



In Memoriam

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IN MEMORIAM: LAWRENCE HARVEY WALKINSHAW, 1904–1993

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LAWRENCE HARVEY WALKINSHAW, 1904–1993

(Photograph taken in Sweden in June 1963)

AS EACH branch of science matures, it tends to pass out of the reach of the individual worker pursuing it as a part-time avocation without institutional support. In ornithology, however, the amateur still holds a respected place, and near the head of every list of such people stands Lawrence Walkinshaw. It is almost impossible to write on the life histories of cranes, warblers, flycatchers, or sparrows without quoting his work. He is a sparkling example of the dedicated student of birds.

His bibliography lists more than 200 works, including nine books, spanning 70 years. How did he do it? He was a man of prodigious energy and determination. One of his companions watching him stride across the tundra in Alaska said, "He moved like a steam engine." He began a day's work before most people were awake, and he ended it after most people were asleep. Unlike many otherwise competent field workers, he carried his projects through to conclusion, and put his findings into print without delay. He was a finisher.

Walkinshaw had a passion for facts. As misers collect money, he collected data. When he found a bird or a nest, he noted; he measured; he weighed. He took meticulous notes. It should be encouraging to beginners that he accomplished this great body of work without institutional backing, financial grants, or secretarial help. However, he had able assistance in the field from friends, notably his long-time companion, William A. Dyer, who coauthored some of his papers.

Like most ornithologists, Larry, as he was widely known, was fascinated by birds early in life. He reported a nest at age 12, built a bluebird trail at 13, and began systematic recording of his observations at 14. He found most of his subjects near his home. His comprehensive study of the Field Sparrow (*Spizella pusilla*) was conducted on an abandoned 100-acre farm adjacent to his home, where over many years he gathered data on 615 nests.

His monumental efforts with the Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*) began in a marsh he knew from boyhood. Later his fieldwork expanded through North America, and his data covered more than 700 nests of this one species. During his lifetime he saw the crane restored to common nesting status, while the formerly abundant Greater Prairie-Chicken (*Tympanuchus cupido*) disappeared completely from his county.

His interest in Kirtland's Warbler (*Dendroica kirtlandii*) began in 1930. He was able to reach the nesting grounds in a 3-h drive from his home. In a half century he found more than 330 of their nests, far more than any other person. He banded the first Kirtland's Warbler on record in 1932, and ultimately wrote three books detailing his observations, the most important of which was *The Kirtland's Warbler—The Natural History of an Endangered Species* (1983, Cranbrook Institute of Science, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan).

Within his county he found the Prothonotary Warbler (*Protonotaria citrea*), here rare near the northern limit of its nesting range, and he studied it by installing nest boxes. Also, in his neighborhood *Empidonax* flycatchers caught his attention, and he accomplished the remarkable feat of finding more than 100 nests of each of Acadian Flycatcher (*Empidonax vireescens*), Willow Flycatcher (*E. traillii*), and Least Flycatcher (*E. minimus*).

His talent for finding concealed nests was not matched by many professionals. In his career he found the first nests in Michigan for many species and also banded 40,000 birds.

His interest in cranes attracted him farther afield, indeed, twice around the world. To gather material for his *Cranes of the World* (1973, Winchester Press, New York), he travelled to Sweden, Denmark, Poland, India, Japan, Australia, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Sudan, and South Africa, finding nests in every region. He visited every continent except South America and Antarctica (there were no cranes there!).

His attraction to Sandhill Cranes continued through life and, in his last weeks, he was planning further fieldwork on this species. He had pursued them from Florida south to Cuba and north through the Canadian prairies to Banks Island in the Northwest Territories, and to Alaska. He wrote many papers and a book, *The Sandhill Cranes* (1949, Cranbrook Institute of Science, Bloomfield Hills).

Locally he was influential in all issues concerning birds, organizing and reporting Christmas bird counts at Battle Creek for 40 years, and at Lake Wales, Florida, where he lived in winter for 20 years. He joined the AOU in 1929, became an Elected Member in 1941, and was elected a Fellow in 1951. On the state and national scene he held major offices including President of the Wilson Ornithological Society (1958–1960) and

Secretary of the AOU (1961-1964). He was a member of the board of the Michigan Audubon Society for many years, and co-editor of their journal, *The Jack-Pine Warbler* (1938-1948). As chairman of their conservation committee, he was influential in the establishment of the Baker Sanctuary in Calhoun County. In recognition of this work a tract in Oceana County has been named the Walkinshaw Wetlands in his honor.

To some his pursuit of birds seemed obsessive, but this ignores many other activities he pursued with characteristic energy and purpose. While conducting a flourishing practice of dentistry in Battle Creek for 39 years, he was president of the Southwestern Michigan Dental Society for a term, and was active for 40 years in the sight-saving efforts of the Lions Club, serving in turn as their President. For nine years he led a scout troop, and received the highest Boy Scout honor, the Silver Beaver Award. Four books on branches of the Walkinshaw and Grinnell families attest to his longstanding interest in genealogy.

Although he published voluminously, he had little fondness for the minutiae of writing. He

was so impatient with the details and delays of editing that he published several of his later books by himself through microfilm-xerography.

Walkinshaw was born 25 February 1904 on his father's farm in Calhoun County, Michigan, the son of Beatson Charles Walkinshaw and Eva Marie Grinnell. He died following a stroke on 16 January 1993, while visiting his daughter and her family at Lubbock, Texas. He was married in 1931 to Clara Mae Cartland, who survives him. They have two children, James Richard Walkinshaw, and Wendy Ann Shake, each of whom have two children.

He attended Olivet College and then studied dentistry at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, graduating in 1929. He opened his office in that same year, and continued practice in Battle Creek until 1968. His nest records have been deposited at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology at Ithaca, New York, and his field notebooks at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington. His family has established the Walkinshaw Memorial Scholarship Fund at Cornell for students of ornithology.