

REMINISCENCES BY MEMBERS
COLLECTED ON THE OCCASION OF
THE CENTENNIAL OF
THE LINNAEAN SOCIETY OF NEW YORK
MARCH 1978

Presented to members and Guests at the Annual Meeting, March 14, 1978 in the
Education Hall at the American Museum of Natural History.

The Linnaean Society in 1914

John Kieran

When I was welcomed into the Linnaean Society in 1914, sponsored by Charles H. Rogers and Ludlow Griscom, we used to meet every two weeks in a small room on the ground floor of the old building of the Museum. At these meetings I sat regularly with my sponsors and three or four dozen other members famous for their knowledge of natural history. This includes dear old kindly Dr. Jonathan Dwight, Waldron DeWitt Miller, Charles Urner, poet, printer, philosopher, and expert on birds, John T. Nichols, Lincoln-esque in stature and appearance and equally like Lincoln in wisdom and kindness, genial Walter Granger, who had been to the Gobi Desert, Roy Chapman Andrews, back from Mongolia, William Beebe, up from the ocean depths, Robert Cushman Murphy, returned from Peru, and James P. Chapin, on furlough from the Belgian Congo. Being in the same room with such men was an education for me. "*Ter quarterque beati*" were they in my eyes--and in my heart. I owe them so much that I here acknowledge a debt I never will be able to repay.

The Linnaean Society in the 1920's and '30's

Joseph Hickey

The Linnaean Society of New York had a singular charm in the 1920's when I began to attend its meetings. The active members were then on the order of 25 or 30 persons, and the Society met in the Museum's New York Academy of Sciences room right next to the elevators at the 77th Street entrance. There were only about 10 rows of chairs in the meeting room, and we boys always sat in the back on the right. We were, of course, at the very bottom of the "peck order"!

The first presiding officer that I remember was "Old Handlebars," a name that the irreverent younger generation bestowed on Dr. Johnathan Dwight. His mustache, you see, extended several inches horizontally to the left and to the right. He was the gentlest man I ever knew.

We Bronxites broke in under "J.T.," our appellation for John Treadwell Nichols, an ichthyologist, but ardent birder in his spare time, who looked and indeed acted like a Great Blue Heron. "J.T.'s" main occupation was lighting matches for his pipe. He too was kindly towards boys. I remember the brash youngster (not of course from the Bronx) who reported at an April meeting that he had just seen a White-crowned Sparrow in the Ramble. "And did you get the yellow spot before the eye?" asked J.T. "Oh, yes sir," said the youngster. "Thank you," said J.T.

nodding his head. "Are there any more field notes?"

There was a time in Linnaean's past when half the presidents of the Society had also been president of the American Ornithologists' Union. This of course was simply an index to the stature of the Department of Ornithology in the American Museum and its contributions over so many decades to the Linnaean Society. Somewhere in this period, we practically ran out of Museum senior citizens, but our nominating committee asked S. H. Chubb to be president. Chubb was a delightful 60-year old man with a white goatee, who put together the sensational skeletons of a man reining a leaping horse. He was too modest to accept the job, and we offered it to a dynamic young business man, Warren F. Eaton. What a break with tradition! Young and non-Museum! When the Museum heard of Chubb's decision, it told him bluntly: Accept the nomination; but it was too late, Eaton had been offered the job, and it was his. I think the Society changed posture at this date. It became young, it accepted business-men as presidents, and (I think) it began to grow.

In the 1920's the Linnaean Society was dominated by Ludlow Griscom, present or absent. We Bronxites have of course memorized Griscom's book, *Birds of the New York City Region*. We quoted passages from it, and our guru, Jack Kuerzi, could talk exactly like him. A favorite expression of ours, taken from the Great Man, about a faunal record of doubtful authenticity, was "It's not worth a cheesy damn!" The only intellectual horizons evident to us boys was breaking arrival and late dates published by Griscom for the Bronx.

The 1930's were another matter. The two dominant members of the Society in this era were Charles A. Urner, a publisher in the butter and egg trade, and Ernst Mayr, a young German who had joined the American Museum to work up some birds collected in the South Pacific. Urner was as close to a Born Ecologist as I have ever seen. He had a passion for census-taking. He wanted to do a quantitative survey of the bird life of New Jersey. He ran roadside transects and quadrat studies of succession on a landfill created by dredging. He was superb in field identification (--the first to distinguish between the call notes of the two dowitchers), and he had an absolutely gorgeous sense of humor. Most of his behavior observations were short and never written up, but he could charm meetings with a description of a robin on his lawn who owned territorial rights to a tree but did not own the lawn below. We were nearly a male society in those days; "Gentlemen," Charlie summarized one night, "I think my Catbird just loves to copulate!"

Mayr's role in the Society was more behind the scenes.

He became a correspondent of Margaret Nice, persuaded her to publish her first major paper in *Journal für Ornithologie*, and then prodded the Linnaean Society into publishing *Studies in the Life History of the Song Sparrow*, for which she won the Brewster Medal of the A.O.U. The diehards in the Society, headed, I guess by Lee Edwards in New Jersey, thought this was none of the Society's business.

Of course it was. The publication was perhaps the Society's greatest contribution to ornithology. Charlie Urner's firm was the printer. What flabbergasted him was the English language "expertise" of Ernst Mayr who edited Volume 1. How could a German know so much about "our" language! Mayr's other role in the 1930's was to set up personally a seminar in field ornithology for businessmen. Everyone invited was a member of the Society. As one of the participants, this was the turning point in my life.

I shall have to go back to fill you in. The Linnaean Society, starting at least in the 1920's, was invaded by a series of young boys. In the '20's these came from the Bronx. Each wave had to have its own identity. We were 9 at the start, but we added newcomers like R.T. Peterson (a student in an art school) who was always talking about the birds in Jamestown, N.Y. (We called him Roger Tory Jamestown Peterson). Mayr was our age and invited on all our (Griscom-type) field trips. The heckling of this German foreigner was tremendous, but he gave tit-for-tat and any modern picture of Dr. E. Mayr as a very formal person does not square with my memory of the 1930's! He held his own! The Bronxite version of Mayr in this era was: "Everybody should have a problem."

There is one more Society officer that I need to describe, Robert Porter Allen who was Secretary while I was President. What a delightful experience: we exchanged jobs left and right, and on one occasion I remember as President writing the Secretary's annual report.

I think in reviewing these notes I write them as a heartfelt thanks to a great "educational" institution. My best wishes on the next century ahead.

Personalities in The Linnaean Society Before World War II

Walter Sedwitz

...Among the members was Charles Johnson, a book reviewer for the New York Times who was most often found in Central Park, looking at the migrants. With his dark jacket, striped pants, conservative tie, shiny black shoes, and a face that was a replica of Henry Cabot Lodge, bearded and elegant, and who spoke in

modulated tones, full of gentle dignity, his discussions about the birds he had sighted in Central Park were models of rhetoric and refinement.

Perhaps, after Johnson, L.N. Nichols might rise and report from the Pelham region. Rather short, with colorless hair, he had a florid complexion, was high strung, spoke very rapidly in a high pitched voice which he continuously had to clear, and while reading his notes exchanged alternately two pairs of eye-glasses. His notes were read with great concern and library-bred precision, always searching for the phrase or word that completely described his findings.

Following, might be George Hix of Brooklyn, a short sturdy man with a booming voice, a broad bespectacled visage and penchant for the Boy Scout movement. While leading a troop of scouts around Dyker Heights Park, he found birds worth reporting. Though his hearing was impaired, his dogged determination and sharp eyes were enough to find the rarities in south Brooklyn.

Not everyone who came to the meetings was a bird watcher. A regular attendant was a thin, bearded, ruffe-haired, bespectacled fellow in his late thirties who, choosing an end chair, would bend his head against the wall and fall asleep. Once in a while he would wake up and speak on some technical aspect of parliamentary procedure, which had no relevancy to the matters at hand, and then lapse back into his somnolent pose.

We might hear from the very active bird watchers from New Jersey, who would astound the audience with their sightings. Their spokesman was generally Charles Urner, a burly; balding, sun-tanned middle aged businessman, and a reformed duck hunter who had become a bird watcher of extraordinary ability.

Cheerful, democratic, friendly, believing, he managed to speak to as many members and visitors as there was time, after the meetings. His evolution from hunter to ornithologist spread over many years, and his deep interest in the shore and water birds became authoritative for the state of New Jersey. His speech was succinct, dry and countrified, rather like a farmer, though he grew up in metropolitan New York, and worked in Manhattan. His belief and wonder in birds was contagious, and he encouraged many of the less courageous to get into the field more often, for longer periods, and to find new birding areas. He was a man of great substance, who never was too busy or involved to give the younger members a helping hand.

Warren F. Eaton, another Jerseyite, was a tall, slim, blonde, blue-eyed man with the rosiest of cheeks. While he was almost dapper appearing man, he spoke in a

nasal, pressing manner. But his appearance was most deceiving, for when aroused he had the disposition of a gladiator. Otherwise he was a gentle though impatient person, most serious about his concerns. There was story that he and Johnson had gone through the Troy Meadow swamps one summer day and emerged in flawless fashion, not a drop of mud, not a pants crease disturbed, not a shoe unshined. His chic dress clothed a most belligerent conservationist, at a time when such people were considered cranks and more than slightly lunatic. Eaton's special sphere was the birds of prey and their precarious niche in modern civilization. He felt strongly that these species were endangered, and in deep trouble, decades before that idea became apparent and fashionable. His opinions were backed by a stubborn nature and he was adamant in his arguments and lucid with his particulars.

There were many attractive personalities from other areas of our region. One such was Howard H. Cleaves of Staten Island. A naturalist and lecturer of great reputation, he often came to the meetings to report his findings from that little visited borough. While the native Staten Islanders were active, we did not get too much information from across the bay. But Cleaves, an energetic person who looked like a Roman senator, but with a brush haircut, spoke in rapid fire manner, as he paced the floor or platform, telling us in a terse, certain, and pointed manner, just what he had in mind. He was a lecturer of great skill and magnetism, and the audience was absorbed by his flow of interesting facts and adventures.

From Princeton, New Jersey, we had as an occasional speaker; Charles H. Rogers. He was a tall, rangy, well built, bald man with a craggy nose, blazing blue eyes, and an allover aura of hauteur, that was often taken for snobbery. But, in reality, he was an impatient man with a quicksilver mind who seemed frustrated by the slow reactions of those about him. His lectures were most often illustrated with actual skins of birds, and were learned and very stimulating.

When John Baker assumed the presidency of the Society he held the reins with quiet strength. Under his influence the Society seemed more like a corporation, to be run with a minimum of waves and a maximum of efficiency. During his tenure there was little laughter in meeting room, and none of the usual by-play that marked the previous membership. While the Society appeared to look like a business office, it functioned in spite of the drag of bureaucracy, showing the resiliency that was inherent in the membership.

Dr. James P. Chapin, when he was in New York, often

came to our meetings. His electric presence, tall, lean and bronzed, lent a touch of the far lands to our prosaic meetings. He was full of energy, spoke rapidly, moved quickly, and seemed to see everything with his deep-set eyes, which he blinked incessantly, a nervous habit acquired in the sun and heat of tropical Africa. In spite of his formidable experience and appearance, he was easy going and considerate in person. He had a great interest in local birds, and, when in New York, ferried across New York Harbor twice a day from his home in Staten Island, accumulating many interesting waterbird finds. His talks were treats for the audience, full of his enthusiasm for Africa, spiced with native words and scenes from places then little known. Primarily he was a man of the outdoors who seemed to chafe at the constricting city and countryside, and longed to get back to his Africa. He was a man of stature, with a common touch, of even temperament, who enjoyed your company and talk.

When there were questions of constitutional rules and by-laws we had Beecher's. Bowdish of Demerest, New Jersey, to contend with them. Even when I became a member in 1929, Bowdish was a long-time part of the Society, a slight, white haired, patrician man whose sonorous mellow voice penetrated through room or hall. A deliberate man, he spoke slowly and with great concentration. Much of his birding was done in nearby New Jersey; never one to dash over the landscape after rare or unusual birds, he made his milieu where he lived, and there he noted many worthwhile birds. His wise opinions guided us through changing periods and helped the Society to be a better place for the members.

Another member who covered a great span of time was Dr. E. R. Po Janvrin, though his medical practice kept him ever on the go, even having him paged at the meetings. His self-effacing ways made this short, balding man barely noticeable at the meetings, though his services to the Society had long precedence. He rarely reported to the members, unless there was something extraordinary involved. In the field, if one met him, he was a delightful companion, knowledgeable, sharp eyed, and modest, who never gave you the impression of his years of active field work. He was ever willing to take on some onerous work for the Society that had to be done.

When it came to a shining and forthright personality, none was more effective in the meetings and on the outside than Allan Cruickshank. A javelin tosser in college, he had a tall athletic build, and looked like the All American Boy, grown to manhood. All of his physical and mental prowess he poured into bird watching, and he became an unsurpassed tracker of birds, and a most entertaining speaker. He had an eyesight that was peerless, an ear for the faintest sibilance, and an aptitude

to imitate any bird sound. He was a natural leader and the younger people flocked to his talks and lectures. On a field trip he was full of stories, jokes, and songs that made the duller excursion gay.

Among the members from the Bronx County Bird Club who later shed great influence was Joseph Hickey, intercollegiate mile champion and theorizer on avian matters. With his Irish humor and wit, as well as his deep thoughtful mind, he gave dignity and life to bird reports that might have been flat and uninteresting.

His ever present smile and bantering moods intimately enlivened the meetings, when with irony and fact he demolished some wild and far-out conjectures. But in spite of his light tones he was a serious person whose concern for the Society and for ornithology surfaced often. He spoke in a scholarly manner and had a more unified conception of bird biology than most of us realized.

A self-effacing person was Irving Kasso, a short, slim, bald, bespectacled bird watcher who had a passion for owls. He was all solemnity in bird watching as well as at the meetings, but so caught up with the study of owls that he became our authority on that group of birds. His enthusiasm led him to spend long hours investigating the life history of the Barn Owl. While he was a friendly fellow, he tended to be abstract, cautious, and careful in his statements, and was far from the fluent ways that most of the Bronx County Boys seemed to glory in. When giving a talk, his quiet demeanor gave the impression that he had a great deal to tell, but was reluctant to reveal too much at that particular time. In many of his ways, Kasso was the antithesis of the maverick friends of the Bronx County Bird Club who enjoyed their bird and social life with gusto and *das*.

An Unusual Birding Experience

Leroy Wilcox

I joined the Linnaean Society on November 13, 1928 in going over the 1977 list of members I find that of the 519 current members there are only eight now living who joined before I did. Many of those who joined about the same time that I did are now gone, but I have fond memories of many field trips with them out here on eastern Long Island. One experience with other Linnaean members that stands out in my memory as being rather unusual happened back in the 1930's during Prohibition days.

In the early 1930's three Linnaean members and I had driven to Montauk, arriving there soon after day-break, when I had a flat tire on my car not far west of the

lighthouse on the old South Road. At that time we had our first contact with rum runners, who stopped their car, a large black Cadillac with a chauffeur and one man in the back seat, no doubt to look us over, inquiring if we needed any help. It was an unpleasant day at Christmas time with a heavy mist and hardly another car all day at Montauk. No doubt our binoculars attracted their attention, as they probably thought we only had one reason to have them -- to look for boats out in the ocean ready to unload their illegal cargo. About five hours later as we were ready to leave Montauk we saw a truck going west followed at a discrete distance by a black Cadillac. As we were on our way home we just by accident fell in line about a quarter of a mile behind the two vehicles. We continued on west for about two miles to Montauk village when their car stopped at a garage and took on four more men as reinforcements, all dressed in yellow rain gear. We all continued west on the old Montauk Highway near the ocean, but I was now between the truck and their car. Then, for the first time, we all realized the dangerous position we were in. We took down the license plates of the truck and their car and covered up my shotgun, which I had in the back of the car for collecting bird specimens. There are now many houses along this next mile or two of road, but none back in the '30's. Before we reached Hither Hills State Park the Cadillac picked up speed and shot across the road in front of me, forcing me off the road. Two men stayed in the car and four men jumped out and surrounded our car with hands in their pockets, no doubt with guns. I guess we will never know how close we came to being "wiped out" without any questions asked. They may have thought we were "hijackers" getting ready to steal their truck load away from them, a practice which had been going on for some time. Two of the men were rough-looking thugs and I asked them why they were stopping us. The answer was something like this: "We've been watching a carload of four suspicious looking men driving around Montauk all day, and wondered what they were doing," -- meaning us, but not saying so. One of the Linnaean members quickly produced the check list of birds we had seen, and explained that we were ornithologists from the American Museum of Natural History out for the day counting birds. Immediately the extreme tension was lifted, the explanation seemed to satisfy them, and they apologized for stopping us. If we had not been birders I don't know what the situation would have led to.

Rousing the Society's Interest in Ornithology

Ernst Mayr

When I arrived in New York in January 1931, I knew nobody in the city. Everybody was most kind to me at the

American Museum, but my colleagues were 15 years or older than I. I believe it was Dr. Robert C. Murphy who suggested that I attend the meetings of the Linnaean Society, and there I quickly made friends. I went on field trips with two groups, Charlie Urner's New Jersey gang and the Bronx County Bird Club with the Kuerzis, Joe Hickey, Irv Kassoy, Allen Cruickshank, and others. I participated in Christmas censuses and later in big days. The Society gave me the companionship which I needed so badly in the strange, big city.

As far as the actual activities of the Society were concerned, I was rather amazed by the contrast between the Linnaean Society and the D.O.G., the ornithological society whose meetings I had attended in Berlin. The German society was far more scientific, far more interested in life histories and breeding bird species, as well as in reports on important recent literature. Most members of the German society were amateurs just like those of the Linnaean Society, but somehow a very different tradition had become established.

When I mentioned this to my new friends, they very much encourage me to start an "Ornithological Seminar." Here we reviewed the current literature, if it was in German I would present an abstract, if it was a paper in the English language Joe Hickey, Bill Vogt, Kassay, one of the Kuerzis, or some other member of the Seminar would present the report. This was a strictly private enterprise, and, of course, no one was obliged to attend. Nevertheless, a dozen or so of the younger ornithologists usually attended. Eventually it inspired them to try their own hand in some investigation, resulting in Bill Vogt's work on the Willet, that of Dick Kuerzi on the Tree Swallow, of Irv Kassoy on the Barn Owl, of Joe Hickey on the breeding birds of the Grassy Sprains Ridge, etc. Unfortunately, Kassoy's outstanding and completely pioneering researches were never published. One of the most important outcomes of our new interest was a shift of emphasis from "records" to breeding birds. Bill Vogt started to establish a breeding bird census in Bird-Lore, as a counter piece to the Christmas censuses which Frank Chapman had started in 1900.

Charlie Urner, who was a publisher and printer, was not too happy with the Society's publications and urged me to take on the editorship. I had no knowledge whatsoever of printing and editing, but with great patience Urner taught me what needed to be learned. Charlie had the Transactions revived, which had not been printed for I don't know how many years. A manuscript was already available, Griscom's *Birds of Dutchess County*. Such local lists are undoubtedly necessary, but they do not contribute much to the prestige of a society, particularly if the whole emphasis is on faunistic records

and little is said about the breeding birds and their habits.

I felt the Society should be more ambitious and publish something that would give us national or even international prestige. At this time I was in active correspondence with Margaret Morse Nice in Columbus, Ohio, who was beginning to summarize her magnificent researches on the life history of the Song Sparrow. I persuaded her to write a monograph and to offer it to the Linnaean Society for publication. Let us remember that this was in the Depression years, and she probably would have had difficulties to publish it anywhere else. This was long before the monograph series of the A.O.U. and the Nuttall Club. To persuade the Linnaean Society to publish such monographs was no easy task. Why should we publish a Song Sparrow monograph by a bird watcher in Ohio when it costs so much to print it? Furthermore, it was "all statistical and most uninteresting." My good friend Lee Edwards was the most vociferous opponent of the plan. But he was merely the mouthpiece of a rather wide-spread opposition in the Society. Fortunately, Charlie Urner was all for the plan and so were the young "Turks" of the Society.

In due time we started printing. But there was another crisis. The previous Transactions, Griscom's *Birds of Dutchess County*, had sold, as I remember it, about 100 copies. The Council thought that for this more general publication maybe we should print 200 copies, or perhaps even 250. Everyone thought I was totally mad when I insisted that we print 1000 copies. Hindsight tells me that I was probably not too diplomatic in getting my way, but Charlie Urner printed 1,000 copies, even though he thought we would probably get stuck with an unsold supply of about 750 copies. Much to everyone's surprise, even my own, it took relatively few years before the whole edition was sold out, the Society not having lost its shirt, but actually making a profit. Shortly afterwards, I persuaded Niko Tinbergen to give us a fine manuscript on the Snow Bunting. Now that he has received a Nobel Prize, no one any longer will complain about my selection of the manuscript.

Let me emphasize that I do not feel in the slightest that I have given the Society more than I have received. In those early years in New York when I was a stranger in a big city, it was the companionship and later friendship which I was offered in the Linnaean Society that was the most important thing of my life.

Seeing "Song Sparrow II" Through the Press Dean Amadon

Shortly after arriving in New York in October 1937, to begin employment at the American Museum of Natural

History. I began to attend the meetings of the Linnaean Society. The Society at that time had an enviable record of publication, as it still does. The most valued of its publications remains the two volumes of Mrs. Margaret Morse Nice's *Studies in the Life History of the Song Sparrow*, for which she received international recognition and the Brewster Medal of the A.O.U.

Song Sparrow I appeared in 1937 and the vast manuscript for the second volume arrived in the hands of Dr. Ernst Mayr, then serving as editor for the Society, at about that time. Some months later, Mayr, who was extremely busy with his research program and other activities, asked me if I would help him see the manuscript through the press. Though I knew nothing about editing, and have learned little in the ensuing years, I jumped at the opportunity. With the brashness of youth I went through the manuscript (or perhaps it was the first galley proof) making numerous minor changes. Mrs. Nice, for example, often used the pronoun "with" where I thought "by" or "in" to be preferred; all of these I changed. Strong protests to these and other impertinencies soon came from Chicago, where the Nices now resided, and almost everything was changed back. Fortunately, I believe she blamed the press, not me, for the liberties.

This, however, was only the beginning of my travail. The publisher for the Linnaean Society was the Urner-Barry Press, on the Lower West Side, reached, I remember, by ascending a couple of flights of rickety wooden stairs. Charles Urner, acknowledged leader of the New Jersey contingent of the Linnaean Society, was vice-president of this firm, which printed publications "covering various produce markets." The only one I recall was a daily price sheet for the wholesale egg trade. The sudden and premature death of Urner in June 1938 left the Urner-Barry Press without any one interested or skilled in scientific or indeed scholarly publications. But *Song Sparrow II* had already been committed to their hands, and there was no turning back.

Often I would end to the press galley proofs with numerous corrections indicated, only to find later that additional typographical errors had been introduced in correcting the earlier ones. To be sure, this opus would have taxed the patience of the best of printers.

Well, *Song Sparrow II* appeared in 1943, just as I was entering the Army. I see that I am listed as editor of the Linnaean Society in that year and the preceding one. Reviewers in general concentrated on the excellent contents of the volume and not on its typographical abnormalities. One of my first tasks after returning to the Museum in the spring of 1946 must have been to return the original manuscript to its author. I find a card from

Mrs. Nice dated March 6, 1946: "Many thanks for returning the great mss. of SSII." She went on to say that it was a very early spring in Chicago, even though she had seen a Glaucous Gull two days earlier.

Birding Areas. Around New York Geoffrey Carleton

Active birders in the 1930's used to visit Tobay Pond, where Bill Vogt was the resident in charge, and do shore birding at Oak Island flats. But it was not until the late forties that the potential of the coastal strip for land birds in fall was recognized; I was unaware of the existence of Riis Park until then. Each active fall would probably produce the "Big Four" Blue Grosbeak, Dickcissel, Lark Sparrow, and Clay-colored Sparrow.

One of the birders was Walter Sedwitz, who edited the New York Region for *Bird-Lore* between the reigns of J. T. Nichol and C.K. Nichols. Walter had a sense of where to go according to weather conditions and on certain cold, overcast days when he said "Mean lookin' ocean today," the shore was where we concentrated.

Parts of the New York City region have surges: the Bronx with L. N. Nichols, the Bronx County Bird Club, the Sialis Bird Club (named after the bluebird, also with a German connotation: See alles), etc. John Mayer put Idlewild on the map, also "the Raunt," which was included in the formation of Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge in 1953.

Prospect Park had a surge in the late forties under Ed Whelen, who lamented that the Brooklyn Bird Club developed people who then went over to the "Manhattan Institute for Advanced Studies" — otherwise known as the Linnaean Society.

The Linnaean Society and the Peregrine Falcon Walter Spofford

In March 1936 a penny postcard lay on my desk in the Anatomy Department at the Cornell Medical College on York Avenue. Word had reached Joe Hickey that I had seen a Peregrine Falcon on a ledge of the New York Hospital-Cornell building. Would I like to join him in an "eyrie survey" the following week end?

I did. And this proved to be a most exciting and rewarding expedition along the tops of the Hudson's Palisades and to Storm King above West Point "checking out" occupancy of some seven Peregrine sites ...was a pair present, or a single? ...was there evidence of nesting activity — a "scrape" in view? or possibly an egg or two?... To me, this was news! I wasn't out to collect eggs, as I had done in Massachusetts a decade earlier, nor was

I out to take an eyass for falconry, as in a previous year. This was part of a scientific investigation on the “duck hawk” along the Hudson, as part of an on-going population study, to be published eventually in *The Auk*.

Inspired by the brilliant insight of “Ernie” Mayr, Joe pointed out that the Peregrine eyries were a conspicuous landmark, and one could study a measurable part of a total population. Also because both the eggs and young falcons had long been subject to human predation, there was a known history, for reference and comparison. This was my first contact with a real field-study of birds, and it introduced me to both the methods and the g6als of a segment of field ornithology.

Each meeting of the Linnaean Society Linaeen Society became a get-together of the Group working with Joe Hickey -- Bill Sargent, Dick Herbert, Irv Kassoy, Harry Darrow, John Bull, and others. Each Saturday and Sunday, during the spring, at least one field party headed for the Palisades, the Hudson Highlands; the Kittatinny and the Shawangunks, and often longer trips to Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Vermont.

This study became far more important than either Dr. Mayr Joe Hickey realized at the time, I am sure. The 1942 paper, *Eastern Populations of the Duck Hawk*, became a baseline study of a bird that is now, because of its struggle for survival with pesticides, a symbol for the whole “environmental movement.” It was Joe Hickey and the encouragement he received from the Linnaean Society which formed the backbone (and the cranium!) of a major auto-ecological study

The Birth of the News-Letter

Robert Arbib

Unlikely as it may now seem, the idea for the Linnaean News-Letter developed as a direct descendant from another news-letter with which I had earlier been involved, it was a mimeographed weekly sheet entitled *Long Island Bird Notes* that was originally edited by Ur. David Harrower of Woodmere, It was the earliest known local version of the rare bird alert; weekend bird re- cords were mailed or telephoned to Dr. Harrower on Mondays and he managed to get the newsletter into the mail and the hands of his 35 subscribers by Friday. I later inherited this little publication, and turned it into a weekly newspaper column that was published in the *Long Island Review-Star* for about 20 years, most of them under the editorship of John J. Elliott.

Returning from Europe in 1946, and returning to the

meetings of the Linnaean Society, it occurred to me that the Society needed a newsletter, or some sort of regular bulletin, that would inform members of the new items of interest to them, announce meetings and field trips, and publish short articles and field records. Until then the major publications of the Society were the very infrequent Proceedings and the even more sporadic Transactions, neither of which did much to bring. the membership together into a cohesive body.

We started the News-Letter in 1947 as a four-page monthly in almost exactly the same format that you see today, and with the same problems A t the start, and for many years thereafter, Thomas Higgins was art director, and created a new mast head for almost every issue. Later James Nolan took over as art director. During the eleven years I was editor we published nine issues a year, and throughout our biggest problem was always getting enough material to fill each issue. When there wasn't enough, I simply wrote an article or two or three myself; there are probably fifty or more unsigned pieces in those issues that were “fillers” by me. The News-Letter was typed by Mrs. John Guerin at her home in Rockville Center; typing, printing, and postage cost us about \$30 per issue at that time.

How We Got Great Gull Island

Robert Arbib

In 1940 the Linnaean Society was informed that Great Gull Island was coming up for sale by the U.S. General Services Administration, which was charged with disposing of war time surplus, including real estate. It was also announced that bids would be accepted by a certain date, and. that the high bidder would win the island.

It is my recollection that the next step was a discussion at a Council meeting, when we learned t ha t a tern colony had been on the island before the Army took it over, There was consider a le opposition- to the entire idea of us taking on some property, which was a new idea for the Linnaean Society; some of the traditionally conservative voices expressed doubts, fears, worries, etc. But I think and several others – Dean Amadon was Vice-President under me, and favored it – finally convinced the Council that we should acquire it; if worst came to worst we wouldn't lose anything on it.

Next we learned that since the Linnaean Society was not then incorporated or recognized as an educational institution, we would have to put in a money bid for the island. Obviously we couldn't bid more than a nominal \$1, and there would be higher bid s. So we approached the American Museum of Natural History, to see if they

would bid for the island for UE.

It happened that Richard Pough was then Conservation Chairman at the Museum, and he got interested in the island. I don't know the steps he went through to convince the Museum, but they finally agreed to bid \$ 0 for the island, on the condition that the Linnaean Society would assume full responsibility, all future costs, and be in charge of any work or research done there. The attitude definitely was that they were doing the Society a favor and that they didn't want to have anything to do with the island once it was acquired.

Of course, the rest is history. We did get the island, and the first parties went out there for the big clean-up. There was still a marvelous dock, many wooden structures, and much junk, coal piles, what not. We saw that money would be needed, and since the Museum had warned us that they would not be providing any funds, at my suggestion we started a voluntary Great Gull Island fund and raise about \$600.

The Museum did not get interested in the island until some years later, when the work out there began to get some favorable publicity, and then they began to talk about "their" island research station. But before the terns returned and the more serious work started, the Museum was content to let the Linnaean Society "own and operate" Great Gull Island in any way we wished.

The Linnaean Society in Conservation **Richard Pough**

The Linnaean Society, always active in local conservation issues, also played a role in two conservation causes of national significance. In the fall of 1932, after I had located the Pennsylvania mountain local farmers called. "Hawk Mountain" where they went every fall" to shoot hawks, I tried, to no avail, to get the Pennsylvania Game Commission to halt the destruction of the birds,

The following October Henry Collins and I spoke at a joint meeting of the Linnaean and National Audubon Societies at which we described the situation, but there was no response by the National Audubon Society The following June Mrs. Rosalie Edge, a Linnaean Society member who had attended the October meeting, called me to ask if the Audubon Society had done anything. When I told her "No," she decided to take action through her Emergency Conservation Committee. She came to Hawk Mountain with a real estate agent and I showed her the property. We discovered that it was in an estate administered by a bank that had been trying to sell the land for twenty years. Through her Emergency Conservation Committee, Mrs. Edge took a lease and option to buy the 1398 acres

at \$1.50 per acre. Thus, one of the first steps in stopping the hawk shooting in the Pennsylvania ridges can be said to have started at a Linnaean Society meeting.

The other occasion when a meeting of the Linnaean Society provoked wide interest in a conservation issue was in 1959, when the Navy was planning to destroy a large percentage of the Black-footed and Laysan Albatrosses that nested on Midway Island, because the birds were a hazard to aircraft. I organized a Society meeting in conjunction with the American Ornithologists' Union and the National Audubon Society at which Dr. Robert Cushman Murphy and others familiar with the albatrosses spoke. The attention it drew to the Navy, plan led to hundreds of letters and the Navy drastically altered its plan.

"Thanks" **Emanuel Levine**

The names of the speakers who addressed the Society when I was President in 1963-64 and 1964-65 read like a *Who's Who* in ornithology, and I am fortunate to be able to include a good many of them among my personal friends. This might not have been so had I not been active in the Society. Therefore, what it really boils down to is that I had the opportunity, through the various offices I have held, to meet many of the ornithological greats and, through them, experience a much wider horizon and awareness than just being a "bird watcher" affords. Don't get me wrong -- being a bird watcher has been is and will continue to be one of the most important thing in my life. It is just that the Linnaean Society has made everything a bit more meaningful and helped focus my activities, so I say "thanks" for being allowed to serve.

"Salutations" **Roger Baldwin**

I rejoice with you that the Society has endured 100 years. As one almost as old, I congratulate you all not on survival but on the youthful enthusiasm and curiosity which keep the Linnaean still vital.

The original manuscripts have been placed in the Society's archives. Written permission to use this material must be secured from the Linnaean Society of New York.