



HERBERT FRIEDMANN, 1900-1987

## IN MEMORIAM: HERBERT FRIEDMANN

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With the death of Herbert Friedmann on 14 May 1987, ornithology and scholarly research in general lost one of the most remarkable figures of recent times. Friedmann's prolific ornithological research included landmark studies of cowbirds and other parasitic birds as well

as authoritative treatises on the distribution and systematics of birds in diverse parts of the world.

Friedmann became a Fellow of the A.O.U. in 1929, was elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 1962, and received other prestigious signs of recognition. He served as President of

the A.O.U. from 1937 to 1939. His accomplishments were not limited to science; he was also a noted art historian. Friedmann's formal affiliations were with museums for most of his career, and here too he was an influential figure. Despite Friedmann's devotion to his own research, he regarded his achievements as contributions to a broader understanding that could best be achieved by a community of scholars. He was the antithesis of today's highly competitive and often combative scientist, and *The New York Times* correctly called him "a gentle, scholarly man."

Friedmann was born in Brooklyn, New York, on 22 April 1900. A serious interest in ornithology developed at about the age of 16 as a result of visits to exhibits at the American Museum of Natural History and bird walks in city parks. From 1916 to 1920 he attended City College in Manhattan where he received his bachelor's degree. During this period he studied "The weaving of the Red-billed Weaver Bird in captivity" at the New York Zoological Park, which resulted in his first publication (1922, *Zoologica* 2: 357). This study so impressed William Beebe that he urged Friedmann to apply to Cornell University for a scholarship. Friedmann received the scholarship and completed a doctorate under Arthur A. Allen in 1923. A postdoctoral grant from the National Research Council and the Rockefeller Foundation supported Friedmann from 1923 to 1926. Although officially based at Harvard University under the tutelage of William Morton Wheeler, Friedmann spent much of this period in South America and Africa studying parasitic birds. At that time it took months of slow, roundabout travel to reach these far-off places. When people told Herbert about their problems with jet-lag, he delighted in recounting the three months it took him to reach Africa on his first trip.

Much of the combined work of these early years was published in the classic "The Cowbirds: A Study in the Biology of Social Parasitism" (1929). This book demonstrates one of Friedmann's most admirable qualities, his knack for recognizing scientific problems of enduring significance. Long before the emergence of evolutionary ecology and sociobiology, he realized that the six species of cowbirds, each of which differs from the others in one or more major life-history features, provide a fertile ground for studies of coevolution, social behavior, and reproductive strategies. The book continues to

have an impact and was cited in 37 publications by 26 different authors from 1980 to 1984.

In the mid- and late 1920's, Friedmann taught at Brown University and Amherst College. He became curator of the Division of Birds in the National Museum of Natural History at the Smithsonian Institution in 1929. Friedmann published three books on the birds of Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania during the 1930's. These were followed by systematic works on birds in the New World: three volumes that continued Ridgway's "Birds of North and Middle America" (1941, 1946, 1950) and two co-authored volumes on the birds of Mexico (1950, 1957). Friedmann also found time to continue his studies of parasitic birds and published "The Parasitic Cuckoos of Africa" (1949). This was followed by books on the honeyguides (1955), parasitic weaverbirds (1960), and the cuckoo genera *Clamator* (1964) and *Chrysococcyx* (1968). His work on the honeyguides was based in part on fieldwork in Africa in 1950-1951 and also included laboratory studies that elucidated the symbiotic relationships between the birds and intestinal bacteria and yeast that allow them to digest wax. The honeyguide research won the National Academy of Sciences Elliott Medal in 1959. Such recognition must have been a source of much satisfaction for Friedmann because he felt a special appreciation for Africa, both its fauna and its people. Friedmann was also awarded the Leidy Medal by the Academy of Natural Science in Philadelphia in 1955.

Despite this work on birds from all over the world, Friedmann never stopped his cowbird studies. He published summaries of important records of cowbird parasitism at frequent intervals. This information was synthesized in a 1963 book, "Host Relations of the Parasitic Cowbirds," which was mentioned prominently when the A.O.U. awarded him the Brewster Medal in 1964. This book has a separate discussion for each host of the three most generalized cowbirds, more than 400 host species in all. The 1963 host catalog was updated by monographs in 1977 and 1985, the latter his last research publication.

Friedmann served as Curator of Birds at the Smithsonian until 1959, when he became Head Curator of Zoology. He held that post until 1961 when he was named Director of the Los Angeles County Natural History Museum. That museum was then part of the Museum of Art, History and Science, and Friedmann led the division of

this general museum into the separate components that exist today. Under his guidance, the Museum of Natural History underwent significant expansion, both in public exhibits and specimen collections. With adjunct appointments in zoology and in art at the University of California at Los Angeles, he served as Director of the Museum until his retirement in 1970 when he became Director Emeritus. But official retirement had little effect on his devotion to research. He went to Antarctica in 1970 to evaluate the National Science Foundation's biological research program there.

Friedmann published 17 books and some 315 articles, reviews, and monographs. A complete list has been placed in the A.O.U. archives at the Smithsonian. Considering the enormous breadth of the man's interest and competence, most ornithologists probably are unaware of some of his achievements. In a little-known 1964 paper titled "The history of our knowledge of avian brood parasitism," published in *Centaurus*, Friedmann showed that the first written mention of parasitic birds is not attributable to Aristotle, as is true for so many things in science, but to the ancient Vedas of India, nearly 2,000 years earlier. Another unusual study, "The natural history background of camouflage," was published in 1942 as part of the "Smithsonian War Background Studies." This series of papers by Smithsonian staff provided basic information, most of it about indigenous peoples of the world, helpful to the Allies' war effort.

The most notable of Friedmann's nonornithological publications were in art history. His two books, "The Symbolic Goldfinch" (1946) and "A Bestiary for St. Jerome: Animal Symbolism in European Religious Art" (1980), and approximately 20 papers are highly regarded in the art world. His contributions in this area were recognized by the prestigious Samuel H. Kress Foundation, which funded his travels throughout Europe to inspect paintings in numerous museums. Although science and art might seem to represent disparate kinds of intellectual endeavors, Friedmann was convinced that there are some important similarities. He presented this viewpoint in an intriguing paper titled "The significance of the unimportant in studies of nature and of art" (1966, *Proc. Am. Phil. Soc.* 110: 256).

Those who knew Friedmann and his scholarly work well were especially impressed by three notable features. His remarkable presci-

ence for identifying scientific problems of long-term significance has been mentioned. The second feature was Friedmann's openness about science and his pleasure at seeing other people apply new techniques and concepts to the same problems he tackled. A third feature was Friedmann's scholarship and meticulous attention to detail, which allowed him to amass numerous disjointed bits of data and synthesize them into a significant body of information. Nothing shows Friedmann's scholarship as well as his continuing efforts to summarize known cases of cowbird parasitism. To accumulate data for his host catalogs, Friedmann examined numerous state journals, read carefully the detailed entries on censuses and breeding birds in *American Birds*, and consulted with museums to uncover unpublished records of parasitism among their egg collections. There was a massive correspondence with amateur and professional ornithologists. Some of the correspondence was initiated by Friedmann, but much of it was initiated by fieldworkers who knew that telling Herbert Friedmann about their findings was the thing to do. Somehow, Friedmann accurately sorted the thousands of bits of data collected over more than half a century and was able to determine when a case of parasitism constituted the first record for a particular species (of the host or the cowbird), for a particular subspecies (of the host or the cowbird), or for a particular geographic area. Anyone starting such a task today would undoubtedly employ computerized records, but Friedmann's acumen allowed him to succeed long before the computer age.

Herbert never wanted his work to be the final word on a subject. Rather, he wanted it to be something to which others could add, even if this meant a change in his interpretation. Herbert's attitude was summed up by one of the many anecdotes he enjoyed telling. He once asked a South African scientist why no one had followed up on his honeyguide research. The answer was "Why should we? You wrote a whole book on the subject." This answer both amused and disturbed Herbert. The upsurge in cowbird studies in the last 20 years was a source of great satisfaction to him. He delighted in communicating with younger investigators. Herbert was a significant positive factor in the professional development of a number of scientists, even though he was never in a position to serve as a graduate advisor.

Herbert's open, gentle personality gave him

a wonderful perspective on the importance of things. Despite his lifelong commitment to research, he never regarded his work as something so imbued with ego that he would engage in bitter fights over the veracity of his or of someone else's findings. Nothing was too serious to have fun poked at it. He enjoyed writing limericks, and a biologically slanted series of these was once put on display at the Smithsonian. One makes note of the wax-eating propensities of honeyguides:

There once was a bird in Nigeria  
Whose chatter grew weary and wearier  
Its demeanor grew lax  
As it gobbled up wax,  
Which it stuffed in its little interior.

As a perspective on the length of time he was associated with museums, Herbert enjoyed telling about his conditions when the Smithsonian offered him a position in the 1920's. He requested that the institution purchase its first typewriter, which would be for his use, and that he be free to hire the Smithsonian's first female secretary if she turned out to be the best candidate. Both conditions, especially the idea of working in the same room with a woman, made the older Smithsonian scientists uncomfortable.

Herbert met his wife, the former Karen Juul Vejlo of Denmark, when she visited in Washington during 1936-1937 in her capacity as an agricultural economist. They were married in 1937. Mrs. Friedmann continues to reside at their home in Laguna Hills, California. Their daughter, Karen, has developed a career in art history.

Herbert's health had been failing in recent years. He survived a serious illness in 1982 "much to his own surprise and that of the doctors." But he suffered a stroke in early May 1987 and died on 14 May. He was in good spirits, and his mind remained sharp until the end. He still had projects in the works. He is survived by his wife, daughter, and brother.

Upon his death, his wife found a large collection of notes on significant records of cowbird parasitism that he had accumulated since his 1985 compilation. A month after his death, a large group of Herbert's friends and family gathered to reminisce at the Museum of Natural History in Los Angeles. While there was sadness at Herbert's passing, there was also celebration of the long and extraordinarily productive life that he led.

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## IN MEMORIAM: FRANÇOIS HAVERSCHMIDT, 1906-1987

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With the passing of Mr. Justice Haverschmidt on 28 April 1987, The Netherlands lost one of its foremost ornithologists. Born into a judge's family in Utrecht, he grew up, studied law, and became clerk of the court in that city. He moved later to the courts of Haarlem, Heerlen, and Leeuwarden. Until he was 40, he worked mainly on Dutch birds, with a preference for meadow birds, particularly the Stork. Early in 1946 he was appointed as a Judge in Suriname, where he rose to be Chief Justice and Acting Governor.

His main motive for accepting the judgeship of Suriname was the fact that the avifauna of that country was then extremely poorly known.

A large series of publications dealing with the avifauna of Suriname culminated in his "Birds of Suriname," published in 1968, the year he retired to Ommen, The Netherlands. He continued to visit Suriname until 1981.

In an amazingly productive life, Haverschmidt wrote about 350 ornithological papers, which were published mainly in American, Dutch, German, and English journals. He produced six books.

Haverschmidt was also active in the field of conservation. In Suriname, he was chair of the committee to advise the government on hunting and conservation matters. The first nature