



In Memoriam

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IN MEMORIAM: MAURICE BROOKS, 1900–1993

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MAURICE BROOKS, 1900–1993

(Photograph taken in 1985)

Maurice Brooks, Fellow of the American Ornithologists' Union, died on 10 January 1993. At 93, he had outlived most of his contemporaries and, as so often happens with exceptional longevity, his name may be unfamiliar to the new generation of ornithologists, especially those outside of the Appalachian region.

The name of Maurice Brooks is synonymous with the natural history of Appalachia. John Burroughs was best associated with the Catskills, and John Muir with the Sierras. Maurice Brooks, in a similar fashion, became the interpreter of the Appalachians.

The role came naturally. His father, Fred Brooks, was an early entomologist at West Virginia University. His uncle, Earl Brooks, was a Presbyterian minister, a professor of natural sciences at Boston University, and an accomplished ornithologist. Another uncle, A. B. Brooks, was the first chief game protector in West Virginia. Maurice Brooks became the true interpreter and literary voice of Appalachian natural history, extending his interests and vision beyond the borders of the state.

Maurice Brooks was born 16 June 1900 on the family farm at French Creek, Upshur County. He attended Davis and Elkins College and West Virginia Wesleyan College before graduating from West Virginia University in 1923. Extension and teaching jobs followed and in 1934 he came to West Virginia University as a professor in the Biology Department. He moved to the Division of Forestry in 1938 as a professor of wildlife management and remained there until his retirement in 1969.

Maurice Brooks always considered himself a teacher. Throughout his tenure in the Division of Forestry he taught several courses in wildlife management, but the one course for which he is best remembered and the one through which he influenced the most students was Forestry 140, West Virginia Natural Resources. In it students from many curricula gained new insights and appreciation of the Appalachians.

Outside the academic world, Maurice Brooks was known for his literary works. He wrote scores of articles on Appalachian natural history for *Wonderful West Virginia* and a series of articles for the *New York Times* garden section from 1950–1960. Maurice Brooks wrote his first article for *Bird Lore*, published by the National Audubon Society (then National Association of Audubon Societies) in 1926. Some of these articles, such as his "Muskeg Furthest South" (one

of the first national articles on Cranberry Glades), have achieved the rank of minor classics. Many notes and articles on West Virginia birds followed and were published in the *Auk* and the *Wilson Bulletin*. Among them were observations of the range extensions of the Savannah Sparrow, Bobolink, and Henslow's Sparrow into deforested West Virginia. But Maurice is best known for his 1965 book *The Appalachians*, regarded as the definitive work on the natural history of that mountain range. In 1968 he wrote a second book, *The Life of the Mountains*, one in a series of natural-history books published by McGraw Hill.

Maurice Brooks' reputation as a teacher and writer overshadowed his scientific contributions, which were not confined to birds. He published the definitive paper on the snowshoe hare in West Virginia in the *Journal of Wildlife Management*, still widely cited, and on the Cheat Mountain salamander in *Copeia*. Still cited in many major works on chemical ecology is his paper on the allelopathic effects of walnut on associated vegetation in 1951. This paper, published as an *Experiment Station Bulletin*, was a pioneer work in that field.

Perhaps his finest and least-appreciated piece of scientific work was in botany. *The Pteridophytes of West Virginia* was published in 1938 as a *West Virginia Bulletin*. In this beautifully printed monograph Maurice Brooks employed a diagnostic approach to the identification of ferns, the same technique used by Roger Tory Peterson in his field guide to birds.

His diverse scientific interests led Roger Tory Peterson to write, "It is as difficult to label Maurice Brooks as it is to classify some of the plant and animal associations of the Central Appalachians. Birdmen know him as a leading ornithologist, herpetologists would claim him for their ranks, while botanists admire his scholarly work with ferns and other groups. He is really an ecologist, one who interprets nature as a whole through her many parts."

For his achievements in the fields of science, teaching, and writing, Maurice Brooks received a number of honors and awards. He served on the Council of the AOU, and was elected a Fellow in 1950, 20 years after joining and 4 years after becoming an Elective Member. He was a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. From 1950 to 1952 Maurice was President of the Wilson Ornithological Society. Previously he had served as its Secre-

tary during World War II, was second and first Vice President, and was a representative of the Wilson Ornithological Society on the Council of the AOU and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He was elected a life member of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and the Brooks Bird Club. He served eight years on the West Virginia Conservation Commission and four years on the Blennerhassett Historical Park Commission. He received honorary degrees from West Virginia University, Davis and Elkins College, West Virginia Wesleyan, Susquehanna University, and Salem College. In 1979 Maurice Brooks was the *Charleston Gazette Mail's* West Virginian of the

Year; and in the same year, the West Virginia State Legislature named him West Virginia Man of the Year. In 1970 West Virginia bestowed on him its highest honor for service with the University—the Order of Vandalia. In the January 1984 issue of *Audubon*, Maurice Brooks was honored with a biographical article, fittingly entitled *Dr. Appalachia*.

Maurice Brooks was a unique scientist, conservationist, writer and teacher who had a tremendous impact on thousands of individuals and students for more than half a century. In future years he will be acknowledged as the foremost naturalist ever to live and work in West Virginia.

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IN MEMORIAM: HAMILTON MACK LAING, 1883–1982

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Hamilton "Mack" Laing, a member of the AOU since 1917 and an Elective Member since 1943, was born at Hensall, Ontario, 6 February 1883, and died at Comox, British Columbia, 15 February 1982. A rural teacher in Manitoba for 11 years, he then studied art at the Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York, 1911–1915, before serving in the Royal Flying Corps. He was assistant naturalist on the Smithsonian Institution Expedition to Lake Athabasca under Francis Harper in 1920, and assistant naturalist with National Museum of Canada field parties most summers in the 1920s and 1930s, while operating a nut farm at Comox, British Columbia.

He collected and superbly prepared about 10,000 specimens of birds and mammals for the Museum of Canada and Royal British Columbia

Museum. He published 16 scientific articles, chiefly in the *Canadian Field-Naturalist*, and his notes concerning 11 species appeared in A. C. Bent's *Life Histories of North American Birds*. *Out With the Birds* was published in 1913 and *Allan Brooks, Artist-Naturalist*, appeared in 1979, representing an interval of 66 years between books! He wrote about 900 nature articles (many illustrated with his own photographs) for newspapers, magazines and outdoor journals. A plant (*Antennaria laingii*), a subspecies of the Great Basin pocket mouse (*Perognathus parvus laingi*), and a subspecies of the Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis laingi*), were named for him. His biography, *Hamilton Mack Laing, Hunter-Naturalist*, by Richard Mackie, was published in 1985.