

The Journal

of the

Maine Ornithological Society

Published by the Society on the first of March, June, September and December

Vol. IX

JUNE, 1907

No. 2

History of the Maine Ornithological Society.

By J. MERTON SWAIN.

The association known as "The United Ornithologists of Maine" was founded by Stephen J. Adams, of Cornish, Maine, Jan. 1, 1893. It was conducted for two years as a correspondence society without officers. During this period an attempt was made at organization, and a constitution was drafted, but owing to the unsatisfactory results of the correspondence method and to certain contentions that arose, the idea was abandoned.

Increased interest, however, in the subject of ornithology in the autumn of 1894 warranted a second trial. Another constitution was drafted Jan. 1, 1895, and a permanent organization was effected by the election of :

President, Stephen J. Adams, Cornish, Maine.

Vice-President, Charles B. Wilson, Waterville, Maine.

Secretary, William L. Powers, Gardiner, Maine.

Treasurer, Ralph Rockwood, Waterville, Maine.

The charter members were indeed few, as will be seen by the following list :

Stephen J. Adams, Cornish, Maine.

William L. Powers, Gardiner, Maine.

A. P. Larrabee, Gardiner, Maine.

Ralph Rockwood, Waterville, Maine.

Charles B. Wilson, Waterville, Maine.

Maurice Royal, Gardiner, Maine.

It was the plan of the founders to publish a list of all birds that breed in the State, map their faunal areas, and add a list of migrants.

At the close of 1895 the ranks contained thirty-five members, yet no active work had been done.

Early in 1896 new officers were elected and the work of the society began to take a definite shape. The following were chosen officers for 1896 :

President, James Carroll Mead, North Bridgton, Maine.

Vice-President, Everett E. Johnson, Lewiston, Maine.

Secretary and Treasurer, Ora W. Knight, Bangor, Maine.

President Mead at once entered upon a campaign of reform by appointing Mr. Adams, Mr. Lane and Mr. Powers a committee to revise the constitution. Negotiations were entered into with the leading papers of the State for space in which to publish the transactions, and the *Maine Sportsman*, a monthly published in Bangor, was decided upon as the most suitable organ.

In the March number of that year was a page devoted to our interests, edited by Ora W. Knight, of Bangor, and each succeeding issue contained a like amount of information, valuable to the student of ornithology.

In the April number of 1895, the committee on new constitution reported their final draft, and in the May number, President Mead was able to report its unanimous adoption by the society.

On Dec. 28-29, 1896, the society held its first annual meeting in the High School building at Gardiner. The following officers were elected for 1897 :

President, A. H. Norton, Westbrook, Maine.

Vice-President, Ora W. Knight, Bangor, Maine.

Secretary and Treasurer, William L. Powers, Gardiner, Maine.

Councilor, A. L. Lane, Waterville, Maine.

Councilor, James Carroll Mead, North Bridgton, Maine.

Five new members were elected at this meeting. Previous to this meeting, none of the members, outside of the Gardiner branch, had ever met.

In the spring of 1897 the hopes and ambitions of the members of the society were realized in the publication of "The Birds of Maine," under the able editorship of Ora W. Knight, of Bangor, the list having been prepared under the auspices of the society. Such was the demand for this careful and concise work that the supply was soon exhausted.

One of the best and most enthusiastic meetings the society ever held was its second annual meeting, held in the rooms of the Portland Society of Natural History, in Portland, Dec. 31, 1897, and Jan. 1, 1898. All the officers were present and a goodly number of members. Twenty-nine new members were elected and several valuable scientific papers were read, among them one of especial interest, "How I Became an Ornithologist," by Hon. George A. Boardman, of Calais, the pioneer naturalist of the St. Croix Valley. These papers were placed in the hands of Editor Mead, for publication in the official organ, *The Maine Sportsman*. Messrs. Lane, Hitchings and Knight were appointed a committee to consider a new and appropriate name for the society and to report at the next meeting. The society, too, voted to make a special study of a family of birds, by each member, and make reports at each annual meeting.

At the third annual meeting, held in Waterville, it was voted to change the name of the society to "The Maine Ornithological Society." A proposition made by Mr. Knight to publish the proceedings of the society separately was accepted, and Clarence H. Morrell, of Pittsfield, was elected editor, with Mr. Knight as publisher. It was voted to call the new publication, "THE JOURNAL of the Maine Ornithological Society." To Mr. Powers belongs the honor of suggesting the name of the society, and to James Carroll Mead, for the name adopted for "THE JOURNAL."

The first number of the JOURNAL appeared as a quarterly, in January, 1899, and the three following numbers, with an average of ten pages, were well filled with material of much interest to students of Maine birds. Owing to Mr. Morrell's ill health, he declined to serve as editor of Vol. II, and at the fourth annual meeting, held in Brunswick, Mr. J. Merton Swain, of Portland, was elected to suc-

ceed Mr. Morrell as editor. At the completion of Vol. II, Mr. Swain assumed the publication of the JOURNAL, too. Slowly, but surely, it was enlarged and put on a better paying basis by increasing the advertising and enlarging the subscription list. Mr. Swain was re-elected for five consecutive years. At the close of Vol. VI, owing to pressure of business, and the conviction that for that reason he could not do justice to the JOURNAL, and to the fact that he was chosen by Mr. Knight to serve on the committee to assist in writing "The Revised List of the Birds of Maine," Mr. Swain resigned the office of editor and was elected secretary and treasurer. Mr. W. H. Brownson, of Portland, was then elected editor by the society, and under his management the JOURNAL has continued to improve and increase in value and popularity. Still greater improvements are in contemplation as fast as a larger list of members and subscribers can be added. Many papers of interest, relative to Maine birds, have been published from time to time. In Vol. V, No. 4, began a series of papers, "Notes on the Finches Found in Maine," by Arthur H. Norton, and concluded in Vol. VI, No. 3. In Vol. VI, No. 2, began a series of papers, "Contributions to the Life Histories of the Warblers Found in Maine," written by Mr. O. W. Knight and Mr. Swain, and these are still being published in the current volume. For several years the members have been making spring and fall migration reports. The results have been tabulated by Mr. Dana W. Sweet, and published from time to time in the JOURNAL.

The society at once became prominent in the work of protecting the breeding colonies of sea birds when the wave of sentiment swept the whole country to stop the wanton destruction of birds for plumage to adorn millinery. It at once responded to the call to assist from the "A. O. U." committee on protection, and the "Audubon Society" committee, and much valuable assistance was rendered along this line. The adoption of the A. O. U. uniform bird law by our State Legislature was effected solely through the efforts of our society.