

IN MEMORIAM: JAMES BOND

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JAMES BOND, 1900–1989
(From a photograph taken in 1984)

James Bond, internationally regarded as the doyen of Caribbean ornithology, died on 14 February 1989, after battling cancer for many years.

Bond was born in Philadelphia on 4 January 1900 and was a bridge between the centuries in his ornithology as in his lifespan. His education began at the Delancey School and later the prestigious St. Paul's School in Concord, New Hampshire. After his mother died, he left St. Paul's, and he and his father moved to England. There James entered Harrow in preparation for Cambridge University, where he received his B.A. in 1922. He lived in England for eight years, and his vocal inflections remained an amalgam of New England, British, and upper-class Philadelphian all his life.

His first position after graduation was in the Foreign Exchange Department of the Pennsylvania Company (a banking firm), but a boyhood interest in natural history, originally manifested in butterfly collecting, won out, and he resigned from the bank in 1925, after less than three years. He accepted an invitation to accompany Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee on a collecting expedition to the lower Amazon River, Brazil, on behalf of the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia (ANSP). The report on their collections (1928, *Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci. Philadelphia* 80: 149–176) was written by Witmer Stone, Curator of Birds at the ANSP, but incorporated the field notes of both of the expedition participants.

Although Bond continued to publish papers

on South American birds (some coauthored with Meyer de Schauensee), notably those of Bolivia and Peru, these were based on specimens in the ANSP collected by M. A. Carriker Jr., J. Steinbach, and others, rather than on Bond's own fieldwork. He had determined, not long after returning from Brazil, that his real ornithological interests centered on the Caribbean islands, and these studies became his life's work. His only other expedition to a South American country, in the company of William H. Phelps and his family in 1961, was to the islands off Venezuela, an expedition that influenced his thinking about the limits of the Antillean avifaunal subregion.

Bond's "Check-list of Birds of the West Indies," published by the ANSP, appeared in four successive editions, the last in 1956. He kept the check-list up-to-date through a series of 27 Supplements, published 1956 through 1987. The first version of his book "Birds of the West Indies" (ANSP 1936) was not a field guide in the modern sense, having no color plates other than a frontispiece of a tody. He converted this into a field guide with color plates by Don Eckelberry in 1947; this was published by Macmillan, but a series of revised editions (including supplementary plates by Arthur Singer) was issued by Collins in England and Houghton Mifflin in the United States. Bond completed revisions for a 6th edition of the field guide shortly before his death.

A bachelor for more than half a century, in 1953 Bond married Mary Fanning Wickham Porcher Lewis, widow of a prominent Philadelphia lawyer. Mary was already a published poet and novelist, and she subsequently wrote several books about her life with James Bond, as well as an autobiography (1988) entitled "Ninety Years 'At Home' in Philadelphia."

The experiences of the Bonds in the 1960s have now passed into legend and were played up by the media in their obituaries of James. In 1960, in a London newspaper review of a revision of the field guide, cryptic reference was made to sadomasochism, Smith and Wesson guns, and other aspects of a life utterly unlike that of James Bond of Philadelphia. This was the first hint to reach Jim and Mary of the *other* James Bond, who was to plague their lives for years afterward. They soon learned that the British novelist Ian Fleming, who had a home in Jamaica and was something of a bird-watcher, had taken the name James Bond from the

field guide and given it to his fictional character, a dashing, womanizing counterspy. Mary Bond's little book "How 007 Got his Name" (Collins 1966) tells the whole story with great good humor; inexplicably, no American publisher bought the rights to this book (which was a best-seller in Britain and was translated into French), and it is now a collector's item.

Bond joined the American Ornithologists' Union in 1923, became a Member (equivalent to current Elective Member) in 1929, and was elected Fellow in 1946. He was awarded the Brewster Medal in 1954. Other honors included the Musgrave Medal of the Institute of Jamaica (1953), the Wilderness Club (Philadelphia) Medal (1961), the Leidy Medal of the ANSP (1975), the Silver Medal of the Congreso Iberoamericano de Ornitología (1983), and Honorary Membership in the British Ornithologists' Union (1987). In 1973, David Lack proposed, in a letter to Bond, that the avifaunal boundary between Tobago and the Lesser Antilles, which Bond had emphasized in his zoogeographical writings, be called "Bond's Line."

In addition to his books, the check-list, and its supplements, Bond published about thirty papers on birds of the West Indies and peripheral islands. He also published about half a dozen papers on the birds of his beloved Maine and the adjacent Maritime Provinces. He seldom attended meetings of the major ornithological societies, but he and I both participated in a highly successful symposium on the Parulinae arranged by George Miksch Sutton for the Wilson Ornithological Society (1959) meeting in Rockland, Maine. I owe to Harold Mayfield an anecdote to the effect that the late Fred Hebard of Philadelphia persuaded Bond to drive with him to the Wilson Society meeting at Douglas Lake, Michigan, in 1953. The Mayfields encountered them at a restaurant en route, where Hebard informed them that this was the first time Bond had ever been west of Paoli, a suburb of Philadelphia. Bond remarked that the country seemed very large!

Although he has said that his interest in birds began at Spring House, Pennsylvania, when he was five, Bond's desire to become an ornithologist was especially stimulated by his rather dashing father, Francis E. Bond, who led an expedition to the Orinoco Delta on behalf of the ANSP when James was 11. Among his contemporaries, Bond's heroes were Alexander Wetmore, Alexander Skutch, and Ernst Mayr

(with whom he published a seminal paper on swallow classification based largely on nesting habits [1943, *Ibis* 85: 334–343]). The nidification of birds was one of his most compelling interests, after Caribbean zoogeography, which explains his admiration for Skutch. He believed that in nesting habits might be found clues to the relationships of such problematical West Indian genera as *Microliga* and *Leucopeza*.

Both Bond and his colleague Meyer de Schauensee held appointments on the scientific staff of the ANSP, but they were among the last of a traditional museum breed, the independently wealthy, nonsalaried curator, who lacked advanced university degrees. When illness prevented his regular commuting to the ANSP, he continued to write at home, using materials

brought to him by Frank Gill, Mark Robbins, and others.

Visitors to the ANSP, knowing of Bond's many expeditions to West Indian islands, are always surprised to see how few specimens he actually collected. His approach to systematics tended to be rather typological, precluding the necessity, in his eyes, of collecting large series. Nevertheless, many of his conclusions in his taxonomic papers have held up, and his zoogeographic analyses of the Caribbean avifauna inevitably form the bases for all subsequent studies.

I am indebted to Mary Wickham Bond and Frank B. Gill for much of the material incorporated into this memorial.