

IN MEMORIAM: LAWRENCE EMERSON HICKS

BY EDWARD S. THOMAS

THE death on January 20, 1957 of Lawrence Hicks, Fellow and past Secretary of The American Ornithologists' Union, removed from the field of biology one of the most remarkable persons in my acquaintance. He was endowed with many faculties seldom combined in one man. Great physical strength, a fine mind, consuming intellectual curiosity, tremendous drive and keen competitive instinct united to make him an unusual biologist.

His interest in natural history dated from childhood. At the age of 14, he contributed two articles to Lone Scout Magazine, "The Chimney Swift" and "Should Cats be Licensed?" His first Christmas Bird Count, made at the age of 19, was published in Bird-Lore in 1925. He continued to participate in the Christmas Bird Counts with the greatest enthusiasm up to the time of his death.

Hicks was primarily a field biologist, rather than an office or laboratory worker and his greatest contributions were made in this area. He published numerous papers, largely on Ohio birds. As an indication of his productiveness, he had a bibliography of more than 90 titles at the age of 40. A selected list of these is appended.

Lawrence Emerson Hicks was born October 22, 1905, and reared at Fredericktown, Ohio, the son of Earl H. and Floy Coe Hicks, both of whom survive him. He received his undergraduate training at Otterbein College and his M.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees from Ohio State University. He served as game ecologist for the Ohio Division of Conservation from 1929 to 1931 and as wildlife conservationist with the U. S. Soil Conservation Service at Zanesville, Ohio, from 1934 to 1936. In 1936 he became the first head of the Cooperative Wildlife Research Station at Ohio State University, where he served until 1945.

He became an Associate Member of the American Ornithologists' Union in 1929, was elected a Fellow in 1941 and served as secretary from 1937 until 1945. In 1938 he was United States delegate to the International Ornithological Congress at Rouen, where he presented a paper on the European Starling in America.

He was secretary of the Wilson Ornithological Society, 1931-1936 and president, 1940-1941. He was elected to the Wheaton Club of Columbus in 1926 and was president of the organization in 1933-1934, at the age of 28, the youngest man to be elevated to that position in the club's history.

While a student in college, Hicks was employed for two summers on a barberry eradication project in Ashtabula County, Ohio. The



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workers covered the area methodically and thoroughly; this survey gave him an exceptional opportunity to study the plant life and the nesting bird populations of this northeastern-most Ohio county. The plant life of the county was the subject of his doctoral dissertation and the nesting birds the basis for the paper listed below. His knowledge of the northern relict habitats of this area was unexcelled.

I made a memorable field trip to Ashtabula County with him in August of 1935, when he aided me in securing for the Ohio State Museum specimens of *Scudderia fasciata* Beutenmuller, a rare species of katydid. The insects were well up in some hemlock trees, too high to reach with an insect net, whereupon Lawrence cut down a large elm sapling with his jack-knife. The sapling was so large that only a strong man could have wielded it, but with it he thrashed the hemlocks, driving out the insects, until we secured a series of specimens, probably larger than the collections of all other museums combined.

Further evidence of Hicks' energy is supplied by his activity in banding Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*). In 1927-1929, the Wheaton Club in a cooperative project banded some 7000 Starlings which were captured in cupolas of barns and towers of buildings in the Columbus area. The project was continued by Hicks, usually with two assistants, and by 1937 they had captured nearly 50,000 birds, a remarkable record.

He was greatly interested in athletics. He played guard on the Otterbein football team, although at that time one of the lightest men on the squad. He later became a skilled wrestler and served as coach during the war years for the Ohio State University wrestling squad.

In 1931 he was married to Thyra Jane Bevier. There are two children, Mrs. Clement A. F. Hastie and Thomas Edward Deam Hicks.

In his later years, Hicks operated a large apiaries business. With colonies of bees scattered widely over the state, he had an opportunity to continue his field work on a considerable scale. In recent years, he made many botanical excursions with Floyd Bartley, of Circleville, into southern Ohio. His keen ecological sense and Bartley's botanical discrimination resulted in the finding of many plants not previously reported for Ohio. In these years he also built up a large collection of Indian artifacts.

He had a large ornithological library, a considerable herbarium and a sizeable collection of bird skins. He contributed thousands of sheets of pressed plants to the herbarium of Ohio State University. His collection of bird skins was bequeathed to the Ohio State Museum, and, together with earlier gifts, amounts to well over 2000 specimens. Particularly valuable are numerous birds representing nesting records for Ashtabula County.

In December of 1956, it was apparent to his friends that his health had failed. This fact, however, did not prevent him from entering into the Christmas Bird Counts with his usual enthusiasm. In a period of 10 days, he participated in 6 counts, including one in Ashtabula County, a 3-day round trip from Columbus. At Ashtabula, he shot a White-winged Scoter, then swam out into the icy water and retrieved the bird.

A few days after the last bird count, he collapsed and was confined to his bed until his death.

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