

# THE ORIOLE

A Quarterly Journal of Georgia Ornithology: Official Organ of the  
Georgia Ornithological Society



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No. 2

# THE ORIOLE

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### GEORGIA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Founded December 13, 1936

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Photograph by Ivan R. Tomkins

DR. EUGENE EDMUND MURPHEY

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## IN MEMORIAM: EUGENE EDMUND MURPHEY

By J. FRED DENTON

Dr. Eugene Edmund Murphey, a charter member and faithful supporter of the Georgia Ornithological Society, died at his home in Augusta, Georgia, on April 13, 1952, from a vascular disease which had long confined him to bed. With his passing the Georgia Ornithological Society has lost one of its most eminent members and those of us who knew him intimately a treasured friend.

Dr. Murphey was born in Augusta, Georgia, November 1, 1875, the only son and child of Edmund Turner and Sarah (Dobey) Murphey, both natives of Richmond County, Georgia. Here in Augusta he lived his entire life in the same house, except for periods when he was away at school or on trips. Since his father was a planter, we can imagine that Dr. Murphey made frequent trips with him to the large farm near Hephzibah. Possibly it was while exploring the farm with its cotton fields, woodlots, old mill and pond that his interest in birds was aroused. We know that from earliest boyhood he showed an abiding interest in birds and an insatiable curiosity regarding their habits and life histories; an interest that never waned until his death.

His early schooling was obtained in the Augusta public schools and the Academy of Richmond County from which he graduated in 1891. He then entered the University of Georgia which he left in his junior year to study medicine in the office of Eugene Foster, M. D. Later he entered the Medical College of Georgia in Augusta from which he graduated in 1898. After serving a year's internship at the Lamar Hospital, Augusta, he spent a year in postgraduate study at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland. Returning to Augusta in 1900, Dr. Murphey was appointed city physician for infectious diseases, the first advance toward a brilliant career in medicine. On November 14, 1900, he married Willie Roney of Augusta. There were no children from this union.

Dr. Murphey's prominence in the medical field, both in private and public office, was widely recognized and his achievements have been outstanding in the spheres of public health and medical education. He served successively on the faculty of the Medical College of Georgia as Instructor in Physical Diagnosis, Professor of Materia Medica and Therapeutics, Professor of Clinical Medicine and Clinical Professor of Medicine. In recognition of his contribution to medical education the building on the Medical College campus which houses the departments of Pathology, and Microbiology and Public Health has been named the Murphey Building.

Despite a very busy career as a physician and teacher, Dr. Murphey found time to pursue his favorite avocation, ornithology. Starting while

still a boy with a study of the birds in the immediate vicinity of Augusta, he gradually extended his observations to include the whole middle Savannah River Valley. He was early attracted to the Charleston Museum where were available specimens for comparison and staff members for enlightening discussions. A great interest in waterfowl and coastal birds was developed which led to much active work in the Bull's Bay region, Prichard's Island, Bay Point, Beaufort, Edisto, and other coastal South Carolina points, as well as points on the Georgia coast. On three occasions some time was spent at Rodanthe, North Carolina and on one occasion at Accomac, Virginia, studying birds. Other more extended trips to study birds included a visit to South Dakota and two trips to the Gaspé Peninsula. Dr. Murphey was acquainted with the few other ornithologists working in the southeast and visited them frequently to collect and exchange specimens. Through the years he accumulated a fine collection of skins which contains not only birds of the southeast but a majority of the species occurring in North America north of Mexico. This collection will be preserved in the Charleston Museum.

Possibly because of the time-consuming and exhausting demands of his medical profession, Dr. Murphey found little time for ornithological writing. His one major contribution was an important monograph on his observations of the birds of the middle Savannah River Valley, published by the Charleston Museum in 1937. However, he was most generous in the lending of specimens and the sharing of his extensive knowledge, the results of which have enriched the writings of other authors. Dr. Murphey was elected an associate of the American Ornithologists' Union in 1934 and a member in 1940. For many years he served as Honorary Curator of Birds in the Charleston Museum.

Georgia has produced few men as talented as Dr. Murphey. Besides his profession and his ornithology he had many other interests and avocations—poet, portrait painter, historian, orator, politician and raconteur. It was possibly as a conversationalist and raconteur that he liked best to be known. He was always the center of any group and led the conversation in so subtle a manner that it was never apparent it was being directed. He always left time for the other fellow to tell his story and he somehow seemed to bring out the best in everyone.

Always in great demand as toastmaster for varied occasions, Dr. Murphey was a charming host and his home was distinguished as a center of social and intellectual culture.

Eugene Edmund Murphey—gentleman, physician, poet, raconteur, friend and Dean of Georgia Ornithologists, farewell; in life we loved you, in death we salute you.

## GENERAL NOTES

**A GLYNN COUNTY SIGHT RECORD OF THE AVOCET.**—While observing shore birds on St. Simon Island near the mouth of King River, October 12, 1951, Mrs. Fern Dorris and the writer came within fifty yards of two Avocets (*Recurvirostra americana*). Through a 7 x 30 Zeiss binocular the distinguishing black and white pattern, light legs and upturned bill were noted at rest and in flight.

I believe this is the first recorded sight record in Georgia since October 21, 1943, by James B. Floyd (Tomkins) three miles east of Savannah (see Greene, *et al.*, *Birds of Georgia*, 1945). Since this incident two Avocets were seen on the Deptford Tract, four miles east of Savannah, on October 21, 1951, by Ivan Tomkins, who states that the Avocet has been reported more frequently in South Carolina and Florida of late years.—LUCILLE C. ROTCHFORD, 141 South Jackson Street, Milledgeville, Georgia.

**UNUSUAL NESTING BEHAVIOR OF THE BROWN-HEADED NUTHATCH.**—Two pairs of Brown-headed Nuthatches (*Sitta pusilla*) were observed in Bulloch County, Georgia, about one-half mile south of the city limits of Statesboro from April 5 through May 17, 1951, caring for the same nest. The nest was about five feet from the ground in the hollow of a partially decayed limb of a pecan tree which was growing in the corner of a hog pasture. A pair of Bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*) were nesting in a hole of the same limb about six inches above the opening of the Nuthatch nest and were constantly annoying the Nuthatches.

The four adult birds were seen taking nesting materials to the cavity, although one pair did not seem as active in this task as the other. After the eggs hatched, both pairs seemed to work equally hard at the job of securing food. During the early stages of brooding, three of the adult birds fed the adult on the nest, presumably a female. Whether this was for her, or for her to feed to the young, I cannot say. Later the feeding was done by all four adults from outside the entrance to the nest.

The young left the nest on May 1. On May 17, I saw a family of seven or eight Nuthatches about two hundred yards from the nest and assumed that this was the same family I had been observing. Only two adult birds were in this group.

That both females shared in the laying of the eggs is questionable. I am inclined to believe that all the eggs were laid by one bird.—JAMES H. OLIVER, JR., Box 145, Waynesboro, Georgia.

**THE BRITISH COLUMBIA WATER-THRUSH IN SOUTHERN GEORGIA.**—On August 25, 1951, I collected two migrant Water-thrushes on a palm-shaded hummock adjacent to the Jekyll Island causeway, approximately three miles south of Brunswick, Glynn County, Georgia. The specimens, both immature males, were referable to *Seiurus noveboracensis noveboracensis* and *Seiurus n. linnaeus*, respectively, the latter race having been described by McCabe and Miller from British Columbia (*Condor*, 35: 192-197, 1933). Measurements of the example of *linnaeus* are as follows: wing, 72.9; tail, 51.5; bill (from nostril), 10.0 mm. The specimens, bearing my catalog numbers 1014 and 1015, have been checked and these identifications verified by Dr. Alden H. Miller, and they are deposited in the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, Berkeley. The race *linnaeus* has been reported from northern

Georgia by Burleigh (*Oriole*, 13: 6-7, 1948) and from coastal Mississippi by the same ornithologist (*Occas. Papers Mus. Zool. Louisiana State Univ.*, No. 20: 329-490, 1945). While my specimen appears to be the first from southern Georgia, a re-examination of older specimens from the State (particularly those referred to *S. n. notabilis*) might reveal further examples of the British Columbia form.—ROBERT A. NORRIS, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, Berkeley 4, California*.

**PHILADELPHIA VIREO AT ATLANTA.**—On October 6, 1951, I collected a Philadelphia Vireo (*Vireo philadelphicus*) in the willows bordering Peachtree Creek and a small swampy area about three miles north of Decatur in DeKalb County, Georgia. The bird proved to be a female and was very fat. This is but the third record of this vireo from the Atlanta region.—RICHARD A. PARKS, 2303 Pembroke Place, N. E., Atlanta, Georgia.

## RECENT LITERATURE

**A CHECK-LIST OF THE BIRDS OF VIRGINIA.**—By Joseph James Murray, 113 pp. Virginia Society of Ornithology, 1952. \$1.50.

This paper bound volume concisely but comprehensively summarizes the status of 398 forms of birds found in Virginia. Introductory chapters treat in a scholarly manner of the history of ornithology, the physiographic and faunal zones and the ornithological literature of the State.

Bird students will find Dr. Murray's use of the common names of birds interesting. Inasmuch as these names were checked by Dr. Alexander Wetmore, chairman of the American Ornithologists' Union Committee on Nomenclature, the book may give us some forewarning of official changes to appear in the forthcoming A. O. U. Check-list. Having learned to expect considerable change in scientific names, we are saddened to note that the amateur ornithologist, for whose benefit common names were invented, must now keep abreast of a changing vernacular. I am particularly afraid that I shall never be able to remember where to insert the word "common" in the names of the American Common Egret and the Common Snowy Egret, the new names of these two species.

The custom of affording to both species and subspecies the same degree of dignity in the format of the check-list has been followed. Unfortunately, this custom allows the admission as additional "forms" of some dozen races on the basis of a single examined specimen, and the subspecies, Wayne's Black-throated Green Warbler, is admitted purely on the basis of geographic probability. I do not mean to imply that the problem of subspecific status does not merit attention in a state check-list. On the contrary, it is an important aspect to be considered. Nevertheless, it is my belief that emphasis should be placed upon the species, relegating the position of subspecies to subparagraphs within the discussion of each species. The criteria for the separation of one species from another are more stable, less subject to change, than the constantly shifting criteria for the separation of the various geographical races of most of our polytypic species. A specimen of the Hermit Thrush identified as *H. g. faxonii* today may be referable tomorrow to a newly described race. Yet unquestionably it is a Hermit Thrush; the bird itself knew this.

The book will be of interest to Georgia in that it demonstrates the results of cooperative effort on the part of bird students in all parts of a state. To Virginians it will undoubtedly prove indispensable, since that state has been without an up-to-date check-list since 1890. Economically printed in attractive off-set process so that it is within the price reach of all, the book is a most welcome contribution to our knowledge of southern birds.—WILLIAM W. GRIFFIN.

## NEWS AND COMMENTS

**SPRING MEETING, 1952.**—The twenty-sixth semi-annual meeting of the Georgia Ornithological Society was held at Gatlinburg, Tennessee, April 25-27, 1952, in conjunction with the Wilson Ornithological Club. The Tennessee Ornithological Society, the Carolina Bird Club, and the Georgia Ornithological Society were hosts to the 33rd annual meeting of the Wilson Club. Sixty-seven members and guests attended the G.O.S. luncheon and business meeting which was held at the Mountain View Hotel on Saturday, April 26, with the president, Harold Peters, presiding.

The president announced that an increasing number of requests were being received for back numbers of *The Oriole*, six of which are now out of print. One of our members, who desired that his name be withheld, offered to double any amount that might be raised for the purpose of reprinting these numbers. It was the consensus of opinion that "the plate should be passed" for contributions, which subsequently amounted to \$87.40.

Mrs. J. C. Oliver, Second Vice-president, commented on the duties and activities of the Regional Vice-presidents and was followed by reports from the various Vice-presidents who were present.

In considering the fall meeting it was announced that the date would not conflict with American Ornithologists' Union which meets in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, October 20-24. The desire to meet in south Georgia in the fall was expressed, and the request made that suggestions be directed to Mrs. Charles Neal. An invitation was extended to meet in Statesboro.

The executive committee recommended an amendment to the By-Laws and submitted the following proposed change in writing to the president:

Article III, Section 1., a. from "Associate member: annual dues, two dollars," to read "Student, Out-of-State, Library: annual dues, two dollars."

Section 2. to read "The privileges of membership are the same for all classes." Deleting "except that associate members shall not be eligible to vote or hold office."

It was moved, seconded, and voted that this recommendation be adopted.

Honored guest at the G.O.S. luncheon was Dr. George Miksch Sutton, noted bird artist, who is at present staying with Mr. Herbert L. Stoddard and painting the plates for Thomas Burleigh's forthcoming book on the birds of Georgia. Dr. Sutton was introduced by Harold Peters and expressed appreciation for the cordiality and new friendships. He recounted his early friendship with Mr. Burleigh and the plans for a book on the birds of Georgia. Mr. Stoddard announced that a number of

the paintings which had been completed would be on display following the business session. He also read excerpts from a letter from Mr. Burleigh concerning the progress on the manuscript, which it was hoped would be ready for publication in the fall of this year.

**THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY.**—It is a pleasure to report the formation, in April, 1952, of the Alabama Ornithological Society. We welcome this addition to southern bird organizations and wish for it a long life of success and achievement.

**REPRINTS AVAILABLE OF VOL. 1, NO. 1.**—Out of print for many years, the first issue of *The Oriole* has been reprinted and is now available. Copies may be secured from the Business Manager. The price is \$1.00. This reprint was made possible by contributions at the spring meeting and the generosity of one of our members. Other out-of-print numbers will be reprinted in the near future.

**STUDIES OF NOCTURNAL BIRD MIGRATION IN GEORGIA.**—In the spring of 1948, observers at 30 points on the North American continent trained telescopes on the moon to obtain counts of migrating birds. Georgia was represented in this cooperative effort by stations at Thomasville and at Athens. The data secured were used to compute the flight densities (*i.e.*, the number of birds per hour per mile of front) and directional trends of nocturnal migrants at different times, at different places, and under different conditions. Comparisons of these flight densities and analyses of the variations in flight trends led to several surprising discoveries, which have been discussed in a recent paper by George H. Lowery, Jr., ("A Quantitative Study of the Nocturnal Migration of Birds," *University of Kansas Publications*, Museum of Natural History, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 361-472).

Flight densities in Georgia, as derived from 26 hours of observation, were modest. The *maximum* hourly station densities were 900 at Athens, 1500 at Thomasville; the *average* hourly station densities, 400 at Athens, 500 at Thomasville. These results are to be considered in no sense disappointing. Indeed, without the contrasts that such figures afford, few conclusions would be possible. In the present instance, the Georgia densities combine with results from Pensacola and Winter Park, Florida, and from Charleston, South Carolina, to indicate that nocturnal migrational activity in the southeastern United States in the latter half of April is astonishingly low. Some contrasting April hourly averages from other parts of North America are: Tampico, Tamaulipas—6300; Progreso, Yucatan—2800; Louisville, Kentucky—2000; Ottumwa, Iowa—1700; Rockport, Texas—1600; Knoxville, Tennessee—1300.

A second cooperative moon-watching effort of even greater scope is being staged in the fall of 1952. An attempt is being made to saturate the United States with observers. It will be interesting to see whether the volume of migration through Georgia in autumn exceeds that in April and whether results at Athens and Thomasville are representative of the volumes for the state as a whole. Members of the G.O.S. are urged to join in the project. The observational procedure is extremely simple and can be carried out by anyone who can avail himself of a small telescope of the type popular among ornithologists. Additional details may be secured by writing at once to Robert J. Newman, at the Museum of Zoology, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where the data will be mathematically processed.