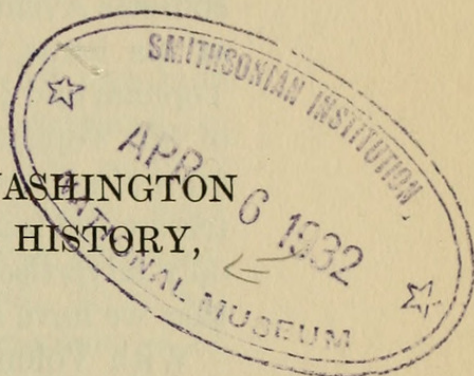


PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
BIOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON

ACCOUNT OF THE PASTIME, A WASHINGTON
PERIODICAL, LARGELY OF NATURAL HISTORY,
PUBLISHED IN 1883-1885.

BY W. L. McATEE.



Among the treasures of the Division of Birds, U. S. National Museum, is an incomplete set of a little journal, *The Pastime*, that aside from its rarity derives its value chiefly from natural history contributions by young men who later made their mark in science. The late William Palmer presented the nucleus of the set comprising examples of 9 of the probable 20 numbers that were published. Through the efforts of Dr. C. W. Richmond and the writer, the set has been increased to representations of 16 issues (3 of them incomplete). Washington Topham, referred to later in this account, generously presented the only copy in his possession, which fortunately was of a number previously missing from the set. Miss Margaret Lewis, sister of W. C. Lewis, founder of *The Pastime*, kindly supplied loose sheets from which it was possible to assemble one complete issue additional to the existing set. Every effort has been made to trace copies and to collect information about *The Pastime* with the results here presented.

We may deal first with the business history of *The Pastime*. It was launched in July, 1883, by W. C. Lewis and C. E. Clifton, Editors and Publishers, as "A repository for the literary efforts of our young people, devoted to sports and pastimes, natural history, etc." Mr. Washington Topham has kindly supplied the following information about this little journal. In those days there was rather a fad among young men of gathering together printing equipment and producing either occasionally or regularly leaflets or small magazines, the principal outlet for

which was exchange among themselves. Mr. Topham was one of these embryo typographers and he says: "The Pastime was first printed by me in my amateur printing office at 1010 Massachusetts Avenue, and after sale of office to my dear friend Lewis, at his home 916 Rhode Island Avenue N. W. * * * Mrs. Topham and I used to be contributors to it." Further evidence of Mr. Topham's connection with The Pastime is visible in the form of an advertisement of his father's well known business in trunks and leather goods, on the back page of the first issue, the only advertisement to appear in any number of the periodical that we have seen.

With Volume 2, a change was made in the subheading of The Pastime to "A monthly journal devoted to the interests of our American Youth and all others who may appreciate its efforts." W. C. Lewis and C. E. Clifton are now listed as Editors. In No. 6, June, 1884, the suspension of the journal is announced, but new blood permitted a reorganization which is explained in the first issue of Volume 3. The subhead undergoes another change to "A monthly journal of Literature, Natural History, Field Sports, etc.," with W. C. Lewis as Editor, and E. C. Bryan and William Palmer as Associate Editors. A leaflet laid in Volume 3, No. 1, July, 1884, distinguishes these signatories as proprietors and announces that "In the future equal space will be devoted to Natural History and General Literature." They hope their humble endeavors may be appreciated and state the subscription price as 50 cents per year. Hugh M. Smith's Natural History department, which persisted through the first two volumes, is discontinued but Smith remained a contributor to the end.

Volume 3, it is evident also, saw a change in the "personally produced" policy as Nos. 1 and 2 bear the legend "Gibbons Print," No. 3 "Wills Print," Nos. 4, 5 and 7 "Henkle & Co. Print" (in issue No. 4, the three producers are ranked equally as Editors). Volume 3, No. 7, January, 1885, appears with a cover, with the subheading "devoted to Literature and the Sciences" and the editorial definition changed to "an amateur monthly journal devoted to the sciences in general"; the subscription price is raised to One Dollar. On the cover we note that Edward C. Bryan is Editor, and on the editorial page we read: "the originator of the paper and also one of the associate

editors have withdrawn, leaving only myself to conduct affairs." The editor was constrained to remark also "it is impossible to keep the paper alive on wind." Such symptoms presaged the end and one more issue, Vol. 3, No. 8, February, 1885, appears to have been the last.

The particular interest that *The Pastime* has for members of the Biological Society of Washington is that throughout its career it was in part a natural history journal. The younger scientists of the city found in it an outlet for comment, brief notes, and even longer contributions, which was agreeably unsupervised by the scientific pundits of the period. Hugh M. Smith, then an undergraduate, later U. S. Commissioner of Fisheries, was in charge of the Natural History Department of Volumes 1 and 2, and contributed to most of the issues of Vol. 3. In the initial issue he said, "It shall be our purpose in this department of the paper to present Natural History in its most attractive form, not indulging in any very scientific treatment of natural topics, and omitting, when expedient, all technical terms. Short communications on live subjects are solicited."

William Palmer, then an assistant to his father, Joseph Palmer, and later Chief Taxidermist of the U. S. National Museum, a Fellow of the American Ornithologists' Union, and a recognized authority in several branches of natural history, became associate editor of *The Pastime* in July, 1884, and at once began, under the heading *Avifauna Columbiana*, a series of notes of additions and corrections to the work of Elliott Coues and D. Webster Prentiss, published under the same title as Bulletin 26 of the National Museum (1883).

The restiveness of these youngsters under the reign of Coues not only is thus made evident but it is given explicit expression in the July, 1884, issue as follows: "It is to be regretted that Dr. Coues in preparing his list of birds did not avail himself more of the experience of our younger ornithologists. * * * There are many corrections and additions that we can suggest, which it is our purpose to note in our future numbers of this paper * * *."

In the August, 1884, issue the further interesting statement of policy is given "Being aware of the fact that there is no journal published in Washington wherein the ornithological and other natural history interests of the District are considered and

promoted, we have undertaken the task of opening the columns of our paper to * * * communications * * * on such subjects, believing that by doing so we will prove of no small use to the student and collector." In all probability the development of the Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington, at this period, in part satisfied the need here expressed and may have been one of the factors in bringing about the demise of The Pastime.

Signed articles on natural history in available parts of The Pastime were contributed by Ed. C. Bryan, F. H. Knowlton, C. Lehnert, F. A. Lucas, L. M. McCormick, Wm. Palmer, F. A. Reynolds, John A. Ryder, Hugh M. Smith, and Lester F. Ward. Several men of great scientific reputation developed from these young naturalists but, alas, all but one of them (Smith) have passed on.

A systematic review is here given of the Natural history content of the available file of The Pastime, special attention being called to notes of local interest.

Vol. 1, No. 1, July, 1883.

Collecting of plants advised; National Museum received a shipment of Carolina paroquets *alive*; bald eagle (some local bearing); fence lizard a pet.

Vol. 1, No. 2, August, 1883 (only first 2 pages identified).

Nothing.

Vol. 1, No. ? date ? (previous to No. 5, November).

General essay on "The Avi-fauna of the District," nothing definite.

Vol. 1, No. 5, November, 1883.

Probability of establishment of a Zoological Garden; miscellany mostly not of local interest, but Hornaday's group of oranges in Museum pronounced "one of the best pieces of taxidermy we have ever seen," gives an "accurate idea of the personal appearance of our ancestors"; "Quail and Quail Shooting."

Vol. 1, No. ? (probably 6, Dec. 1883).

The mockingbird; miscellany; "Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal," with general local reference.

Vol. 2, No. 2, February, 1884.

Curious facts about some trees; miscellany, none of local interest.

Vol. 2, No. 3, March, 1884.

The purple finch; prairie dogs; gnats.

Vol. 2, No. 4, April, 1884.

Termites; second records of Bewick's Wren and the Yellow Rail for the vicinity; capture also of a Loggerhead Shrike "of which but very few have been taken here"; notice of publication of a second edition of Coues and Prentiss' *Avifauna Columbiana*; miscellany.

Vol. 2, No. 5, May, 1884.

The bobolink; miscellany.

Vol. 2, No. 6, June, 1884.

The catbird; positive local record of breeding of the blue yellow-backed warbler not so recorded by Coues and Prentiss; first collecting of hooded warbler and of Lincoln's sparrow; ruffed grouse still to be found in the Soldiers' Home Grounds; "recently a pair of silver foxes have made their appearance"; miscellany.

Vol. 3, No. 1, July, 1884.

Avifauna Columbiana (explained in the August issue as "notes of additions and corrections to Coues & Prentiss' list" by William Palmer), notes on 8 species "not enumerated in the recently published list," 4 others "first recorded as taken here, though mentioned in Coues and Prentiss' list as having been seen here"; and another 3 of which the second instance of capture is noted; Dipping for Shad; references to publications on Flora Columbiana, "It is doubtful if there will ever be any great addition made to this list," a bit of that ever risky matter, prophecy, as the number of higher plants given namely 1294, was increased to 1630 in 1919,¹ a number further materially expanded in 1930²; carnivorous plants with local record for *Sarracenia purpurea*; red cross-bills collected at Laurel, Md., June 30, by George Marshall (p. 8), is a record not included in the latest list³ of birds of the region; *Hydrophyllum canadense*, a new plant for the Flora; additional record for *Heliotropium europaeum*.

Vol. 3, No. 2, August, 1884.

Avifauna Columbiana, continued, amending the Coues and Prentiss list with respect to 18 species. Of the American Egret Palmer says, "I have known this bird to breed in Arlington Cemetery" (p. 13); "The Decrease of Shad and Herring in the Potomac"; *Clethra alnifolia* added to the Flora; porpoise seen above Aqueduct Bridge; albino robin nestlings; miscellany.

Vol. 3, No. 3, September, 1884.

"The 'Coon"; plume trade; "The Linden Tree"; interesting plant localities about Washington; liquorice; miscellany including local bird records.

Vol. 3, No. 4, October, 1884.

"A botanical trip up the Anacostia"; bird records for Gainesville, Va.; "The Ferns of Washington and Vicinity"; *Aspidium spinulosum* added to Flora; *Corallorhiza multiflora* recorded; "Arrival of Spring Birds"; "Notes on Birds found on Cobb's Island, Va., between July 9 and July 29, 1884. Part 1—Land Birds" (19 species); miscellany including local bird records.

Vol. 3, No. 5, November, 1884 (incomplete).

"Chinese smoking opium"; "Potato"; local squirrels; 3 species addi-

¹Contr. U. S. Nat. Herb. 21, 329 pp., 42 Pls., 1919.

²Proc. Biol. Soc. Wash. 43, pp. 21-54, March, 1930.

³Proc. Biol. Soc. Wash., 42, pp. 1-80, March, 1929.

tional to Part 1 of the Cobb's Island list; and Part 2—Water Birds (28 species).

Vol. 3, No. 7, January, 1885.

"The Nectar Glands of the Catalpa Tree"; "Guano Bird's Egg"; "Water Snake"; account of meetings of the Biological Society of Washington.

Vol. 3, No. 8, February, 1885.

"The Distribution of Seeds by the Wind"; "A list of recent Land and Fresh-water Mollusks of the District of Columbia and Vicinity." C. Lehnert, the author, says 36 more species and varieties are recorded than in Girard's list of 1855. This catalog has never been superseded; miscellany including local bird records.

The set of *The Pastime in the Division of Birds*, U. S. National Museum, as at present collated includes:

Vol. 1, No. 1, July, 1883.

Vol. 1, No. 2, August, 1883 (*incomplete*).

Vol. 1, No. 5, November, 1883.

Vol. 1, No. 6 (?) (*incomplete*).

Vol. 2, No. 2, February, 1884.

Vol. 2, No. 3, March, 1884.

Vol. 2, No. 4, April, 1884.

Vol. 2, No. 5, May, 1884.

Vol. 2, No. 6, June, 1884.

Vol. 3, No. 1, July, 1884.

Vol. 3, No. 2, August, 1884.

Vol. 3, No. 3, September, 1884.

Vol. 3, No. 4, October, 1884.

Vol. 3, No. 5, November, 1884 (*incomplete*).

Vol. 3, No. 7, January, 1885.

Vol. 3, No. 8, February, 1885.

If this brochure reaches any one who can help to complete the set or give further information about the journal their cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

Inquiry at Washington libraries has developed that there are no specimens of *The Pastime in the Division of Birds* in the Library of Congress, nor in those of the Smithsonian Institution and the Department of Agriculture. The National Museum main library has copies of Vol. 3, Nos. 1 and 4, and the Washington Public Library one of Vol. 3, No. 1.



McAtee, W. L. 1932. "Account of the pastime, a Washington periodical, largely of natural history, published in 1883-1885." *Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington* 45, 23–28.

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