

THE ORNITHOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF ALLAN R. PHILLIPS JOHN P. HUBBARD¹

ABSTRACT.—Allan R. Phillips' (ARP) career as a professional ornithologist spanned almost 65 years, from 1931 through 1996. During this time he contributed to ornithology in many ways, including publication of 171 articles on birds, mainly of North America. These and other of his contributions are discussed, along with an attempt to understand the man and how he functioned as a person and an ornithologist.

Allan Robert Phillips' (ARP) professional career in ornithology spanned almost 65 years, beginning in Arizona's Baboquivari Mountains in October 1931 and ending with his death in suburban Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico in January 1996. During this span, he became one of North America's premier ornithologists in such traditional venues as the collecting, preparation, and curating of specimens and the study of avian distribution, status (e.g., abundance, frequency of occurrence, and seasonal presence), migration, geographic and other variation, and taxonomy. In addition, he was interested in and knowledgeable about many other aspects of birds, including their habits, ecology, vocalizations, breeding biology, adaptations, molt, osteology, paleontology, and conservation. He conveyed what he learned in a manner that was no-nonsense and to the point, at times laced with intemperate remarks that could be offensive to some. However, his ultimate goal was to make ornithology the best science possible, both through his own contributions and critiques of those of others. While his approach may have earned him the animosity of some, most people recognized him as a valuable source and solid synthesizer of information on birds. And for many he was much more, including a teacher, mentor, critic, friend, field and museum companion, host, conservationist, resident curmudgeon, humorist, aficionado of the sublime, and a truly unique character. But regardless of how one might have viewed him, ARP was above all a fine ornithologist whose many contributions to the science will be valued for a long time to come.

ARP's published works provide the most accessible record of his contributions to ornithology, although these are also evident in the form of his specimens, notes, correspondence, spoken word, and other sources. Overall, he published 171 articles on birds (plus one on a mammal), of which about a third were coauthored. His publications ranged from letters, comments, notes, and reviews to longer articles and several books. The majority of his publications were on the status, distribution, migration, and taxonomy of the birds, with fewer on their biology, conservation, paleontology, and miscellaneous topics. His studies focused on birds at many different levels, ranging from taxa to regional avifaunas. Geographically, he devoted most of his efforts to the birds of North America, particularly those of the western and southern portions of the continent (including Middle America). He was especially knowledgeable about the avifaunas of Arizona and Mexico, which he studied firsthand mainly in the periods 1931-1958 and 1959-1995, respectively. Works dealing with these regions included the **Birds of Arizona** (no. 85 in his

bibliography), published in 1964 with coauthors Joe T. Marshall, Jr. and Gale Monson. This is a monumental tome, as it forms the bedrock on which our knowledge of that important avifauna rests. It was derived in large part from ARP's dissertation, which earned him a Ph. D. from Cornell University in 1946. (The delay in publication was mainly due to ARP's persistent search for data on Arizona's birds, which only declined with his move to Mexico.) In addition, he published many other papers on the birds of that state, including the 1981 **Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Arizona** with Monson as senior author (no. 149).

ARP's studies of the Mexican avifauna never resulted in a definitive book on that subject per se, although he published copiously on the distribution, status, migration, taxonomy (especially subspecies), ecology, and conservation of that country's birds. Beginning in 1958 (nos. 69 and 70), many of his papers relating to that region were in Spanish, which he began learning when he moved to Arizona and in which he became fluent as a resident in Mexico. This faculty, plus his long residence and deep involvement in the birds of the region, made ARP preeminent among ornithologists who have worked in Mexico. In fact, he became as much a Mexican as a U.S. ornithologist, to the point of relating to that country's avifauna more patrimonially than as an outsider. His most extensive treatment of the Mexican avifauna is contained in parts I and II of **Known Birds of North and Middle America** (or "**Known Birds**"), which cover the genera, species, and subspecies he recognized in 20 families of birds in North America (nos. 157 and 163). Without doubt, these volumes contain the most comprehensive, accurate, and solidly-based accounts on the distribution and status ever published in one place on this group of birds. Particularly useful are his accounts on subspecies, which included diagnoses as well as the above information. In addition, these volumes provide detailed summations of ARP's years of taxonomic work, which at times led to different conclusions than those of standard sources. Others of his Mexican publications included a summary of the history of ornithology in Mexico in the years 1910-1960 (no. 75) and lists (coauthored with Andrés M. Sada and Mario A. Ramos) of Spanish names for birds of that country (154 and 158).

ARP's interests in the natural history and taxonomy of birds were evident from his earliest papers, including the first in 1933 on nesting birds at a marsh in northern Arizona (no. 1). However, subspecific identifications cited there and in two subsequent papers (nos. 2 and 3) were apparently based on the literature and not his own determinations. By 1935-1936, his use of trinomials became based at least in part on his own specimens and/or determinations, and this became his standard by 1939 (no. 13). ARP's first published reference to conservation issues occurred in 1943, when he expressed concern about the loss of avian habitats due to overgrazing by livestock (no. 23). While no doubt observed firsthand, he may have become more sensitive to such impacts through association with Charles T. Vorhies—a mentor at the University of Arizona in the 1930s. Evidence of this is seen in ARP's 1950 obituary for Vorhies (no. 43), in which he stated that "his death is a tragic loss to his associates, to science, and to the cause of intelligent land use." This association may also have led ARP to review his acceptance of the "good hawk/bad hawk" philosophy, which was in vogue at the time. For example, in 1933 he wrote about destroying two Cooper's Hawks nests (no. 2), and in 1947 referred to "harmful species" among hawks and owls in Arizona (no. 34). Subsequently, he

seems to have abandoned this concept, at least in his publications. By 1950, his conservation horizon had expanded, including a call for monitoring Baltimore Oriole populations to determine effects of nest-parasitism by the Brown-headed Cowbird (no. 49). Beginning in the 1960s, he became increasingly involved in the conservation of birds and their habitats, as evidenced particularly in papers published in 1970 (no. 119), 1973 (127), 1977 (141), 1980 (146), and 1984 (152).

The first of ARP's 12 book reviews was published in 1946, that on Adriaan J. van Rossem's (1945) annotated check-list on the birds of Sonora (no. 27). Although ARP was just beginning studies of Mexican birds, this review reveals an extensive knowledge of the avifauna of the northwest of that country. The review is incisive and informative, with praise and criticism in balanced and justifiable proportions. In fact, this would be the pattern for most subsequent his reviews, which made good reading in and of themselves. Of all his reviews, none was more anticipated than that of Ned K. Johnson's (1963) treatise on the taxonomy of flycatchers in the Hammond's-Dusky-Gray complex in 1966 (no. 94). Among other things, Johnson's research involved an avian complex on which ARP had done seminal research and become an authority. In addition, Johnson was a student of Alden H. Miller of the University of California at Berkeley, with whom ARP had developed a notorious feud in the 1950's (discussed later). In fact, Johnson's paper would also inject him into the feud, including through his pointed criticisms and muted acknowledgment of ARP previous work on these flycatchers. In spite of such considerations, ARP produced a review that was balanced, objective, and largely free of intemperate remarks (the latter due to tight editorial control—fide Kenneth C. Parkes!). While readily acknowledging its good qualities, ARP detailed a number of shortcomings in Johnson's work—including “incomplete coverage of the literature, exaggerated criticism of 'disapproved' authors, unwarranted claims of originality, ...erroneous statistics... [and] evidences of circular reasoning.”

While most of ARP's publications centered on presentation of findings, about a dozen could be categorized as critiques or topical reviews. The first was published in 1948 (no. 38), this a critique of the contention that House Sparrows were unable to survive in areas where temperatures exceed 40 degrees C or 104 F (e.g., Kendeigh 1934). This idea was based on a laboratory study, which some ornithologists extrapolated to birds in the wild. Using observational data, ARP showed that these sparrows not only survived but had become widespread in places in the Southwest where even higher temperatures were prevalent. Another of ARP's critiques, published in 1971 (no. 123) dealt with photoperiodicity—which was being widely touted as a (if not the) major factor in determining timing of breeding in birds outside equatorial regions (e.g., Miller 1960). This was based largely on laboratory studies, which showed that gonads enlarge as birds are exposed to increasing daylength. This culminates in maximum size in late spring and early summer, which in turn coincides with the height of breeding in many species. However, ARP cited numerous examples to the contrary, including cases in which species regularly breed in late summer, autumn, early spring, and even winter. Based on this and other information, he argued that the timing of breeding in birds is too complex and varied to be explained by any single factor—albeit photoperiodicity is certainly one.

ARP's first topical review was published in 1951, that dealing mainly with

bird migration in southwestern North America (no. 51). There, he explored such subjects as the regularity and timing of migration, which his examples revealed as an exquisitely varied and complex phenomenon. In the process, he produced the first significant migrational overview for the region, where it had attracted relatively little attention until that time. Incidentally, ARP's interests in migration would continue throughout his career, resulting in the publication of extensive information on such topics as dates of passage for many species and subspecies of birds in Arizona, Mexico, and elsewhere in North America. In 1959, he published another important topical review, this detailing his views on avian species and subspecies (no. 71). Although he had been publishing since 1933, this was his first comprehensive statement of taxonomic philosophy. As such, it not only explained the rationale for much of his past work, it laid out a blueprint that he would follow for the rest of his ornithological career. In this paper, he embraced the concept of biological species, which he believed should be assessed both on the basis of reproductive relationships and characters that included morphology, voice, behavior, life history, and ecology of adults and young. However, he recognized that biological species are highly diverse, so the status of each must be determined individually and with proper study. He went on to discuss this diversity, including "open-ring" forms in the North American avifauna. As for subspecies, he firmly believed in both their existence in the natural world and value in ornithological studies. In general, he accepted the so-called 75% rule in recognizing them, but he insisted they be formally named rather than designated by other means. He also pointed out the need for continued scientific collecting, which he had seen decline in extent and emphasis in his 28 years in ornithology.

Several of ARP's subsequent topical reviews reiterated themes addressed above, notably on the values of subspecies and scientific collecting. The most important of these were published in the period 1974-1982, namely nos. 128, 137, and 151. In them, he expressed concerns about the waning interest in (if not rejection of) subspecies by many in ornithology, in spite of their demonstrated usefulness (e.g., in tracking migration and other movements in birds). For example, his studies of subspecies revealed that often lowland occurrences of montane birds represented latitudinal rather than altitudinal dispersal, such as in the Steller's Jay in southwestern North America (no. 48). ARP also pointed out that many questions remain about birds that can be best answered by the collection of carefully selected, prepared, and curated specimens. As in his 1959 review (above), he noted that many bird skins already in collections are of limited scientific value. The reasons for this vary, but they include incomplete data, post-mortem changes, and poor curation. In addition, specimens from breeding populations are often so worn as to be of little value in the subspecific studies. In this regard, ARP did much to improve the situation, including seeking out early-season and molting post-breeding specimens on their breeding grounds. These often included birds in juvenile, immature, female, and non-breeding plumages, which he discovered were often more taxonomically useful than breeding-plumage males! Finally, he was also an early proponent for expanding information on labels, including providing data on gonad and fat condition, cranial pneumatization, molt, soft-part coloration, habitat, and behavior (including vocalizations).

Many of ARP's critiques and topical reviews were sparked by his concerns

about changes occurring in ornithology in the 20th century. Among other things, he deplored the fact that older approaches were being unnecessarily discarded in favor of newer ones. The former included those focusing on natural history and traditional aspects of avian taxonomy. Time and time again, he showed the importance of these as sources of information on birds. Furthermore, ignoring or overlooking such information could lead to questionable conclusions, such as clearly illustrated in his critique on House Sparrows and high temperatures (above). Regard that situation, his concluding statement in that critique was that “Theorizing, combined with careful testing and research, is important in the advance of science; but let us not repeat endlessly all-inclusive theories that do not fit the known facts of nature’s vast outdoor laboratory.” He expressed these and similar sentiments many times over the years, as well as incorporating them into strictures on how ornithological studies should be conducted. When these were not heeded, those guilty of errancies were subject to his criticism—which could verge on intemperance at times. In fact, such instances at times detracted from his intended goal, which was ultimately to improve ornithology as a science (discussed later).

Some might dismiss ARP’s ornithological critiques (*sensu lato*) mainly as fulminations of a 19th-century holdout against the change that invariably occurs as science evolves. For example, the remark quoted above could be viewed as his rejection of laboratory findings as “theories,” while depicting natural-history information as “known facts.” However, while he was no devotee of many things done in the laboratory, it would be a mistake to dismiss his criticisms in such a simplistic manner. On the contrary, ARP often learned enough about newer methods to understand how they work, just in case they might have something useful to offer. In addition, such insights could also be helpful in other ways, such as adding weight to his criticisms! As for his 1948 critique, his major point was that a specious conclusion had been reached because not all relevant facts had been considered. And even though he often flailed away at more modern approaches, he was keenly aware that traditional ornithology is also subject to the same problem. In fact, this is readily apparent from his writings, which show he was universally critical of anything that might produce suspect conclusions about nature—regardless of approach or other considerations. In effect, errant studies in natural history or traditional taxonomy were as much “fair game” for ARP as ones involving laboratory or other newer approaches.

In essence, ARP’s views on proper ornithological studies came down to the fulfillment of two essential strictures: (1) that all facts be considered in assessing a situation, and (2) that conclusions fit these facts. To satisfy these, he followed a three-step approach—the first being to assemble and assimilate all information possible on a situation. For him, sources of data were largely specimens, observations, notes, and the literature, depending on what was relevant. If the information were sufficient, the next step was to analyze it from as many perspectives as possible. (If not, analysis was often delayed until the information was available). For ARP, proper analysis included “starting from scratch,” so as to reduce potential bias and thus enhance objectivity. Among other things, this required at least temporarily putting aside previous conclusions about a situation, regardless of their source or authority. In the third step, interpretations emerging from the analyses were assessed for consistency—first in the context of the database and then with regard to

the biological realm in question. Once completed, only those conclusions most consistent with these sources would be considered for acceptance. Once accepted, any remaining inconsistencies were appropriately discussed, never ignored or glossed over. This was true regardless of their origins, including those stemming from suspect or incomplete information, analyses, or interpretations. (These and other queries were often signalled in ARP's writings by shorthand methods, such as italicized or boldfaced type, quotation or question marks, and parentheses or brackets.)

While the above approach was neither original with nor unique to ARP, he was such a proponent that it can appropriately be called the "Phillipsian Method." In fact, he attributed major elements of it to Lyndon L. Hargrave in a 1968 paper dedicated to that early mentor (no. 111). Whatever its origin, this approach very much appealed to ARP, who used it essentially throughout his career. Part of the appeal was that it satisfied his penchant for gathering and assimilating information, an ability in which he had few if any equals in ornithology. The approach was also in tune with ARP's style of thinking, which centered on analyzing data for "best-fit" interpretations--much like a detective solving a crime. Consistent with this was his insistence on analyzing data from scratch and multiple perspectives, which in turn reflected his independent nature as a scientist. As for his ability at data-gathering/assimilation, he was greatly aided by his intense interest in and curiosity about birds, excellent observational skills, voracious appetite for reading, systematic and prolific note-taking, and eye for relevancy. In addition, he had a prodigious if not photographic memory (which for many years he erroneously assumed to be "standard issue" among his fellow ornithologists!). Taken together, such attributes help explain his rapid rise as an expert on Arizona's avifauna, which was evident even in his earliest papers--published when he was in his late teens! In time, he became almost legendary for his enormous store of knowledge about birds and related subjects, which incorporated everything learned from the field, collections, scientific and popular literature, personal contacts, and other sources.

In large part, it was ARP's dedicated use of the Phillipsian Method that led to many of his most important contributions to ornithology. Nowhere is this more evident than in his treatment of the distribution, status, and migration of North American birds, e.g., in the **Birds of Arizona** and parts I and II of **Known Birds**. For one thing, it is obvious the accounts are based on the best information available, including in overall scope and reliability. Second, it is also apparent that each account is the product of extensive information analyzed anew, as opposed to generalizations or repetitions of past findings. Third, the accounts are typically models as regards consistency with the available information, with inconsistencies, etc. appropriately identified. In addition to their high caliber, ARP's findings often provided fresh insights into the distribution, status, and/or migration of North American birds. These in turn sometimes challenged or even overturned previous views, some long held if not "holy writ." In fact, such instances began to crop up early in ARP's career, as in his 1942 paper on Elf and Flammulated owls (no. 19). There, he made a strong case that northern populations of these birds are highly migratory, affirming views of certain "old-timers" (e.g., E.C. Jacot) and contrary to those of "establishment" ornithologists. More recently, his 1975 paper produced a major reassessment of the winter and migratory distribution and status of the Semipalmated and Western sandpipers (no. 134). This was based mainly on specimens, and

it overturned long held views of ornithologists and birdwatchers alike--particularly as regards the eastern U.S., among the avifaunally best-known regions of the world!

The use of Phillipsian Method also contributed to ARP's early grasp of and continued insights into changes in the distribution and status of North American birds--particularly in the period from the 1840s to the present. Although introduced to these possibilities by Hargrave, ARP was the first to demonstrate their extent in the avifauna of southwestern North America. By contrast, many earlier ornithologists tended to view birds in rather static terms, although they were certainly aware of the drastic declines of species such as the Great Auk, Passenger Pigeon, and Ivory-billed Woodpecker. However, ARP documented expansions as well as declines, as typified in his 1950 paper on the Great-tailed Grackle (no. 45). In this, he carefully detailed this species' invasion of Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Sonora, and Chihuahua in the period 1913-1948, this involving three distinct populations. Among other things, he anticipated the eventual contact and its possible outcome as two of these spread over southern Arizona from Chihuahua and Sonora. He also discussed many other changes in avian distribution and status in the **Birds of Arizona**, as well as in less detail in a variety of other publications. Perhaps his most important paper on the subject was published in 1968 (no. 111), where he discussed such changes in 35 landbirds in the Southwest--14 of which showed declines and 24 expansions during the historic period.

ARP also employed the Phillipsian Method with great success in other endeavors, most notably in investigations of variation in birds. His studies centered on museum skins, although he also examined osteological material over the years. In time, he acquired a truly profound understanding of this type of variation, including as regards age, sex, season, individuals, and geography. In addition, he broke new ground in elucidating post-mortem changes in skins, including such phenomena as "foxing" and the effects of different preparation and curatorial techniques. He reached the zenith in these studies in his work on subspecies, of which he described 154 as new (plus six for which he supplied replacement names). His initial paper on such taxa was the 1942 revision of the Middle American *Empidonax affinis*, in which he described his first subspecies (*E. a. vigensis*) from Veracruz, Mexico (no. 20). His last was in 1995, a revision of the oriole *Icterus pustulatus*, including description of three new subspecies (no. 171). Of course, not all his subspecies proved valid, and he himself synonymized several on the basis of new information and reanalysis (e.g., *Melospiza melodia bendirei*, *Oporornis tolmiei intermedia*, *Cyanocitta stelleri browni*, and *Regulus calendula arizonensis*). During the course of his studies, ARP discovered what Marshall called "Phillips Law" (in no 84:xi), which holds that size increases in breeding birds in the highlands and decrease in the lowlands from north to south in North America.

ARP's interest in avian subspecies often focused on their utilitarian value, such as in documenting migration or other movements in populations. (Early in his career he had been exposed to bird-banding as an alternative approach, but he soon gave it up because of its generally slow and sparse yields of data.) He also saw subspecies somewhat as precursors to species, but he recognized speciation as too complex a process for this to be the rule. Whatever his views, ARP's grasp of geographic variation in North American birds reached levels unparalleled by any other ornithologist, including the eminent Robert Ridgway. In fact, before the end

of his career, he had replaced the latter as the premier authority on this subject. Like Ridgway, ARP began encapsulating his taxonomic knowledge in a multi-volume opus that would not be completed in his lifetime, i.e., **Known Birds**—much to the loss of ornithology. As mentioned earlier, ARP lamented the fact that interest in geographic variation had gradually waned in ornithology, to the point of now being passé to many—especially as regards subspecies. In general, proponents of subspecies have not been successful in reviving interest in this concept, although there may still be hope. For example, subspecies could be increasingly used to signal potential subjects for molecular studies of avian differentiation. Once completed, these results could then be compared with those from traditional approaches, as has already been done to some degree. Finally, if the so-called PSC (phylogenetic species concept) is ever adopted in ornithology, it will probably apply to many subspecies—thus rescuing them from current obscurity and perhaps providing work for those that can identify them!

The Phillipsian Method proved a particularly good means for detecting patterns in biological systems, as illustrated above. This is especially true in situations where data can be broken down into discrete, quantifiable states, such as locations, dates, status categories, measurements, and color characters. Although especially well-suited for subspecies, the approach is also helpful at other taxonomic levels, such as characterizing species and genera. This is because avian taxa are still largely defined by character sets that can be broken down as described above, whether of traditional (e.g., measurements and coloration) or more modern (e.g., molecular) types. ARP used this approach to great advantage in his work on the difficult flycatcher genus *Empidonax*, on which he became a leading taxonomic authority. He began his investigations in the mid-1930s, including by refining characters to identify species from museum specimens. By 1939, these investigations had borne fruit, for he published his discovery that the holotype of *Empidonax wrightii* pertained to the Gray and not Wright's (now Dusky) flycatcher (no. 13). As *wrightii* was an older name, it had to replace *griseus* for the Gray Flycatcher. This left Wright's Flycatcher without a specific epithet, which ARP remedied by naming *Empidonax oberholseri*—in honor of the noted ornithologist, Harry C. Oberholser. Although at variance with views dating from 1889, ARP's changes were subsequently accepted by American Ornithologists' Union (Wetmore et al. 1953) and remain in effect (e.g., A.O.U. 1983).

ARP's first published venture into *Empidonax* (above) heralded what would become one of his strongest suits, that being his ability to extract taxonomic and other information from scientific specimens. Although requisite in many ornithological endeavors, he raised the practice to a level seldom equalled if unsurpassed among his peers. In this, he was aided by both his innate characteristics and approach, especially the use of the Phillipsian Method. As a consequence, it often appeared that specimens "spoke" to him, revealing information not apparent to (or misconstrued by) others. A recent example involved his re-identification of a alleged Yellow-green Vireo taken in Quebec in 1883, which he determined to be a hybrid between the Red-eyed and Philadelphia vireos (no. 163:205)! Overall, ARP used his talent for information-extraction in a wide array of studies, including in generating extensive and often new information on the distribution, status, and taxonomy of such complex avian genera as *Empidonax*, *Polioptila*, *Catharus*, and

Vireo. This was done not only in publications, but also through personal instruction and careful annotation of labels on thousands of museum specimens. The latter often involved complicated entries, sometimes reflecting changes in ARP's taxonomic thinking over time or containing queries concerning data or other aspects of specimens.

Although ARP relied heavily on specimens, his workplace was certainly not confined to museum collections. On the contrary, he spent a great deal of time in the field, where he observed as well as collected birds. Besides good vision, he possessed excellent hearing and a knack for distinguishing among bird sounds. For example, on September 22, 1956, he collected Arizona's first Yellow-bellied Flycatcher--after hearing it call in a manner that differed from other *Empidonax* of the region (no. 84:89). He was also a close observer of other behavior, and in 1943 was the first to point a means of identifying the Gray Flycatcher by its manner of tail-movement (no. 25). In addition, he was interested in the breeding biology, habitat use, and other aspects of avian natural history. Among other things, he used such information in his studies of the distribution (including migration), status, and taxonomy of birds. He also wrote several papers on the life histories of birds, including highly-readable accounts on the Rufous-winged and Rufous-crowned sparrows for A.C. Bent series in 1968 (no. 109). In a more popular vein, he wrote six species accounts in Richard Pough's *Audubon Western Birdguide*, published in 1957 (no. 68).

In time, ARP added another role to his ornithological repertoire, that of critic. This is not surprising, given the depth of his knowledge about birds, his sensibilities concerning their study, and his personality. His move toward this role started innocently enough, when he began correcting errors he found in published, museum, and other information on birds. He also raised questions and offered alternative views about other aspects of the record, as well as suggesting ways for improving ornithology as a science. ARP clearly initiated these things with the most constructive of intents, in the process assuming useful roles as information source, instructor, and sage. Eventually, he began adding critical remarks to his commentaries, again with the intent of being constructive. However, the role of critic is difficult at best, even when criticism is justifiable and delivered diplomatically. In ARP's case, diplomacy was secondary to laying out the facts as he saw them, in keeping with his "truth over politics" philosophy. Even when he was diplomatic, he displayed a bias that tended to be proportional to his liking for those being criticized. For example, his criticisms of friends tended to be rather soft, if offered at all. On the other hand, his "enemies" were frequently criticized harshly, at times in personal terms and for the slightest infractions. In addition, he sometimes used criticism as a means of "settling scores," another perversion of the role of ideal critic.

Given the above, ARP's contributions as an ornithological critic certainly constituted a "mixed bag." To be sure, his criticisms often got attention, and for some people no doubt proved instructive if not helpful. This would have been especially true for those wanting to study birds as ARP did, which may have been his major goal as a critic. However, for others his criticisms may have served little or no constructive purpose, and in fact were likely counterproductive. As for ARP himself, criticism was probably a good means for "letting off steam," self-indul-

gent though it may have been at times. On the “down side,” it could reflect badly on him on occasion, such as some of the ranting in his introductions to parts I and II of **Known Birds**. Furthermore, it surely represented a needless drain on his resources, which could have been better used in more constructive pursuits. Nothing better illustrates this than his long-running “feud” with Alden H. Miller and his colleagues, which essentially began with a critique of Robert T. Moore in 1946 (no. 28), accelerated in two highly critical papers aimed mainly at Miller in 1959 (nos. 71 and 73), and ended with a commentary focusing largely on Ned K. Johnson in 1994 (no. 170). Of course, it took “two to tango” in this feud, and the other camp certainly helped perpetuate it with publications such as Moore et al. 1950; Miller et al. 1957; Johnson 1963; Johnson 1966; Zink and Dittmann 1992; and Johnson 1994.

Besides wasting resources and creating a spectacle, a feud like the above might have had the potential for subverting the scientific work of one or more of the participants—particularly in issues being contested by the two camps. Evidence of this could take various forms, such as generation of specious information or findings, withholding or suppressing critical data, passing off unsubstantiated opinions as fact, and worse. However, I see little evidence such things as these occurred, and thereby conclude the feud did not in fact subvert the work of the participants. On the other hand, the situation certainly had other negative impacts, including in ARP’s frequent and intemperate expression of personal biases against the other side—as discussed above. The feud also intensified his oversight over the work of Miller and his associates, which ARP reviewed in part to find gaffs with which to embarrass them. However, this does not constitute a subversion of science, anymore than did his restudy of matters on which the other camp had spoken. In this vein, ARP often took pains to detail the basis for disagreements, including outlining his philosophical positions in papers published in 1959 (nos. 71 and 73), 1966 (no. 94), 1971 (no. 123), and 1994 (no. 170). Ultimately, the feud may have even had a positive impact on ARP, that being to reinforce the need for objectivity, lest he slip up and give the opposition an opening for criticizing him in return!

One could go on endlessly about ARP’s feud with Miller and his colleagues, but this chapter in American ornithology would best be buried and left to rest in peace. Suffice to say, each camp participated and therefore shared the blame for this unfortunate situation, depending on circumstances of the moment. In fairness to Miller, he so differed from ARP that the two would likely never have gotten along, feud or not. For example, Miller was refined, patrician, and quiet-spoken, and he achieved lofty standing in ornithological circles. On the other hand, ARP was much the opposite, and he savored his independence, if not his standing as a curmudgeon and critic (some would say gadfly). Nonetheless, ARP had many good qualities, including his loyalty to friends and predecessors. To gain access to this circle, one had first to earn ARP’s respect. While competence counted a great deal in this, he also respected people that did their best with what they had. This was especially true if they shared his ideals, and being unpretentious, hard-working, and dedicated also helped their cases. Conversely, ARP had many dislikes, among the greatest being any use of position, politics, or power to get ahead—whether in science or life itself.

As is typical of other humans, ARP’s personality traits could negatively

impact his performance at times—in this case as a scientist. For example, he could be overly sensitive to slights (real or imagined) of his or other favored works, leading him to lash out in retaliation. This and his tendency toward paranoia sometimes led him to concoct “conspiracy theories,” which was a major element in his feud with Miller et al. Unfortunately, his paranoia eventually led him to conceal information about type specimens (e.g., museum numbers and locations), lest it lead to prosecution of individuals or institutions by government authorities! Another negative trait was a tendency toward being cryptic, which ran the probable gamut from unintentional to a conscious choice on his part. An example of the latter may have been some of his publications in Spanish, which would have made English-only readers work harder to get the message. ARP could also seem arbitrary in arriving at positions, such as the selective mishmash of his views on scientific nomenclature. For example, he regarded the Law of Priority as the “first commandment,” while *nomina conservanda* represented unacceptable meddling by lawyers and other nonbelievers. In addition, he often described subspecies on the basis of series, instead of designating a holotype as prescribed by code.

As is also typically human, ARP could rationalize so that his positions came across as clearly right and others as wrong. In so doing, he could be smug, self-righteous, and even pedantic, as well as implying that doubters were dense or worse not to “get it.” Besides reflecting his less-desirable traits, these attitudes also spoke to a perception of infallibility on ARP’s part. In essence, if he did it, it would have been done well and therefore must be right. Nonetheless, there were times in which ARP’s work was not up to standard, even if he did not always admit to this. Nowhere was this more evident than in certain of his treatments of taxonomic status in species or higher taxa, such as the proposed merger of the Nashville, Virginia’s, and Colima warblers in 1961 (no. 79). Although several characters were cited to bolster his case, no analyses or other hard data were ever provided to substantiate this otherwise subjective appraisal. Consequently, the proposal hardly warranted serious consideration, which was also true of 12 other mergers proposed in the above paper. (Some of these would later be adopted by the A.O.U. [e.g., 1983], but based on better evidence than supplied originally by ARP.) Thankfully, subjective judgments such as these were relatively rare in ARP’s work, and this series may well have been instigated by his rush to “beat others to the punch” as regards potential mergers.

Whatever his occasional stumbles, ARP’s overall contributions to ornithology stand as a monument to his abilities, dedication, and energy as a scientist. Among other things, they represent a worthy continuation of the outstanding work of predecessors like Spencer F. Baird, Elliott Coues, Edgar A. Mearns, and Robert Ridgway—all of whom ARP admired greatly. To a great extent, ARP’s main interests were the same as theirs—notably in determining and documenting the distribution, status, and taxonomy of North American birds. In the process, he used many of the same data sources as they, including specimens, observations, and the literature. Like them, he was also a skilled and avid field naturalist, and he made significant use of such knowledge in his studies. Quite clearly, ARP regarded the “old ways” as valid and enduring means for learning about birds. Furthermore, he reached this conclusion early on and never saw any reason to change his mind. In spite of this, it would be a mistake to regard his ornithological contributions as lacking in

modern relevance. On the contrary, they constitute a lasting legacy that will be consulted time-and-time again by serious students of North American birds. Even though resistant to many of the newer wrinkles in ornithology, ARP exemplified a trait that should never go out of style. That was his commitment to “doing” science in the most thorough manner possible, no matter what one’s emphasis or specialties. While he did not always succeed in his ideals, he certainly shone as an independent and able performer on the American ornithological scene.

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