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Allan D. Cruickshank

Allan Dudley Cruickshank, whose name was intimately associated with this journal and its predecessors for fifty years, died in Gainesville, Florida, of progressive kidney failure, on October 11, 1974, in his 67th year. Even now, some weeks later, it seems difficult to believe this; to every one of his tens of thousands of friends and admirers Allan was always the picture of rugged good health, boundless energy, and ageless enthusiasm. With his tam-o-shanter cocked at a rakish angle, and the roguish sparkle in eye and smile, anyone would seem safe to predict that Allan would go on climbing trees and chasing across dunes well into the 21st century.

Cruickshank was born in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, on August 29, 1907, came to the United States two years later, and grew up in New York City. His interest in birds went back to early childhood, but his first printed contribution was anonymous: he was an unnamed member of a Christmas Bird Count taken in New York City by a group from Evander Childs High School. The date was December 23, 1922, and his participation was surely prophetic.

Because the Christmas Bird Count loomed ever larger in his life, and during seventeen years he was literally "Mr. Christmas Bird Count," responsible for editing every count that came in to Audubon Field Notes and later American Birds, questioning, joshing, doubting, writing pithy editorial remarks, setting the style and tone, and the spirit of friendly competition through an era of enormous growth in participation in the event. Never forgetting that leadership and inspiration begin at home, Allan led the his own Cocoa, Florida, count to repeated national records and international supremacy, while giving an example to all on how a Christmas Count should really be professionally organized.

But Allan was a many-faceted and complex person. As a teacher and lecturer for the Bird Club of Long Island and for National Audubon, he estimated that he had lectured to 2,900,000 people (live), in some 5,860 talks with motion pictures, and thousands more in the early days of colored slides. He was an instructor at the Audubon Camp in Maine from 1936 to 1958 (with two years out for war service); teaching and inspiring teachers in the ways of nature and birds — entertaining with his special talent for mimicry. His travels crisscrossing the continent for lectures added up to millions of miles, with more millions traveled by car to photograph birds.

In photography Allan excelled; there are more than 40,000 black-and-white negatives in his collection, and thousands of color transparencies — none of the latter yet published but many of surpassing beauty and interest. In all, his North American list of birds *acceptably* photographed (up to his own high standard) was about 550, which is probably unequaled. Thousands of his prints were of difficult-access nests and young, one of our first recollections of "Cruickie" was of birding along the edge of a marsh on Long Island, hearing a Pied-billed Grebe where we had not expected one, walking into the tangled margin to seek out the bird, and finding it high in a tree with a Graflex camera at the ready, a Green Heron nest the object. Allan was not one for photographing birds in zoos, or for avoiding the rugged side of bird photography.

His leadership of bird walks, as guide and teacher, came to over 3500. Recently he led several overseas bird tours to Africa and Europe, and was looking forward to another to Argentina this winter. He was author or co-author with or illustrated for Helen Gere Cruickshank twelve books, and illustrations of his appeared in countless other books and magazines. Honors included the Arthur A. Allen Award of Cornell University, and the John Burroughs Medal (with Helen, for *Flight into Sunshine*). He was a member of many societies, and a former president of the Linnaean Society of New York.

How many of those now interested in birds, or nature, or conservation got that way because Allan Cruickshank first showed them their beauty and fascination, transmitting to them so well his own excitement and fascination! Helen recalls one side of his personality we all knew — "He was a veritable Pied Piper with children in the field. I've watched him lead a wild, hilarious snake dance across meadows, through the woods, or along beaches only to have rapt attention take over instantly when an important subject stopped the crowd that listened to Allan's discussion of it; bird, rock, plant, or whatever, suddenly caught up in the magic of whatever they were shown."

Many will miss this talented and honorable man. We at American Birds will miss his ready advice and assistance, his *joie-de-vivre*, the stream of letters from him addressed to "Reverend" Arbib, one of the numerous honorary titles he bestowed on countless friends across the world. Suddenly, it seems, there is an enormous empty hole in the familiar landscape.