

or the history of literature. He published four collections of poetry, two of which have been translated into English. The last collection (1990) was named *In Memoriam*. Below is a poem entitled "Autumn's Joy" from the collection *Black Sails* (*Svarta segel*, 1969), which was

translated from Swedish by Doris Huestis Speirs in 1976:

"Strange is the joy of autumn,—
a marine-blue wind, a birch's
nerve-fine branch in light. The eye smiles
but the song of the heart is smoke."

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IN MEMORIAM: BISWAMOY BISWAS, 1923–1994

ERNST MAYR

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With the death in Calcutta of Biswamoy Biswas on 10 August 1994, India lost its foremost bird taxonomist. Born there on 2 June 1923, son of a professor of geology, Biswas was a brilliant student and gold medallist at his graduation. S. L. Hora, director of the Zoological Survey of India, recognized his promise and in 1947 awarded him a three-year fellowship. This allowed Biswas to study at the British Museum in London and with Stresemann in Berlin, but mostly at the American Museum in New York where he worked with me. He was an indefatigable worker, often staying in the museum far into the night after everyone else had gone home. The results were numerous clarifications in our understanding of Indian genera of birds, including *Psittacula* and *Lanius*.

On his return from abroad, Biswas obtained his Ph.D. from the University of Calcutta (1952) and took charge of the Bird and Mammal Section of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI). Later, until retirement in 1981, he was Joint Director of the ZSI, and then Emeritus Scientist until 1986. A member of the AOU from 1948, he was elected a Corresponding Fellow in 1953.

Having adopted a modern genus concept, Biswas published in 1953 *A Check-list of Genera of Indian Birds*, the basis of all future taxonomic papers for the subcontinent. He also published on avian anatomy, particularly the vascular system, and on mammalian taxonomy. Of greater importance, he wrote the fundamental

12-part *The Birds of Nepal* (1960–1967), and, jointly with Salim Ali and S. Dillon Ripley, *The Birds of Bhutan* (1995).

A born naturalist and conservationist, Biswas spent as much time as possible in the field, visiting every state in central and northern India. He helped establish the Salt Lakes and Narendrapur wildlife sanctuaries near Calcutta. He was a member from 1958 of the International Ornithological Committee that directs the International Ornithological Congresses, and he also attended congresses of the International Council for Bird Preservation. For years he edited the *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of Calcutta*. The Asiatic Society awarded him the Joy Govinda Law Memorial Medallion in 1975. A new genus of flying squirrel, *Biswamoypterus*, has been named in his honor.

His associates believe his greatest contribution was as a teacher. Numerous students obtained their Ph.D. under his supervision; he infected all of them with his enthusiasm and taught them the critical and meticulous approach that characterized his own work. A life-long bachelor with a retiring, almost shy personality, he nevertheless made many friends during his years abroad. He lived frugally and donated most of his savings to charity. In all respects, he was an admirable human being.

A longer memorial, with portrait and partial bibliography, appeared in *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 92:397–402 in 1995.