

reduced, however, the more deliberate pace and ultimate value of long-term studies is not likely to be recognized and rewarded. Without some changes in how scientific progress and professional stature are currently perceived, bright young ornithologists will be compelled to avoid investigations of the inter-

mediate-scale phenomena that require 5 or 10 or more years to understand or they will investigate such phenomena on a short-term basis, perhaps obtaining results that are superficial and quite possibly incorrect.

---

## 100 Years Ago in *The Auk*

---



WITH this issue, *The Auk* begins its second century of publication. This milestone provides the opportunity to look back on what was being published in *The Auk* 100 years ago, as the journal began. Ornithology was a different sort of discipline then, with much that we now accept as common knowledge yet to be discovered. In some respects, however, ornithologists of a century ago had as much understanding of natural phenomena as we do today, although they expressed themselves using more eloquent prose, less jargon, and far less quantitative detail. Reading the writings of a century ago reveals a good deal about how our current thinking was anticipated, how far we have come, how little has changed, how ornithologists approached the study of birds then, and the like. Accordingly, this and each following issue of *The Auk* will contain a selected excerpt from the counterpart issue of a century ago. The following note, from Volume 1, Number 1, was selected because it conveys a sense of the excitement of fieldwork and of discovery that, while still present, is not often expressed in contemporary scientific writing.—J.A.W.

“The Nest of the Saw-whet Owl,” by F. H. Carpenter. *Auk* 1: 94 (1884):

In April, 1881, I was camped near the base of Mt. Katahdin [Maine], while on a trip in that section in search of the eggs of our Birds of Prey. The weather at that time being quite cold, it was necessary to frequently replenish the fire. About 3 o'clock in the morning I arose for that purpose, and noticed a small object moving around amongst the remains of our last meal. Further investigation proved it to be some kind of small Owl, gleaning among the bones for stray morsels of meat. On my near approach it flew into a tall fir, and was hid from sight. During breakfast I again saw it, coming

down to within a few feet of us, when, apparently seeing us for the first time, it again retreated to the fir. I then saw it was a Saw-whet Owl, and it seemed to be in no wise affected by the light. At night one of my companions informed me he had seen a pair of small Owls sitting together in an immense birch, but no nest could be found.

The next morning we struck camp, and moved toward the summit of the mountain. In about a week we returned over the same route and again camped at the place just mentioned. On the second night I was surprised to see the little Owl come as before. We concluded he must have a nest near, and the next day, April 30, we commenced to search for the nest. In the afternoon one of my guides was so fortunate as to discover the Owl going into a hole made by a Woodpecker, in a large birch. He looked in but could see nothing, and had stopped up the entrance with moss, so that I might see it just as he had found it. On going back to it and removing the moss I found the entrance quite large, having been slit by some animal trying to effect an entrance. Carefully cutting away the bark below the hole exposed the nest, which was merely a mixture of fine chips and small feathers of the Grouse. It contained the old Owl and three young ones.

I was disappointed at not securing any eggs, but felt amply repaid in viewing one page in the life-history of this little Owl, who sometimes visits me in my more southern home.

The young Owls were wonderfully droll-looking little fellows, and as they gazed at me with upturned eyes from down in the heart of that canoe birch, in the middle of that immense forest, stretching away for miles, remote from any human habitation, I thought that single look was worth hours of gazing at prepared specimens, inclosed in mahogany cases, in our scientific museums. The formation of a collection does not constitute all there is in the study of ornithology; and around the memory of the scene in that old Maine forest are clustered affections which time cannot destroy.