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IN MEMORIAM: JOSEPH HARVEY RILEY

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Plate 1

JOSEPH HARVEY RILEY, Fellow of the American Ornithologists' Union since 1919, departed this life on December 17, 1941, at the age of 68 years, 2 months and 28 days. Born in Falls Church, Virginia, on September 19, 1873, he was resident throughout his time in the family home, except for occasional absences in the field. His entire life was centered in his work in the United States National Museum under the Smithsonian Institution, where for forty-five years he was a member of the staff in the Division of Birds, faithful and conscientious in his application to his work.

Regarding his ancestry, his father, Joseph Schleick Riley, was born near Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1835, and, as a young man, came east to Washington with a sister to reside in that general vicinity until his death in 1919. For a number of years he engaged in a book business located on 7th Street in Washington, until with failing health, his physician recommended a residence farther south. Leaving the store in Washington in other hands, he removed to Richmond, Virginia, where he established a similar business, and also engaged in the sale and export of leaf tobacco. The mother, Mary Edwards Pultz, was born and lived during her childhood near Smithfield, Jefferson County, formerly in Virginia but now a part of West Virginia. This town, locally called 'Clip' because of a once widely known tradition concerning a haunted house there, is now named Middleway. Many men of her large family connection entered the Confederate Army during the War between the States, the local saying being that there were enough Bells to form a regiment.

In the course of his business activities, the elder Riley in 1872 acquired a property of about 80 acres in Falls Church, Virginia, then a small community centered around a church, a tavern and one or



Photograph from Press Association, Inc.

J. A. Riley

two stores a few miles west of Washington. This farm was known in early days under the name of 'Cherry Hill,' from a fine avenue and other plantings of huge old cherry trees lining the roadway leading to the house. Tradition says that the place was established originally by an Englishman named Harvey, who not only planted the cherries but also brought in other trees and shrubs from foreign lands. On this farm Harvey Riley lived during his boyhood, and here, as a child, he developed that interest in natural history, particularly in birds, that grew to form his career. Falls Church, at that time, was located on a branch of the Southern Railroad which later became the Old Dominion Railway. After early schooling in his native town, Riley attended one year of high school in Washington, followed by two years in a preparatory school known as the Emerson Institute, on 14th Street opposite the present location of the Franklin School. On his graduation from the Institute, he was awarded a silver medal for his scholarship, but, due to a diffidence characteristic of him throughout his life, he did not attend the graduating exercises, so that the medal (which had the date 1895 inscribed upon it) was later brought to him in Falls Church by Dr. Young, head of the school.

Like many other naturalists, Riley's boyhood interest in all wild things centered early in the formation of a collection of birds' eggs, and it was no doubt this interest that brought him during his school days in Washington to the Smithsonian Institution, where he met Robert Ridgway, the beginning of a lifelong friendship, and had opened to him the world of birds. Charles Bendire then was working on his 'Life Histories of North American Birds,' Ridgway was preparing the data for his first volumes of the 'Birds of North and Middle America,' and Leonhard Stejneger, though then Curator of Reptiles, was actively interested in ornithology. On August 17, 1896, Harvey Riley came to the National Museum on a temporary appointment as an Aid to assist in work on the collection of eggs of North American birds. Because of shortage of funds, the salaried appointment ended on November 14 of the same year, but Riley's interest was such that he continued to work in the Museum except when prevented by duties at home. Another temporary appointment came December 7, 1897, continuing until July 8, 1898, when he received the status of Aid as a regular member of the staff in the Division of Birds. On July 1, 1928, he became Assistant Curator of the Division, and on June 24, 1932, he was advanced to Associate Curator, a title that he held until his death.

When Dr. W. L. Ralph became custodian of the collection of

birds' eggs, following the death of Bendire, Riley served as his assistant, arranging the collections, incorporating new material, and expanding the series as needed. As this work lessened in amount, he began to assist Robert Ridgway and to work with skins. As Ridgway's assistant, it fell to Riley to make the long series of measurements found in the early volumes of the 'Birds of North and Middle America,'—work that he performed with the most painstaking care that insures their accuracy. He started also a small collection of bird skins of his own, stimulated by the field activities of Ridgway, Richmond, William Palmer, and others who were working in local ornithology at the time. He also had close association at this time with members of the Washington Biologists' Field Club, an organization to which Riley was elected a member on June 3, 1901, when it was decided to move the site of the club to its present location on Plummers Island in the Potomac River above Washington.

Unlike many naturalists, Riley published no boyhood notes, his first paper on Stephens's Whip-poor-will, which appeared in the 'Osprey' for July, 1901, being a serious discussion of what was then known of this bird, its nesting, and its status. A footnote indicates that this was "published by permission of Dr. W. L. Ralph." The following year, for the same journal, he prepared original observations on the nesting of the Broad-winged Hawk in the Washington region, illustrated with a photograph taken by Paul Bartsch of a nest containing two eggs. Immediately then Riley began publication of the notes and descriptions in technical ornithology that continued throughout his life.

His first expedition of note came in 1900 when, from February to August, as assistant to William Palmer of the National Museum, he made collections of birds in Cuba. After a few days about Matanzas and Habana, the two men proceeded to the Province of Pinar del Río, where they were occupied until the end of June. In July, they worked at Batabanó, and also crossed to the Isle of Pines, spending seventeen days on that island. In addition to birds, they collected other animals and plants. The two planned a complete report on the birds obtained, but because of various interruptions this never progressed beyond the stage of a few notes in rough manuscript, and the project was finally abandoned. Quite naturally, this first journey to a foreign country aroused in Riley a deep interest in the avifauna of the West Indies that gave direction to his studies and to his publications for many years. In fact, he assembled much data in card form with the idea of preparing a check-list of the birds of the West

Indies, but in the end used the material only to assist in the writing of various faunal papers.

It was not long until he had opportunity for another visit to the West Indies, as in June and July, 1903 he was detailed to accompany an expedition of the Geographic Society of Baltimore to the Bahama Islands, for which he was designated in charge of the Division of Land Zoology. With Samuel H. Derickson, then a student at Johns Hopkins University, as assistant, collections of reptiles, birds and mammals were made for the U. S. National Museum. Dr. George B. Shattuck, then Associate Professor of Physiographic Geology in the Johns Hopkins University, was Director of the expedition, which covered studies ranging from geology and botany to sanitary conditions in the islands. The party sailed from Baltimore June 1 on the schooner *Van Name* and, after a stormy voyage, reached Nassau June 17. Zoological collections were made on New Providence, Green Cay, Andros, Eleuthera, Cat Island, Rum Cay, Watling's, Long Island and Abaco. On July 22, the party sailed for the north. As usual in such expeditions, the time ashore was curtailed due to the type of transport, but the notes on birds published in the volume on the expedition, and in more detail in 'The Auk,' contain many matters of interest. The reptiles obtained were identified by Dr. Leonhard Stejneger, and the mammals by Gerrit S. Miller, Jr.

In 1910, from May 10 to 20, with William Palmer and Paul Bartsch, Riley collected on Smith's Island on the Virginia coast at the time of the shorebird migration. And the following year, with Dr. E. A. Mearns and E. J. Brown, he made a more extended excursion to South Carolina, the three men being located from April 20 to May 10 across from Charleston. The excursion was planned to secure for the National Museum birds for which Charleston or South Carolina was the type locality, and in this the three naturalists were highly successful. Much of their work was done in the area adjacent to the home of the ornithologist, Arthur T. Wayne, who joined them in many of their days afield, and with whom Riley formed an enduring friendship.

Almost immediately on returning from this excursion, Riley was detailed to accompany Ned Hollister on an expedition sponsored by the Alpine Club of Canada to make a general survey of the fauna and flora of Jasper Park, Yellowhead Pass, and the Mount Robson region in western Canada. Hollister and Riley left Washington June 24 and proceeded to Edmonton, Alberta, where A. O. Wheeler, Director of the Alpine Club and leader of the party, joined them on June 30.

The following day they left Edmonton on the Grand Trunk Pacific, and, on July 2, with living quarters in a boxcar placed for them on a siding, began work on Prairie Creek, a tributary of the Athabaska River. The night of July 3, their car was moved to Brule Lake, seven miles east of Jasper House, where a pack train was organized July 5. They made their next stop at the abandoned site of Henry House, well known to earlier travellers, where they remained until July 9, and then continued through Yellowhead Pass into British Columbia, following down the Fraser River to the mouth of Moose River. They located here on the west fork of the Moose near Reef Glacier, where they remained until July 19, and then crossed to the east fork of the Moose to remain for another five days. The route followed from here led them through Moose Pass, where Hollister and Riley remained in camp in the edge of the fir timber until August 7. They returned to the mouth of Moose River, secured a team, and moved near Moose Lake to collect until August 28. This was followed by a few days at Yellowhead Lake and a return to Henry House, where they collected until September 22, when they left by train for Edmonton. From his specimens secured during these investigations, Riley described as new, races of the Song Sparrow and Fox Sparrow, and was led to make a detailed study of the White-tailed Ptarmigan. He often remarked on the relative scarcity of birds in the area visited and on the small number of individuals of many of them. His paper including the notes on this expedition, published in 1912 in a special number of the *Canadian Alpine Journal*, gives records for 78 species of birds.

For another twenty years, Riley remained active in weekend outings around his home, but the Canadian trip was his last extended expedition. He had built up a small local collection, beginning in 1897, and in 1902 turned this over to the Museum, adding other specimens from time to time. In the earlier years, there were relatively few collectors of birds in the Middle East and Southeast in the United States, while there was regular demand for birds from this area on the part of workers in other regions. Selection of specimens for these exchanges fell usually to Riley, who made a practice of selecting his own skins to send out, so that his collecting brought many valuable birds to the Museum in addition to his local records. He enjoyed making such exchanges, and made a point of collecting birds specially desired by correspondents, the skins received in return being placed in the Museum collections. These exchanges brought specimens from such widely separated points as Argentina and Bavaria. He also

collected a few mammals for use in this manner. As a preparator, he was skillful and fairly rapid, his skins being symmetrical and carefully made. His specimens are marked by a narrow, black-bordered label of a style popular among local ornithologists at the time when he began his work.

Though I first saw Harvey Riley during a visit to the Division of Birds in September, 1908, on that occasion we exchanged only a few brief words. Our real acquaintance began in November, 1911, when for a few weeks I spent considerable time in the Museum in preparation for work in the field in Puerto Rico. Our mutual interests in birds, in books about them, and in the many absorbing details that bring happy communion between naturalists, resulted immediately in a mutual regard that was the foundation for our long friendship. And for years during periods when I was in Washington, usually from late fall to early spring, in addition to our contacts in the Museum, we made many trips afield together in search for specimens. Ordinarily, these started at Riley's house in Falls Church, which I could reach by early morning trolley from Washington. The great cherry trees that had given the farm its name mostly were gone, but we invariably admired a huge sour gum tree at the border of a field below the house, a tree that Robert Ridgway often said was the finest one of its kind that he had ever known, or some of the many other interesting trees and shrubs on the Riley place. By that time, Falls Church had grown to a fair-sized town, so that the Riley acres were bordered by town development that grew on all sides. However, we could cross through a lower field and by trails that avoided houses, proceed past Horseshoe Hill to forested areas along Holmes's Run, and many were the interesting birds that we encountered. There were occasional Ruffed Grouse in one stand of woodland, hawks were seen in reasonable numbers, and there were unusual records among the smaller birds. Riley's own experiences here carried him back to days when the Wild Turkey still nested in the area. In afternoon we returned for Sunday dinner in Riley's home with his mother and other members of the family whose friendly hospitality on my first meeting with them put me immediately at ease from the momentary embarrassment brought to me by my appearance at table in hunting clothing. Many were the birds we saw and collected on these pleasant occasions, and many were the ideas and tales that we exchanged on our work in ornithology.

In his more active years, Riley enjoyed greatly the sport of hunting, particularly of quail and, until middle age, had always one to sev-

eral bird dogs whose training and handling gave him much recreation and pleasure during leisure hours. He also was interested at one time in trap shooting and was a good clay pigeon shot. Local hunting trips were the program for the weekend during the season, and usually each year he had a few days farther afield, elsewhere in Virginia or in West Virginia. The amount of game secured on these excursions was never large, but always there came much pleasure from the fact of being afield.

As years passed and the town of Falls Church grew in size, the original farm that made the Riley home was reduced in acreage, though the land holding of the family remained considerable. Riley's father died in 1919 and his mother followed in 1927, when Harvey Riley inherited the old home with a tract of 8 acres of land. The original property of Cherry Hill had many plantings of unusual trees and shrubs, and Riley's boyhood interest in these was enhanced by his association with Robert Ridgway, Curator of Birds in the National Museum, who was an ardent horticulturist. Flowers and shrubs absorbed much time with Harvey Riley, sometimes on the excuse of getting some return from otherwise idle land, but ordinarily merely for the pleasant hours that they provided in their care and contemplation. The grand old boxwood at the house led him to establish nurseries of this ornamental in which he grew hundreds of cuttings. He also developed a great garden of gladiolus followed by a similar extensive planting of peonies and roses both including many fine varieties. Various of these enterprises were planned as money-making ventures, and he did sell many flowers from them. Actually, to his closest friends, these activities were mainly an expression of his love of things outdoors that in financial return repaid only part or none of the money invested. In addition to those mentioned, he planted many other shrubs and flowers that made his grounds a place of never-failing interest to his visitors. In his later years, his daylight hours away from the office were occupied with his yard and gardens, especially his roses, where naturally, the development of the grounds brought a bird population that was always of delight to him.

In the Museum for years Riley assumed much of the routine care of the bird collection, devoting his remaining time to his scientific studies. As has been indicated above, his early interest was in the West Indies, fostered by his two expeditions in that area. With the steady receipt of collections from other parts of the world, it was natural that as he handled the many unusual birds, he was attracted to them. A fine collection from Celebes made by H. C. Raven through

the interest of Dr. W. L. Abbott was the source of important studies leading to a report on the area. This led to work on other Eastern collections brought by Dr. Abbott as well as on the Chinese materials that came from the travels of Dr. Joseph F. Rock in Yunnan and Szechwan under the auspices of the National Geographic Society, and from another expedition by F. R. Wulsin under the National Geographic to Inner Mongolia, Kansu and Chihli. About this time, Dr. David C. Graham began sendings of birds from western China and eastern Tibet that continued for years, and that brought scores of species new to the Museum and new to science. The study of these fell to Riley and led to a number of papers. Later, there came extensive research and publication on the fine collections from Thailand secured for the Museum by Dr. Hugh M. Smith. A report on these materials, including earlier specimens from W. L. Abbott, published as Bulletin 172 of the U. S. National Museum in 1938, is Riley's most comprehensive paper. His final contributions were short papers on new birds from southern Annam and Indo-China, the last appearing on November 8, 1940.

In his technical studies covering the forms of birds, their names, and their geographic distribution, which was the main field of his writings, Riley showed keen discrimination, his identifications being carefully made, while his deductions in nomenclature were sound. In the course of his forty years of such studies, he proposed fifteen new generic terms and 128 species and subspecies of birds, and named 3 additional forms in collaboration with William Palmer. Some of these proposals were brought about through his observation of pre-occupied names, but the greater part were novelties made known to science for the first time through the collections that passed through his hands. That few of the names that he proposed have been put in synonymy is indication of his sound and conservative judgment. His bibliography includes 116 titles, all carefully noted in one of his record books, that includes also a list of the genera, species and subspecies of birds that he described.

Dr. Stejneger named an iguana from the early expedition in the Bahamas *Cyclura rileyi* in his honor, and Gregory Mathews proposed the genus *Rileyornis* for him. The following subspecies of birds have commemorated his name:

Broderipus chinensis rileyi Mathews

Coracina temminckii rileyi Meise

Coccyzus minor rileyi Ridgway

Myiophonus caeruleus rileyi Deignan

Stachyris nigriceps rileyi Chasen

Strix indranee rileyi Kelso

Pipilo alleni rileyi Koelz

Joseph Harvey Riley was a man of athletic form, above average height—he stood 6 feet, 1 inch and weighed 170 pounds—who, in his later years, acquired the slightly stooped shoulders common to laboratory workers. From his earliest childhood and throughout his entire life he was known for his absolute truthfulness, and he was marked always by an innate courtesy and consideration that was expressed constantly in his contacts with others. With entire unselfishness, he devoted much time to the inquiries of correspondents, and visitors to the Division of Birds were given the fullest attention and assistance. While congenial among his friends and one who enjoyed to the utmost conversations with visitors and with his companion workers, he had, at the same time, a diffidence that kept him from any public appearance. When the American Ornithologists' Union held its annual meeting in Washington, he was always one of those who assisted in the arrangements, but he withdrew from any situation that might call on him to speak, and during my own experience, I never saw him take part in any public program. This same diffidence kept him away from dinners and other similar functions, and he would not consent to holding office in any of the scientific societies that might entail his appearance before an audience. In conversation among his colleagues however, he held long and vigorous arguments on matters of his interest, and did not hesitate to advance strong and definite opinions. He will be remembered always for his friendly reception of those who came to him, and for his many courtesies large and small among those with whom he was in daily contact.

Riley was elected an Associate of the American Ornithologists' Union in 1897, became a Member in 1905, and a Fellow in 1919. While he attended very few meetings,—none in his later life—he was for years a member of the Biological Society of Washington, in which he served on the editorial committee for a considerable period. He joined the Cooper Ornithological Club in 1909, and became an active member of the Wilson Ornithological Club in 1914. For a number of years, he was interested in the Washington Biologists' Field Club, but finally withdrew from the organization because of the difficulties attendant on reaching the site of the Club at Plummers Island from his home in Virginia. He was also a member of the Baird Ornithological Club, though as he became more inactive in later life, he

gave up attendance at the meetings. He held membership in the American Forestry Association, the Wild Flower Preservation Society, the American Rose Society, the Potomac Rose Society, the Southern Historical Association, the American Society of Mammalogists, the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists, the Tennessee Ornithological Society, and the Virginia Society of Ornithology. He was also a Master Mason and at one period was diligent in attendance at Masonic meetings. He was interested in civic affairs in Falls Church, and contributed generously in various local enterprises but, as has been indicated previously, was too diffident by nature to take more active part.

Like most ornithologists of his day, Riley was deeply interested in books and separata dealing with birds, and with travel and natural history in general. In his later years in the long evenings that he spent always at home, he devoted much time to general reading, especially in history, and also before the advent of radio programs built up a large set of phonograph records of classical music that afforded him much pleasure. He also assembled a valuable collection of publications dealing with the War between the States, which with his general works, remains in the hands of his family. His scientific books he gave to the Library of the University of Virginia at Charlottesville, sending many of them there during his later years, as he realized the dangers of possible fire where such collections are kept in the ordinary private home. His will bequeathed the remainder of his library on natural history, including gardening and botany, to the University, where it forms one of the most important collections of its kind in any library in the south. To this bequest, the family has added his books of travel, a valuable adjunct to the scientific publications. A further section in Riley's will made provision for funds toward the founding of a Chair in Vertebrate Zoology at the University of Virginia.

He is survived by four sisters, Mrs. Margaret Riley Parker, Mrs. Kathleen Maude Gage, Mrs. S. H. Styles and Mrs. H. C. Birge. Harvey Riley never married, and except for his absences on field excursions, lived his entire life in the same house in which he was born. His death came from hypertensive heart disease following a period of several years during which he was failing steadily, though seldom was he absent from the Museum because of illness. His funeral was held from his well-loved house on December 19, 1941, with burial in Oakwood Cemetery in Falls Church.

My own association with him has led me to picture him always

against the background of the offices and laboratories of the Division of Birds, and of the fine old place in Virginia that was his home, and it is thus that I shall always remember him, a kindly, friendly man of unfailing courtesy, whose entire life was devoted to the science of ornithology.

THE PUBLISHED WRITINGS OF J. H. RILEY

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THE STATUS OF THE CALIFORNIA GULL

BY ALLAN BROOKS

Plate 2

MANY authorities are now reducing the status of the California Gull, *Larus californicus* Lawrence, to a subspecies of the Herring Gull, *Larus argentatus* Port.; even Dwight in his monumental work, "The Gulls of the World," regards it as closely related to the Herring Gull. The present writer has long been waiting for some one who is familiar with the California Gull in life to refute this contention. It may be that someone has, but if so it has not come to my notice.