## THE CANARY ISLANDS ORNITHOLOGICAL EXPEDITION By Dr. Carnes Weeks

eer as a surgeon. I determined to devote my life to ornithology.

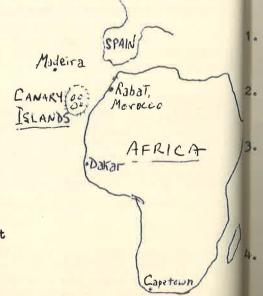
one expedition.

Early in my surgical practice I acquired a patient and life-time you plan to make." friend, Dr. James P. Chapin. What little I have accomplished in the field of ornithology is all certainly due to this splendid individual.

I studied the Wild Turkey in South Carolina for six years.

look around for such a place where there had been very little if any

serious ornithological work done. particularly in modern times. I first settled on Cuba and was well along in the organization of an ornithological expedition when the political situation deteriorated so rapidly the plan had to be abandoned. I next started reading all I could find about the Canary Islands. To my amazement, very little serious scientific work had been done on the avifauna of the Canaries since Bannerman's work, his last was published in 1922. In 1947 Helge Volsoe, Professor of Zoology at the University of Copenhagen, visited the Canary Islands and in the ensuing years wrote a modern monograph on the subject, but he had only been able to spend four months in the islands. Aside from these two authors there were short visits made by several English ornithologists, a French ornithologist, and another Dane.



It seemed to be an ideal place for a long-range study because there ware so very many unanswered questions. Volsoe in his work leaves a question mark after every one of the 60 species of birds thought to breed in In 1949 I developed a rather rare and little-known parasitic disthe Canaries. The same is true of the roughly 160 species of visitors. ease, probably caught from one of my Labrador Retrievers - Toxoplasmosprofessor Volsoe said to me in a letter dated November 13, 1959, "I firm-As it was soon obvious that I would not be able to continue with my cary believe that a thorough study of the avifauna would be most valuable and sure to give important scientific results. Like other island fauna. Canarian is strongly threatened and any delay could easily be irrep-In 1952 I took the Weeks African Expedition to French Equatorial , rable. " He continues, "A bird observatory on one of the eastern islands Africa under the co-sponsorship of the American Museum of Natural Historith possibilities for trapping and ringing birds would certainly yield and the National Geographic Society. It was of interest to note that in amount of valuable information of interest not only to the students of this was the first time that these two organizations had ever sponsoreganarian ornithology, but also to the more general problem of migration. also the problem of inter-island is of great theoretical interest and it could only be solved by a large scale ringing scheme such as I understand

In the year 1951 while planning the expedition to Africa, I made another very close friend, Professor Peter Paul Kellogg of the Labora-The next thing that engaged my attention was Meleagris gallipavo for Ornithology, Cornell University. He advised me and introduced me to the mysteries of sound-recording of birds. In reading an article by two British ornithologists, David Lack and H. N. Southern of Oxford As it became evident that I must live in a warm climate I began tuniversity, they named 16 species of birds common to Great Britain and the Canary Islands whose songs or call notes show marked differences on the islands of Tenerife and other islands of this archipelago.

My objectives were then as follows:

The trapping and banding of all Canary Island birds through the cooperation of the Sociedad Española de Ornitología, Sección de Migración. This operation has never been attempted before.

The sound recording of songs and call notes of some 60 species of birds that are thought to nest on the islands of this archipelago. This has never been done before.

Color photography of these birds with the production of Kodachrome slides to match the recordings for the Land Laboratory of Sound, Laboratory of Ornithology, Cornell University.

The exploration of the possibility of stereoscopic color photography with accurate measurements to replace the collection by shooting of rare species.

Further detailed ecological studies of the Canary Island birds begun principally by David A. Bannerman over 40 years ago, continued in 1948 by Lack and Southern, and by Cullen, et al., in 1949 and then by Helge Volsoe, the Danish ornithologist, who visited the islands in 1947 and his report is considered the finest one in existence.

Time Period for which support is requested: three years, January 1960, through January 1, 1963.

After realizing that an expedition of this sort should have a University backing. I prepared an application for a three-year study of the birds of the Canary Islands for the consideration of the Council of the Laboratory of Ornithology, Cornell University. The Council, at a meet in December, 1959, approved the plan in general and specifically approxa preliminary expedition to start January 1, 1960. I felt that there enough of my friends and others interested in the subject who might be willing to contribute to such a venture by sending checks to Cornell University.

On the basis of our objectives and our University backing we were able to get a distinguished number of American and European ornithologists to act as an Advisory Committee. As I am not a professional on thologist, I realized that our expedition must be able to attract men this caliber who would come out and spend varying periods of time with I am happy to say that of the fifteen members, twelve have indicated to me their desire to do just this. Realizing that we must have a comfor house for headquarters which would care for guests, we rented one in small Spanish town of Bajamar on the northeast coast of the island of Tenerife.

We received many enthusiastic letters from ornithologists, but no more so than the Spanish authorities who have given us their complete cooperation. Professor Francisco Bernis of the Sociedad Española de tología has supplied us with a generous quantity of rings.

The last two months have been spent in planning, organization and mist netting. We have been most fortunate in having as our first gues Wladyslaw Rydzewski, Ph.D., one of the members of our Advisory Committed (and Publisher of THE RING, international banding magazine -Ed.).

We have been successful in banding birds of the following species

Canary - Serinus canarius
Spanish Sparrow - Passer hispaniolensis
Linnet - Carduelis cannabina
Blackcap - Sylvia atricapilla
Berthelot's Pipit - Anthus berthelotii
Chaffinch - Fringilla coelebs
Rock Sparrow - Petronia petronia
Song Thrush - Turdus ericetorum
European Robin - Frithacus rubecula
Hoopoe - Upupa epops
Spectacled Warbler - Sylvia conspicillata