one in retrospect is the large amount of work he accomplished by steady effort and the usefulness of his life. He started many things which will continue like the ripples going out on a quiet pond.

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