

## OBITUARIES

VERDI BURTCH.—On a summer day, back somewhere about 1893 or 1894, two lads from Branchport, New York, arrived on bicycles at my home in Phelps, New York. While birds were the principal objects of their interest, they devoted that day especially to fresh water mollusca, and the three of us explored a few miles of Canandaigua Outlet. One of the lads, wearing knickerbockers, was sitting on a rock in mid-stream, trying to capture certain shellfish desiderata, when he slipped off into some two feet of water with a resounding splash. That was the debut of Verdi Burtch in my life. His companion was Clarence F. Stone, his close companion for many years. Stone died years ago and now Verdi is gone, having died at his Branchport, N. Y. home on December 27, last, at the age of 77.

Verdi Burtch, named after the Italian composer, Verdi, was born in Penn Yan, New York, on December 25, 1868, a son of Joel and Emma McGuinn Burtch, and was the eldest of five children. He was a descendant of the first settlers of Yates County. He was only 16 years old when his father died, at which time his youngest brother, Orba, was only two days old, and he thus early had to assume a large part of the responsibility of head of the family.

He worked for a time as a painter and paper-hanger and then entered into partnership with his brother, Orba, in a grocery and general store which, up to the time of his death, they maintained for forty-five years. Sharing to the full the responsibility of this exacting work, a less enthusiastic naturalist might easily have fallen away from his pet study, but this was not the case with Burtch. He managed, in his very limited spare time, to learn much of the home life of the local birds. Afield with his chum, Stone, he acquired a very good collection of nests and eggs of these local species. Doubtless Burtch and Stone saw more of the home life of the Cerulean Warbler in the famous Potter swamp near by than any other ornithologists, and found, also, many other interesting forms of life in this area.

Burtch became an Associate of the American Ornithologists' Union in 1891 and was advanced to Member in 1934. He attended many meetings of the Union, often driving from his Branchport home to sessions in New York, Philadelphia and even Canada, in company with one or more of his fellow members. He contributed some notes to the Auk and other publications and supplied much valuable material to Elon Howard Eaton's 'Birds of New York,' Bent's 'Life Histories' of North American birds, and Chapman's 'Handbook of Birds of Eastern North America.' He was, in addition, a veteran bird-bander and was active in the ranks of the Eastern Bird-Banding Association.

On June 28, 1894 he married Miss Maud E. Townsend of Dresden, who survives him, together with a daughter, Mrs. John N. Whitaker of Bluff Point; two sons, Forest Burtch of Trenton, N. J., and Kirkland Burtch of Branchport; four grandchildren and three brothers—Orba (his partner in the Branchport store), and Wright and Joel Burtch of Cleveland, Ohio.

Burtch will be missed by the many bird lovers who had the pleasure of knowing him, as a very definite personality for whom no one will quite substitute. With his quiet but deeply sincere love of birds and nature, his many friends are certain to feel that, among all the companionable bird men, there will never be quite another Verdi Burtch.—B. S. BOWDISH.

FRANK COATES KIRKWOOD, an Associate of the American Ornithologists' Union since 1892, died on August 27, 1945, at Texas, Maryland, at the age of 83, and was

buried on August 29 at Fork, Maryland. He was born in Belfast, Ireland, March 25, 1862, the son of Mr. and Mrs. William T. Kirkwood.

I know very little of his boyhood, but he must have had an early interest in birds, as is evidenced from two notebooks of "Extracts relative to such [birds] as breed in Ireland" copied from "Birds of Ireland" by William Thompson, Esq. These notes were in the back of a school notebook used at the Royal Belfast Academical Institution of Belfast in 1878. Little is known of Kirkwood's school days. In the above-mentioned notebooks there are references to lessons in Latin, Greek, geography, general history, British history, and spelling, so it is presumed that he had a fairly good education. On June 28, 1878, he received a prize (a handsome leather-bound book, 'Life of Frederick the Great' by Francis Kugler) from the headmaster of the writing department for "superior penmanship"—the reason for his small but legible writing. From early letters from his brother it is evident that he had an egg collection at an early date, but whether or not he brought this collection with him to the United States is not known.

Late in 1880, at the age of 18, Kirkwood came to Baltimore to work as a book-keeper or clerk in his maternal uncle's soap factory, James Armstrong & Co., 115 Concord St., where he remained until his uncle went bankrupt in the early 1900's. After the failure of his uncle's factory, he bought a small farm off the Stansbury Mill Road in Baltimore County, worked it for some years, and later sold it. Thereafter he boarded with neighbors and did what odd jobs he could that did not interfere with his bird work.

He was married to Anna M. Hoen, November 12, 1919, but this marriage did not prove successful and he and his wife soon separated. During his last years he received an old-age pension from Baltimore County and lived in a small shed with his notes and books, getting his meals at Kenneth Marshall's, on whose property he had built his small abode.

In his nearly 65 years in the United States, most of which were spent in Maryland, he kept detailed and accurate notes on all natural history subjects, but his primary interest was birds. He made his field notes in various kinds of notebooks and later transferred them to small strips of paper which were filed by species in cigar boxes. In his first notebook the first note reads as follows: "Dec 11, 1880 The first land bird to greet my arrival was our own House Sparrow (*P.domestic*) It is here called the English Sparrow and is nearly as thick in Baltimore as in Belfast although it is only a few years since they were introduced."

Not long after his arrival in Baltimore he joined the Maryland Academy of Sciences, where he met and worked with many of his life-long friends and helped to build up the Academy's collection of skins and eggs; in 1895, the Academy published his "Birds of Maryland." He also joined the Maryland State Game and Fish Protective Association, taking an active part in this organization as Secretary-Treasurer from 1898 to 1901.

Between 1900 and 1906, Kirkwood took an active interest in fishes, gathering a good deal of data as well as specimens from the Atlantic Ocean and Chesapeake Bay, with the idea of publishing a book on fishes. The specimens have disappeared. It was thought they were in the U. S. National Museum, but they are not there. Possibly they were turned over to the Maryland Academy of Sciences of Baltimore, which has given its building to the government as a hospital and put its collections in storage; their records are not available.

As was customary with all of the early ornithologists, Kirkwood did a good deal of collecting, for identification of birds was not as simple then as it is now. Most of his collecting was confined to eggs, of which at one time he had a fine, well-prepared

collection of Maryland species, but for the past twenty years, at least, they have been in the loft of a barn, neglected, and are of little or no value now.

In 1924 and 1925, Kirkwood, in collaboration with William H. Fisher and others, under the auspices of the State Game Commission of Maryland, started a revision and enlargement of the 'Birds of Maryland,' but unfortunately he never completed the task. This is a loss to Maryland ornithology, for no one will be able to interpret his copious notes as he could have done. Kirkwood was a keen and accurate observer and his knowledge of the habits and songs of Maryland birds was extensive, both from personal observation and from correspondence with other ornithologists, including Robert Ridgway, G. Eifrig, William Palmer, Dr. A. K. Fisher, Ralph W. Jackson, and many others. He was a witty but stubborn Irishman, a good sport and a good companion on field trips. One could always enjoy excursions with him and profit by his knowledge of birds. Most of his writings were confined to his notes, two of which follow:

"Jan. 13, 1921. Rough-leg Hawk. Coming down out of No. 3 about 4 p. m. and stepping out into old lane one flushed from the ground among bushes not 10 feet from me. It had killed and eaten the flesh off the neck of one of my hens. The bank on the side I came down prevented it seeing me until I stepped into lane, and the W. wind prevented it hearing me. Getting its flight it flew rather heavily and slowly to a poplar at the lower edge of No. 4 and stayed there while I got my field glasses and examined it and later flew to the edge of clearing and stayed there until nearly dark."

"March 24, 1924. Cowbird, one walking in shallow water picks up several small items which it swallows at once, it then makes a quick grab and throws a cray fish up in the air. This it does several times, then it pulled legs off one by one, apparently the cray fish caught its bill each time it grabbed a leg and was thrown up to shake it loose, all this within 20 feet of me. It then picked up the cray fish and flew among the elders, where I could not see it. A few minutes later it went up into a willow, here it uttered a "chuk" in a low tone with a weak low warble that I would not have heard if it had not been so close, but I could clearly see the bill and throat move."

From August 20 to 29, 1900 Kirkwood made a trip to Cobb's Island, Virginia, and the outer islands along the Atlantic coast of Maryland and Virginia, and sent a report to William Dutcher, part of which was published in 'The Auk,' as listed below. In the same year he wrote a series of popular articles on birds for the Baltimore Sun.

The following notes and articles appeared in the Auk:

A list of the birds of Maryland (rev. by Chapman). *Auk*, 13: 67, 1896.

Red-head (*Aythya americana*) in post-nuptial plumage in autumn. *Op. cit.*, 15: 50, 1898.

The Stilt Sandpiper in Maryland. *Op. cit.*, 16: 76, 1899.

(Notes on Cobb's and other islands along the Atlantic coast) In William Dutcher's report on protection of gulls and terns. *Op. cit.*, 18: 78-83, 1901.

The occurrence of the Egyptian Goose in North America. *Op. cit.*, 17: 64, 1900.

The Cerulean Warbler (*Dendroica caerulea*) as a summer resident in Baltimore County, Maryland. *Op. cit.* 18: 137-142, 1901.

Early occurrence of the Black Scoter in Maryland and Virginia. *Op. cit.*, 18: 190, 1901.

Chestnut-collared Longspur (*Calcarius ornatus*) in Maryland. *Op. cit.*, 25: 84, 1908.

Cliff Swallow (*Petrochelidon lunifrons*) again nesting in Baltimore County, Maryland. *Op. cit.*, 42: 275-276, 1925.

Unusual nesting site of Great Horned Owl. *Op. cit.*, 42: 444-445, 1925.

A Raven in Baltimore County, Maryland. *Op. cit.*, 47: 255, 1930.—W. BRYANT TYRRELL.