

OBITUARIES

THE American Ornithologists' Union has suffered a great loss by the death of Dr. SAMUEL PRENTISS BALDWIN, who died at Cleveland, Ohio, on December 31, 1938, after a short illness.

Dr. Baldwin, as will be recalled, was the originator of the method of bird-banding by systematic trapping, and he has been a contributor and a cooperator in this work ever since it was taken over by the United States Biological Survey.

The establishment by him of the Baldwin Bird Research Laboratory at Gates Mills, Ohio, east of Cleveland, has made possible many interesting studies of the physiology, ecology, and behavior of birds. The work that he has done there, in collaboration with his assistants, has been in part published, but there remain several projects of unfinished research that have not yet been given to the public. His contributions to the life history of the House Wren are well known, and the results of his work on the temperature of birds, as well as on other phases of their physiology, have been real contributions to ornithological knowledge. A memorial biography will later be presented to the Union.—H. C. OBERHOLSER.

WILLIAM ISAAC LYON, who became an Associate of the Union in 1921 and a life Member in 1925, died suddenly at Waukegan, Illinois, June 13, 1938. He was born in Waukegan, August 19, 1874, the son of George R. Lyon and Philippa Yeoman Lyon. His paternal grandfather came from Massachusetts to Waukegan, then called Little Fort, in 1847 and engaged in business there as the proprietor of a general store. This business continued in the hands of the Lyon family until 1915. Since then, until his death, the subject of this sketch conducted a real-estate business, related chiefly to the family holdings in Waukegan.

Mr. Lyon's home throughout his life was in the city of his birth. Near at hand lay the flats and dunes, the "Dead River," the marshes and the beaches and the old pine plantations of the nurserymen, the brothers Douglas. For many years the collecting territory of naturalists, this unique region was ever the favorite playground of Will Lyon. Among his papers the writer found an autobiography—characteristically, less than four pages of double-spaced typewritten manuscript. He seldom wrote anything save migration and bird-banding data. Among incidents of his boyhood he records: "The first .22-caliber rifle was acquired in 1881 and the first shotgun in 1883. That spring the local taxidermist was caught in the act of trapping Passenger Pigeons and was forced to give the writer four pairs to 'keep quiet.' These were placed in an enclosed yard with domestic pigeons. The yard held a little spring and some elder bushes. A nest of hay was placed in these bushes and in due season an egg was laid but was knocked out by crowding birds. Then another egg was laid. This was placed under a homing pigeon whose own eggs were removed. The egg hatched and the young bird was raised. That fall . . . a self-feeder was placed in the pigeon house and all the birds were turned loose. Needless to say the Passenger Pigeons were never seen again."

In 1890, Lyon entered the Riverview Military Academy, at Poughkeepsie, New York. Upon graduating he prepared to enter Harvard but, because of trouble with his eyes, an affliction from which he never wholly recovered, he was obliged to abandon close study. It was then that he went into his father's store. However, his overweening interest in all furred and feathered things found him, on all possible occasions, either hunting or trapping on the flats or surrounded at home by the pets which he acquired. He mentions some thirty species of wild birds kept as pets,

besides many kinds of domesticated pigeons, pheasants and ducks, and about twenty sorts of wild animals, besides rabbits, cavies and such 'small deer.'

He became president of the National Pet Stock Association and later joined the American Breeders Association. He made frequent trips to Florida in winter where colonies of pelicans, herons and ibises attracted him. Wherever he went it was the lives of the lesser creatures that most excited his interest and comment. In 1913, bird-banding came to his attention and from that time to the last day of his life he followed this pursuit with amazing purpose and vigor. In 1922, he became secretary of the newly formed Inland Bird Banding Association. In 1924, he was elected its president and held that office until he died.

During his twenty-five years of banding he marked approximately 100,000 birds. The routine of trapping and banding on the grounds about his home—some three acres planted and arranged to attract birds—was seldom interrupted; but the annual adventure, beginning in 1922, among the gulls, terns and other waterbirds on their breeding grounds to the north, was the thing Will Lyon looked forward to from year to year—that and the A. O. U. meeting. To one who was privileged to go with him on these expeditions came the realization that here was a companion remarkably endowed with the qualities which make such undertakings successful. His large geniality, unruffled spirit, tenacity of purpose and his mastery of the skills, devices and ingenuities—some of them derived from more than twenty-five years of Boy Scout work—required for attainment of the objective, were wholly admirable. Everywhere he found recruits to carry on the study of birds by the banding method. As a member of the Waukegan Rotary Club he was able to influence fellow Rotarians in his projects. A very considerable body of publicity concerning bird-banding was obtained, through this influence, in the press of Latin-America.

More recently Lyon became interested in the 'homing instinct' of Cowbirds which he trapped and shipped in numbers to widely divergent destinations in the United States and Canada, there to be released. Similarly he caused other Cowbirds to be trapped at long distances from Waukegan and shipped to him for release. The results of these experiments have been extraordinary. Many of them have become known to those attending the meetings of the Union and to the public in general through newspaper accounts.

Will Lyon's affiliations proved a large social spirit. A thirty-second degree Mason, an Elk, a Rotarian, he was active, too, in local business affairs. He was a founder of the Waukegan Chamber of Commerce and an organizer of the North Chicago-Waukegan Real Estate Board. His 'bird-mindedness' is disclosed by the list of the societies in which he has been active: he was one of the first Members to be elected to the Council of the Union; he was a life member of the Chicago Academy of Sciences and of the Illinois Academy of Sciences; President (1928) of the Chicago Ornithological Society; a Director of the Illinois Audubon Society; President (1933) of the Kenicott Club; Vice-President (1924) of the Wilson Ornithological Club and, as written above, long-time President of the Inland Bird Banding Association. Among all these preoccupations it is doubtful whether any credit for his work gave him greater pleasure than the zestful (and sometimes jestful) acclaim of the 'boys' at the Chicago Academy of Sciences (where he was a frequent visitor) when Will brought in a Least Weasel or a Golden-crowned Sparrow, or reported the first nesting in the Chicago area of the Common Tern, on the flats near his home.

In 1897 he was married to Mary Vanderbilt Cantine, of Poughkeepsie, New York. Mrs. Lyon and their children, George R. Lyon, of Waukegan, and Mrs. Elizabeth Duncan of Winnetka, Illinois, survive him. Life was full for Will Lyon and he went out of it at a breath, as he had desired.—EDWARD R. FORD.