

# THE AUK

## A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF ORNITHOLOGY

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VOL. 61

APRIL, 1944

No. 2

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LEONHARD STEJNEGER

*Bergen, Norway, October 30, 1851—Washington, D. C., February 28, 1943*

BY THOMAS BARBOUR

*Plate 7*

Was it population pressure or was it sheer good fortune that brought Stejneger to the shores of America in 1881? We realize that Scandinavia produces great men and educates them superbly but is not by way of providing first-class opportunities for all of the talented men that are prepared to fill the relatively few positions available to support them.

Moreover, I wish I knew what turned Stejneger from the law to natural history. Not that his juridical studies did not stand him in good stead for they certainly did, but what activated the change? His wide and deep knowledge of both Latin and Greek, to say nothing of most modern tongues, stemmed in part, at least, from his legal training, and his clear-cut thinking, thus trained, enabled him to follow the thread of a troublous nomenclatorial problem more shrewdly and more successfully than any other living man.

Stejneger's deep affection for Spencer Baird was constantly held uppermost in his mind. He was so innately modest that he never realized that he, himself, was by far the greatest discovery that Baird ever made. Nothing so contributed to Baird's great reputation and to the permanent niche he occupies in the grateful remembrance of all students of the history of zoology in North America as the fact that he set Stejneger sailing the seas of natural history in this country. It was Baird who found Stejneger a position in the Signal Corps only a few months after he reached America in May, 1882, and it was Baird who suggested his assignment to Bering Island with what results the world well knows.

One of my most intimate associations with Stejneger was the op-



*Herhard Stejneger*

portunity to study his patience. I played a large part in the somewhat shameful reduction in length of his wonderful manuscript concerning Steller. This had to be brought to a length which was practicable for publication by the Harvard University Press in 1936. Here I had a chance to study the results of his labors. His manuscript, derived often from sources of German written in Russian script, and Russian written in German script, would have baffled the powers of translation of any but the linguistic genius which, in very sooth, Stejneger was. He dedicated the work to Baird, "who sent me on the mission which eventually resulted in this book." How vividly I recall the excellent reviews which appeared in such journals as Petermann's "Geographische Mittheilungen." I think L. S., as we all called him, was a little saddened by the fact that the protean labors which went into the Steller volume never resulted in its appreciation by the reading public. Nevertheless, the most laudatory reviews from the pens of those who counted most made him very happy. I know that one of the everlasting satisfactions of my life was the part which I played in the editing and appearance of this volume. I remember how interested he was in my suggestion that we reproduce a colored plate showing the Blue Jay, copied from Catesby, together with a colored figure of Steller's Jay. These were beautifully drawn by Mr. E. N. Fischer, the staff artist of the Museum of Comparative Zoölogy, to whom we both forgot to give credit when the book appeared. Think of the chance that put Catesby's plate in Steller's hands so that, when he killed the first specimen of the jay that was to be named for him, he held the bird up and declared to Bering, his shipmate in the prevailing mist and fog, that they were in America and no longer in Asia. Alaska had been discovered.

I have elsewhere recalled my tender, personal feelings for Doctor Stejneger (*Cf.* Copeia, 1931, no. 3; Copeia, 1936, no. 3, p. 178) and all essential biographical features have been splendidly recorded by his lifelong friend, Albert Kenrick Fisher. These notes appeared in Copeia for October of 1943. I am reminded of the fact that the last time I saw Doctor Fisher, in the Cosmos Club in Washington but a short time ago, he told me with great pride that he felt he had saved Stejneger's life in 1890. L. S. had developed a bronchial trouble which Fisher, educated as a physician, felt threatened to lead fast to tuberculosis. On his request, George Brown Goode, then the Assistant Secretary of the Smithsonian, arranged to have Stejneger join C. Hart Merriam in the San Francisco Mountains in Arizona. This trip not only improved Stejneger's physical condition but gave him

his first opportunity for his interest to be aroused by the reptiles of the southwest and we all know how keenly he was interested in the fauna of this region until his death, 53 years later.

Last spring, the first time I visited the National Museum after L. S.'s death, his devoted assistant, Miss Cochran, showed me his exquisite drawings of birds from Bering Island, Japan and Kamchatka which proved that he had indeed a talent which rivaled that of Robert Ridgway as an artist. Had his time not been so completely occupied he would have made a reputation for himself in still another field. I believe very few people know that these drawings exist or that there is any such tangible proof of his first love—the birds.

It is difficult not to be trite and to say the obvious when one attempts to appraise Stejneger or even to set forth his extraordinary versatility and the diversity, range, and depth of his talents and attainments or to attempt to praise the modesty, simplicity, dignity and innate kindness of his character. He was sparing only in expressing his dislike of unworthy actions or unworthy deeds. To say that he was the greatest naturalist who has ever trod the halls of the Smithsonian Institution is to step on fairly safe ground. To say that he was a great friend, a benefactor, and one who aided hundreds of members of the rising generation of investigators, is sheer understatement. It would take more than the tongues of men and of angels to sing his praise.

*Cambridge*  
*Massachusetts*

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## BIRDS' FEAR OF MAN

BY H. R. IVOR

THE following paper is intended to record occasional observations made on certain passerine birds with respect to this display of fear; it is not based on any formal series of experiments. The birds observed were native species, largely individuals either confined in my aviary or fostered there and allowed daily freedom. A few observations concern wild, native birds. I have used the term 'fear' to mean, simply, alarm. More completely the term is defined here as an objective manifestation of the self-preservation instinct, usually displayed by crouching or retreat.

I wish to make grateful acknowledgement to L. L. Snyder, Assistant Director, Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology, for his critical review of this paper.