degrees of whiteness. Moreover, in a few instances there are melanistic tendencies in which the same bird shows these contradictory manifestations. Nature is quite stern in drawing boundary lines and fixing limits. Why was she so lenient to this bird and how were the boundary lines removed?

*Baileyville*
*Illinois*

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## PERCY ALGERNON TAVERNER, 1875–1947

BY W. L. MCATEE

*Plate 4*

WITH the demise of our esteemed Fellow, P. A. Taverner, at Ottawa, in early May, 1947, ended an era in Canadian ornithology that surely will bear his name. That of the Macouns, immediately preceding, was summarized by the father-and-son 'Catalogue of Canadian Birds' (1909) and by its French edition (1916). Taverner, in the early years of his service as Ornithologist to the Museum of the Geological Survey of Canada, became pleasantly associated with both of these scientists—with the father, John, until his retirement in 1912, and with the son, James M., until his death in 1920. Relations with the latter, Taverner notes, were "always intimate, cordial, and helpful."

The last of the Macoun works appeared, as indicated, in 1916, and James M. contributed information, advice, and editorial assistance toward Taverner's first Canadian bird book, the 'Birds of Eastern Canada' (297 pp., 50 col. pls.), which was published in 1919. The Macoun volumes were primarily annotated catalogues, but Taverner planned his books as more broadly educational. In the introduction of his first book, he states that it "has been written to awaken and, where it already exists, to stimulate an interest both aesthetic and practical, in the study of Canadian birds and to suggest the sentimental, scientific, and economic value of that study; to assist in the identification of native species; and to furnish the economist with a ready means of determining bird friend from bird foe that he may act intelligently towards them and to the best interest of himself and the country at large; to present in a readily accessible form reliable data upon which measures of protective legislation may be based . . ." (1919: 1). This plan was adhered to in all of his officially published books on the birds of Canada, a section on economic status being included for every group for which the necessary information was available.

He thoroughly appreciated the great value of illustrations and provided pictorial keys, the drawings for which were made by Claude Johnson, as well as many other black and white cuts by himself, and he was fortunate in being able to include liberal numbers of colored plates by Frank C. Hennessey and Allan Brooks.

His second volume, the 'Birds of Western Canada' (380 pp., 184 col. pls.), was issued in 1926 in time for distribution at the first Canadian meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union, at Ottawa. Combining these treatises, he prepared that entitled, 'Birds of Canada' (445 pp., 187 col. pls.), which was published in 1934. The first of these books had two English and two French editions; the second also was reprinted; and the third was twice reissued by a commercial firm to which publication rights were given by the government. The same Toronto printer also published for Taverner two pocket field guides, one on land, and one on water, birds, both highly illustrated.

Properly to appraise Taverner's major publications, it should be realized that there have been no books of equal quality covering the birds of the United States. Neither the United States nor any other government has issued such well-illustrated ornithological hand-books, and the Canadian government had the opportunity to do so only through the creative ability and devoted efforts of Taverner. The Dominion deserves credit for embodying his productions in good form and for widely distributing them. It is said that these bird books can be found at the most remote Hudson's Bay Company and Royal Canadian Mounted Police posts and even in the hands of trappers throughout the vast Canadian wilderness. In the settled districts, they are handbooks for all bird lovers, have been used as texts in the schools, and are the accepted works of reference in their field. The plates of the colored illustrations have been lent and are still being lent to persons who use them in illustrating magazine articles and pamphlets, thus extending the influence of Taverner's work. It is said that sales of the books have been so large that the Government has been little if any out of pocket on the entire project.

Such accomplishment as that of Taverner in Canadian ornithology raises the question of what makes an ornithologist, and especially such a productive one. In all instances that I recall being traced, the individual was what is called a born naturalist. His earliest recollections are associated with natural objects, some or all of them birds. Apparently it is only from such inborn taste that the abiding interest and persistent industry follow that are necessary to a successful career in science. From biographical notes prepared by Taverner, himself, we learn that his earliest definite memories are of a kindergarten at

Highland Falls,[1] New York. They concerned hunting the first flowers of trailing arbutus in the spring, watching Baltimore Orioles and their nest in a tree in the front yard, and seeing in St. Nicholas Magazine a picture of a Scarlet Tanager. Certainly two of our most beautiful birds are involved in these childhood recollections.

The next step in ornithology, of which we have record, was his meeting on a street in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where he was living with friends, A. B. Covert, taxidermist of the University Museum, who invited him into his shop. There he became a constant visitor and unpaid assistant, learning taxidermy and studying birds. Associates in the latter endeavor were George Pray and Robert Wolcott. Week-ends and holidays were devoted to bird trips with both enthusiasm and diligence. Making a collection of study skins, he sold 100 of them to the University for use in class work.

Going to Toronto later through the encouragement of friends, among them W. G. A. Lambe, he met J. H. Fleming (and here I quote from Taverner's biographical outline) "the outstanding Canadian ornithologist . . . and the only one having more than a parochial view, and in contact with broader fields. Fleming's great world collection, already under way, and his intensive study of Canadian ornithology were an inspiration to one who had long worked alone and far from current ornithological thought. Thus began a close friendship and collaboration that persisted steadily and uninterruptedly to the time of Fleming's death." That occurred in 1940. Then, Taverner continues, minimizing his personal achievements in paying tribute to his friend: "If Taverner ever accomplished anything of value in his chosen field, it was through the friendship, encouragement, and example of J. H. Fleming, whose influence upon him and upon Canadian ornithology can hardly be exaggerated." Details of his acquaintance with Fleming are contained in two contributions by Taverner to the Fleming Memorial Papers (The Brodie Club, Toronto, 1940, mimeographed).

As odd times permitted in connection with the study and practice of architecture, Taverner studied birds about Port Huron, Michigan, 1900–1902, and in the outskirts of Chicago, Illinois, principally around Roby and Wolf lakes, for the next four years. With architecture remaining his vocation, he then moved to Detroit, Michigan, where he found in B. H. Swales a congenial spirit, with whom holidays and many evenings were spent in the observation, collection, and study of birds of the southeastern part of the State. In Taverner's 'Memories

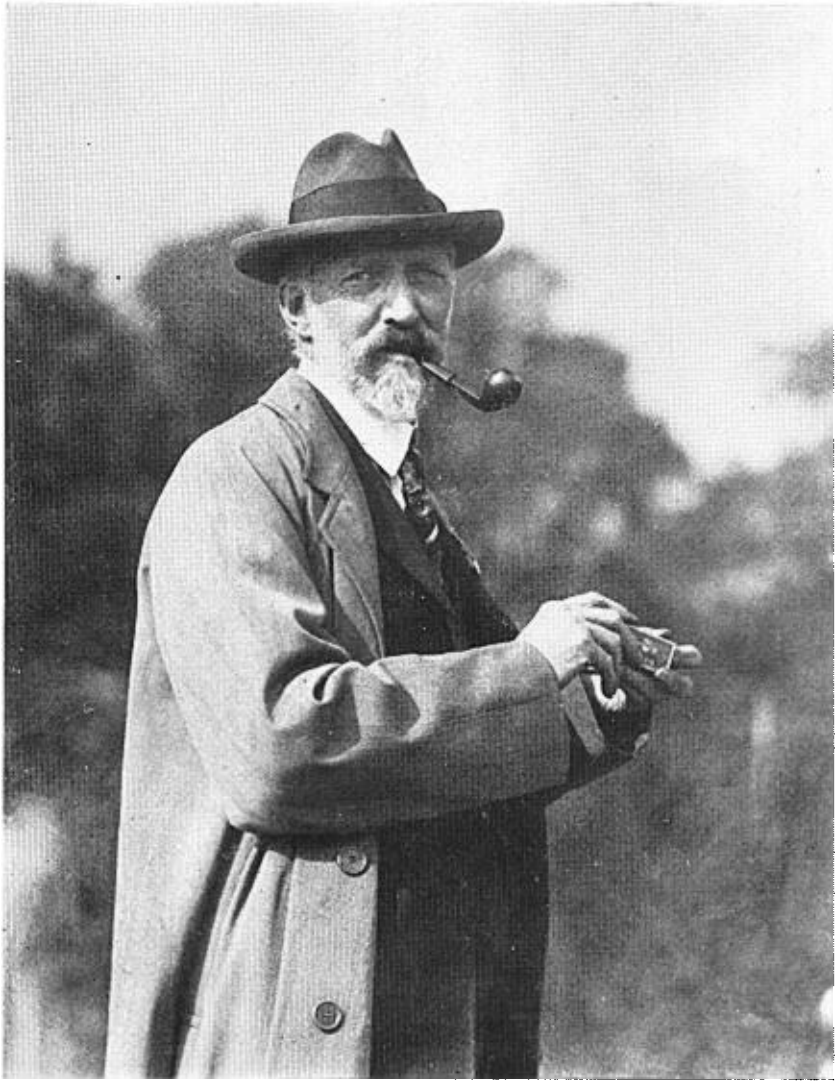
[1] This was the home town of E. A. Mearns, famous naturalist and explorer, whom, however, Taverner never met.

of William Edwin Saunders' (Auk, 61: 348, 1944), he notes that, in company with Swales and A. B. Klugh, he visited Saunders in March, 1905. Their host's glowing account of the flora and fauna of Point Pelee, Ontario, greatly interested the visitors and in time led to the formation of the Great Lakes Ornithological Club, including Saunders, Klugh, Fleming, J. H. Wallace, Swales, and Taverner. They had a manuscript bulletin, which was sent around the circle, commented on and added to, having each author's contributions removed when the bulletin came back to him. A shack was built on Point Pelee for a headquarters (Camp Coues) and much free time was spent there by the Club members and a few guests in the years 1905–1907, studying intensively the ornithology of the area. [The records of the Club, May 1905 to December 1927, are now in the Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology, Toronto.]

The results were summarized in a 135-page report on 'The Birds of Point Pelee' by Taverner and Swales in the Wilson Bulletin, 1907–1908. This communication devoted some space to the dryly humorous relating of irksome experiences of the collectors and contained some entertaining passages on habits and characteristics of the birds, evidently from the pen of Taverner.

It was in the Detroit period that Taverner, influenced largely by suggestions of Leon J. Cole, became interested in banding birds. He had dies made, numbered with them aluminum bands bearing a return address ("Notify The Auk, New York"), and distributed them among correspondents and friends. The only long-distance return was for a flicker banded in Illinois and recovered in Louisiana (reported in Wilson Bulletin, 1906). Thus Taverner, Cole and Paul Bartsch were pioneers of the existing bird-banding movement, and it appears that credit belongs to our subject for the plan of establishing a central office for issuing bands and maintaining records. The work soon became too extensive for an individual to handle and was later conducted, in turn, by the American Bird Banding Association (with support from the Linnaean Society of New York) and the United States Biological Survey (now part of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service).

Taverner remained in Detroit until 1911 when the post of Ornithologist to the Museum of the Geological Survey of Canada was established, and upon recommendation of J. H. Fleming, W. E. Saunders, and Ernest T. Seton, he was appointed to it, with the first title of Assistant Naturalist and Curator. The new Victoria Memorial Museum had just been completed (1910) and R. W. Brock, Director of the Geological Survey, contemplated development of a great



P. A. Taverner.

National Museum for which he assembled a creditable staff. He resigned in 1914. From 1916–1920, following the burning of the Parliament buildings, the Museum was commandeered for use by the Dominion Parliament. So far as the development of a natural history museum is concerned, conditions were discouraging from that time on. The apparently more economically important work of the Department of Mines dominated and the natural sciences were treated like poor relations. However, since the Geological Survey was primarily an exploratory body, funds for field work were comparatively generous. Thus, to add to the material collected chiefly by the Macouns and William Spreadborough and his personal collection (1,222 birds from Ontario and Michigan) sold to the Museum, Taverner organized, nearly every summer, one or more ornithological parties for the investigation of the avifauna of Canada. Those in which he personally took part carried him to: his old collecting ground at Point Pelee, Ontario, in 1913; Chaleur Bay and Miscou Island, New Brunswick, and Bonaventure Island, Percé, and the Magdalen Islands, Quebec (1914); Percé and Point Pelee, revisited in 1915; Shoal Lake, Red Deer, and Jasper Park, Alberta, and parts of British Columbia (1917); Ontario during 1918 and 1919; Alberta and Saskatchewan (with Hoyes Lloyd, 1920); Manitoba (also with H. L.), Saskatchewan, and British Columbia (1921), the last-named Province again in 1922; Saguenay County, Quebec (1924); Alberta and British Columbia (1925); Alberta (1926); Anticosti Island and Canadian Labrador (1928); eastern arctic islands and Greenland on the Beothic, a Dominion patrol-boat (1929) [I received a card from him postmarked Dundas Harbour, Ellesmere Land]; Churchill, Manitoba, and Chesterfield, Keewatin (1930); and various localities in western Manitoba (1936 and 1937).

Field ornithologists will appreciate Taverner's account in a letter to his mother and sister of a field mishap and the overcoming thereof. At Miscou, New Brunswick, in June, 1914, his party experienced a "historic storm" that forced them to abandon their tents. Upon examination the next day, he found: "Our precious bird skins were scattered all over the place and hammered flat in the ground and mud with the rain . . . I gathered them up as rapidly as possible and put them in their trays . . . not that I thought they were any good, but it seemed the proper thing to do." In a vacant, half-finished house they then occupied, "The specimens were hung in racks over the stove and . . . working on them all day . . . [he was able to report that] out of 130 birds we will not lose more than three or four."

Of interest to museum workers is the following extract from a letter written at Percé in June, 1915. He stated: "I also suggested [to a

preparator] a method of casting wax feet on the mounted birds. He tried it with great initial success . . . and hereafter we will have no more dried and mummied feet on our mounted birds. It is the first marked improvement in bird taxidermy in my time and I feel rather proud of it." My friend Herbert L. Stoddard recognizes this as the independent invention of a method that was being developed at the same time (*circa* 1913–1915) at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, from which has arisen casting in celluloid and other materials, not only of birds' feet, but also of entire reptiles, amphibians, and fishes, that has revolutionized this branch of taxidermy.

The Canadian Arctic Expedition (1913–1918) brought back important material from the northwest coast, and correspondents and contributors filled gaps both in the collection and in knowledge. From year to year Taverner won increasing coöperation from other Divisions of the Museum and it is evident from the annual records of specimens received that, like Spencer F. Baird, he had the knack of getting other people to help in the good cause. Meagre and uncared-for at the time of his becoming curator, the bird collection of the National Museum grew from less than 5,000 to more than 30,000 specimens. So was the material gathered upon which Taverner exercised his talents for organization and exposition and which served as the basis for his books and numerous lesser publications on Canadian birds. A bibliography of the subject was established and every year augmented; information from all sources was incorporated in card files; and range maps were prepared and kept up to date so that the facts relating to all species were available for use with minimum effort. For a long period he took current literature home with him and carded Canadian items on his own time.

A. L. Rand, Taverner's successor as Ornithologist to the National Museum (now at the Chicago Natural History Museum) has kindly furnished the following description of the office system. "It included a species file, with every reference to a bird in Canada on a card, under a species heading. All these records were entered on large maps, one for each species. Different symbols indicated type of occurrence, as summer, winter, breeding, migrant, etc. Each symbol had a key number, and the reference was again entered on a facing page. This gave a summary of species distribution and time of occurrence in Canada. There was also an index to literature, an author file, and a gazetteer. The amount of detailed work that went into these was tremendous."

My impression of these works, as seen in Taverner's office, was wonder and admiration that he had succeeded with a minimum of help

in doing for Canadian birds in not to exceed 23 years (date of appointment, 1911, to issuance of 'Birds of Canada,' 1934) what the Biological Survey, with the participation of numerous persons, some of them over long periods, had not been able to complete for birds north of México since 1885.

The maintenance of such files becomes a burden and may have had an influence on Taverner's output. Thus Rand comments substantially as follows: In his early days, Taverner wrote some notable local lists, especially those on the birds of Point Pelee and of Red Deer River, Alberta, but soon his interest shifted away from faunal publications. A number of rather important collections were left unworked and unreported. He was for the most part alone, doing most of his own typing, filing, and mapping, and considerable office routine was involved in the systems he set up, including even the printing of cards and labels by hand press. The mounting bulk of cross-indexing may have had the effect of discouraging him from working up and reporting local avifaunas, as this would have required further indexing. Thus Taverner's impress on the taxonomic study of the birds of Canada is less marked than his tremendous popular influence.

However, he did some good taxonomic work, notably on the Canada Geese and Red-tailed Hawks. In a later study of the Great Horned Owls, he manifested an interest in variation, as such, aside from identification, and this work forms a bridge from an earlier form of taxonomy toward the newer systematics. [So far Rand.]

Apparently Taverner was impressed throughout his ornithological career with the importance of species in contrast to subspecies. He had a paper on trinomials in 1906 and in his 1915 'Suggestions,' he expressed views that he retained throughout life. One of these, with which we can well agree, was that the recording of subspecies should be based only on authoritative determinations and not, as frequently is true, upon geographic probabilities and assumptions. "But to bring this about," he wrote in a letter of April, 1938, "the ornithological public must be furnished with specific names that they can use without committing themselves to finer designation. This point should be insisted upon in the next Check-List." In that respect his views have been accepted and a good many of the species names in the new List will be those first adopted by Taverner in his books on the birds of Canada.

Taverner's ornithological publications number about 300 (The bibliography is being published in the Annual Report of the National Museum of Canada for 1947). Forty per cent of them appeared in the Ottawa Naturalist (14) and Canadian Field-Naturalist (114).

Classifying the titles, seven are the books on Canadian ornithology previously discussed, 69 are reviews, 47 records of unusual occurrences of birds, and 15 annual reports on his official work. There are 15 local lists and reports on collections, and 14 deal with subspecies, the general theme of which was the minimizing of attention to these subdivisions of species and stressing the greater importance of species as wholes. Six papers are revisionary but are restricted to Canadian representatives of the groups, five discuss problems of nomenclature, eight are on techniques in ornithology, and similar numbers relate to theoretical matters, to the economic status of birds, and to conservation.

His interest in the last two phases of ornithology was manifested in his large books and in special reports on the hawks and owls of the prairie Provinces and on the Double-crested Cormorant in the Maritimes. In that region he made a study of these birds in relation to the salmon fishery. Remarks in his letters on the work include: "The cormorant question is interesting. I always thought the damage they do was exaggerated but not to the extent that the evidence shows. Their effect on the salmon is almost nil. Those in tide and salt water feed almost entirely on sculpins and eels. Those in fresh must eat salmon . . . but in spite of them, there are more salmon today than ever before . . . I will have an interesting report to write as it touches several phases of the subject that I have always wanted to write about." (August, 1914.)

Another paper that he had long wanted to produce was read at the North American Wildlife Conference at Washington, D. C., in 1936. In it he had his say about conservation of waterfowl. The main trouble, he said, was too many guns in the field, and he asserted that adequate restriction of them had never been fairly tried. Of the writings not classified in preceding paragraphs, the subjects are so diverse as to defy summarization.

He contributed bird illustrations to the Bulletin of the Michigan Ornithological Club and no fewer than 13 wash drawings and 58 line cuts to W. B. Barrows' 'Michigan Bird Life' (1912).

He described as new four subspecies and had one named for him (*see* list at end). His monument, however, consists primarily of the three sound and thoroughly illustrated books on the birds of Canada and the great public interest in birds which they inspired.

It should not be forgotten that Taverner's work for the National Museum of Canada included far more than ornithology, especially in the earlier years. He was expected to develop a division of biology. Thus, after a short period of inventory of material and methods, he made a tour in 1911 of museums in Boston, Cambridge, Lancaster

(Mass.), New York, Philadelphia, Washington, Ann Arbor, and Chicago. Aided by this survey, he made comprehensive plans for the handling of collections and exhibitions in Ottawa which were approved by the Director of the Museum. In his report for 1911, he alludes to an Atlantic Coast habitat group being worked upon by Frank C. Hennessey and himself but which was not to be attempted in full scale until a properly trained preparator became available. In 1912, the model was completed and put on exhibition. The museum published instructions by him on the collecting of zoological material in which he had the cooperation of former Ann Arbor acquaintances: A. G. Ruthven (for reptiles) and Bryant Walker (for mollusks). The same year, in connection with attendance at a meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union, he made another round of museums at Cambridge, Boston, New York, and Brooklyn. For some years the annual reports of the Division of Zoology dealt not only with birds but with mammals, marine invertebrates, and insects. Loans of material to specialists in other museums became a feature, and educational activities, including lectures and circulating exhibits, were developed. Slides for the use of the entire Geological Survey staff were prepared in the Division of Zoology. Motion picture films made by Taverner in 1913 and 1914 are still being exhibited. They portray the bird cliffs of Percé and Bonaventure Island, showing the home life of the Gannet and other sea birds; and wild geese at the Miner Bird Sanctuary. Another showing consists of bird pictures made in his own garden, especially of Purple Martins, which occupied a house of his own design and construction. In 1919, R. M. Anderson became acting chief of division, later chief; but in 1937, an ornithological division was again instituted, upon which Taverner reported for the remainder of his career. He collected some mammals and wrote a few articles relating to that class and to butterflies, bullfrogs, poisonous plants, and plant protection.

His interest in the Museum did not cease with his retirement, for in addition to training his successor, he worked for revitalization of the organization. In an article published in the Ottawa Citizen and other papers in 1945, he pleaded for a great National Museum that would fulfill the cultural needs of an ambitious and self-respecting Canada and be a part of its taking its rightful place among the most advanced nations of the world.

Turning now to the non-scientific (although not clearly separable) phases of his career, it is apparent that the general rule of ebb and flow of fortune affected him, but to counterbalance troubles, strong friends seemed ever to appear. His father was principal of a private school

in which his mother also taught. "However, this marriage dissolved, and his mother entered the theatrical profession in Mrs. Morrison's Famous Stock Co., Toronto, under the name of Ida Van Cortland. After one season with this company and shortly thereafter, when Percy was six years of age, she met and married Albert Tavernier, also an actor, who informally adopted Percy and had him take his name." For some years from 1882 they maintained their own repertoire company which was very successful at first but later, with a change in style of public entertainment, much less so, and they were hard put to make expenses. In consequence, Percy had a very unsettled childhood, at times travelling with the company and at others living in various homes and with different people. From Taverner's biographical notes, we learn that these early travels took him through the eastern circuits from Newfoundland and the Maritime Provinces, through New England and New York south to Charleston and New Orleans. Of the South he recalled the white cotton fields and darkies at the railway stations chewing sugar cane.

Among places of temporary residence, he recorded a theatre home in Halifax; with a family in Brooklyn where was also Georgie Fox, daughter of a then famous circus clown; in a minister's family along the Erie Canal, where he was regarded as a child of the devil and had the lapses of all the other children blamed on him; and of spending summers at Lake George.

Of the kindergarten at Highland Falls he wrote: "This school was in a big, substantial farm mansion in a large grounds of lawn and orchard set well back from the road, with a grove of chestnut trees in front. Many years after on returning from an A. O. U. meeting, I spotted it again at sight. The chestnuts were of course gone [due to a devastating blight] and the elaborate wooden fence and formal gateway had disappeared, but the big boulder that used to be called 'Grandpa's Pebble,' which marked the drive, remained, and the upper windows of the weather-stained house peeped over the hill that separated it from the roadside. One fall, winter, and spring were spent there."

Further schooling was had at Port Huron, Michigan, where for a number of years he found a home with the C. F. Smiths, who treated him as their own, and he went to Miss Coyle's private school, through most of the grades. Similarly at Ann Arbor, he was cared for in the home of Wallace Bliss and attended the eighth grade and high school. Summers were spent at his parents' island home in Lake Muskoka.

Of this period, his sister, Mrs. Ida C. McLeish of Ottawa, writes: "Our summers were very long there in those days for we made a bee-

line for the only home we had as soon as the season closed in spring and stayed until it was time to start rehearsals in the fall. A few summers the whole company were there with us, and they used to rehearse there for the coming season. The log-book has Percy's name entered almost every summer from 1886 to 1904." Among visitors in the latter year were B. H. Swales and wife. "The summer of '98 Percy did quite a lot of photographic work among the tourists."

While still spending the winters at Port Huron and before graduating from high school, he went to Guelph, Ontario, where his stepfather had taken over the management of the new Royal Opera House. Percy promptly discovered that he was no business man and found that the birds of Guelph interested him far more than the theatre. After some two years of this venture (1894–1897), he turned to other activities, including bird stuffing, also finishing for an itinerant photographer. Eventually, by way of learning a dependable vocation, he returned to Port Huron, Michigan, where he took a correspondence course in architecture and worked in the office of George L. Harvey. To eke out his pittance salary ($3.00 a week), odd jobs of taxidermy and night-ferrying by rowboat across the St. Clair River were resorted to. Percy took over during closed hours of the regular ferry, threading a perilous way between the numerous great freighters. The fare was 25 cents and circus night was a grand harvest time. Drunks who had missed the large boat were regular, though possibly dangerous, customers. Percy kept a cudgel handy for subduing these gentry if necessary.

After about two or three years of this phase of the Port Huron life, Taverner joined his mother and sister in Chicago. The mother (who was a survivor of the great Chicago fire of 1871) had retired from the stage about 1898 or 1899, and was engaged in organizational work for a fraternal insurance company. Hoyes Lloyd tells me that early portraits show her as very beautiful and adds that she was a talented and strong character. She and Percy enjoyed a complete companionship and were devoted to each other.

The flavor of life in these years, before ornithology became the acknowledged major interest, may be gleaned from reminiscences kindly sent me by Mrs. McLeish. She writes: "I remember him making up his [bird] specimens when I was quite a little girl. He was twelve when I was born. His room in Port Huron was a veritable magnet for congenial spirits. He did quite a lot of taxidermy . . . to help out his finances, deer heads, dead-game pieces, owls, etc. The trays of eggs and artificial birds' eyes were fascinating to me, and all his explanations of birds and animals, in fact everything. He always seemed an encyclopaedia. In fact he was a great reader of that very work and often had three or four volumes . . . under his bed.

"Later his room in Detroit was lined with bird cases which he made himself. He had quite a large collection . . . Mother and I went on many woods expeditions with him in the outskirts of Chicago and Detroit . . . he brought in everything—lizards, salamanders, snakes, toads, frogs, tadpoles, water beetles, fairy shrimps, etc., etc.—and he used to 'sugar' the trees and bring in moths, butterflies, beetles, bugs, etc. In spring he had cages with cocoons of *Cecropia, Luna, Polyphemus;* we watched them coming out, developing, and mating. In Detroit we had a tame wood-duck . . . and became familiar with its pretty, conversational, *Br-r-r-e-e-e-e-e.* Also we had a pet female sparrow hawk for several years. Percy bought it from some boys for 10 cents; they had cut its wings. She was very tame, liked to be with us, sitting on a shoulder and running her bill around the convolutions of an ear, snuggling right up to the side of the head . . . Falco's wing feathers finally grew but it took several years for her to become fully winged because as the primaries grew out, she . . . used to bite them off.

"Mr. Fleming visited us in Chicago in 1902 . . . and often . . . in Detroit where we were from 1905 to 1911.

"In Chicago Percy had a very severe pneumonia, nearly didn't make it. It was then he grew a beard; the Doctor thought he had better not remove it during the winter and he wore it always thereafter.

"While we were in Chicago Percy took a course of evening classes at the Art Institute the fall of 1903 . . . Wherever we lived we always embraced every opportunity to see plays or hear music . . . We used to study about these things both before and after we went and it was always a marvel to me what Percy knew . . . We had a passion for the Wagner operas and their dramatic stories."

Percy had wonderful versatility: "it always seemed to me he could *do* or *make anything.* His hands were skilled in every craft—metal work, carpentry, book binding, photography, and a hundred other arts. He was wonderfully adept at small boat handling, could literally sail anything. When in his early 'teens, he converted a little 14-foot row-boat of his into a sail-boat, decked it over, put in a center board, called it 'The Coffin,' and went out in it in any gale. This was at our early home in Muskoka.

"We were together so much, practically all my life until we were both married, within two weeks, and even then lived in the same city. His wonderful care of mother and me, his lovely humor, his passion for music and literature, drama and art, his brilliant mind and retentive memory—it is all a treasure not to be forgotten."

These tributes are not to be discounted as the enthusiasm of a

sister, for the longer one knew Taverner the more one came to realize that he was indeed a man of many skills and of lovable character. A cheerful and friendly expression is apparent in photographs of Taverner at all ages.

A. E. Porsild adds: "Percy was very fond of music and enjoyed the musical evenings at his house . . . He liked the old-time songs and his memory of them . . . was truly astounding . . . Nothing pleased him more than to have someone at the piano with a volume of 'old-timers.' He knew the words of all of them and if no one was around, loved to sing . . . Rock gardening, photography, and book-binding were his principal hobbies." I may contribute that for years he made his own Christmas cards, some being drawings carrying an original idea and others photographs, usually of birds.

Hoyes Lloyd, who was with Percy in western field work in 1920 and 1921, writes of his mechanical ability in camp, "where he could improvise and make do with the very minimum of material and tools. I have seen a hand-made forearm for a shot-gun which he whittled and a home-made stock for a collecting pistol. He could make anything! and his work-bench was a favorite spot . . . Metal seemed his strong point and whenever Percy disappeared in a strange town, he could usually be found at the nearest tinsmith's. In art work he was at home with camera, pencil, brush, or clay . . . He was a good camp cook and could prepare a grand collation . . . Another artistic attainment showed up in his ability as a gardener. His flower garden was always a delight and always included rarities . . . Don't forget 'Hyla' the cottage at Blue Sea Lake which he built with his two hands."

Arthur Kellett, a highly skilled gardener and photographer, kindly writes of Taverner in these roles: "During my long acquaintanceship and friendship with Taverner, his extraordinary versatility was always a matter for wonderment. There seemed to be little that he could not do with a real measure of success, and with the introduction of considerable originality. This was the case in both his gardening and photographic efforts.

"If I remember correctly, it was in 1915 that he constructed in his garden the first lily pool in any private garden in the Ottawa district. This pool, of quite pretentious dimensions, in succeeding years became the home of many locally unknown aquatics including *Nelumbo lutea*, which he collected in its native haunts in the Point Pelee district. He also grew with much success several of the colored water-lily hybrids of exotic parentage, being without doubt the first to introduce them into cultivation in this part of Ontario. Native plants were of particular appeal to him, and under his care many woodland species were

made to thrive in happy association in a corner of his garden which was devoted solely to such subjects. Plants of other habitats which he had collected during his ornithological expeditions, in distant parts of the Dominion, became established in other parts of his garden. The result was a garden of many interests and surprises as well as one of artistic planning.

"His interest in photography I should say lay chiefly in its value as a means of record, but in its utilitarian use he was ever conscious of artistic and technical merit. In his later years declining health and strength reduced but by no means stopped his photographic activities. Turning from birds to the less trying task of photographing the local flora, he produced many delightful plant portraits, for his eye for viewpoint was sure, and good composition, limited only by the nature of the subject itself, invariably added to his photographs a quality which lifted them out of the mere record category.

"In these two activities, as in so many others, his achievements possessed a quality which only one of his appreciation of beauty and fitness could reach."

Taverner's varied accomplishments were much in evidence in connection with the first Canadian meeting of our Union at Ottawa in 1926. The Great Auk and the Auklet (the latter illustrated on Plate 4 of The Auk, 44: opp. p. 74, 1927) were his handiwork as were miniatures of the former provided as place favors at the annual dinner. The illustrated, facetious menu was his doing, he contributed much to The Auklet for which he was given at the dinner a great yellow medallion labelled "Aukleteer," and his book on the 'Birds of Western Canada,' then just published, was distributed gratis to visitors. Through the unstinted efforts of the local Committee and coöperators, the program of the meeting set a new high for A. O. U. gatherings. Though some afterwards met the challenge as at Washington and Charleston, none has included a camp-out such as was made so enjoyable at Blue Sea Lake, Quebec, in 1926.

While Taverner could write well, he did not always take the trouble to do so and he thought it good policy to leave something for editors to correct. It was characteristic of him after getting a new typewriter to complain that it didn't spell any better than the old one. One of the typographical errors that editors did not eliminate was "Lord and Lady Algy" (Birds of Eastern Canada: 284, 1919). A disgruntled compositor slipped in "Algy" from a play then current, with no reference, probably, to Percy's middle name. "Lord and Lady" is a northeast-coast folk name for the Harlequin Duck. As an example of sustained good writing, his article on 'The Yellow-breasted Chat' in

Bird-Lore (1906) may be cited. Scattered in his bird books are many well-turned passages and it is interesting to note that like certain earlier, well-known, ornithological writers, he also was particularly inspired by the Catbird (Birds of Canada: 324–325, 1934). The last two sentences of this essay are: "When left to its own devices and at ease, the Catbird often hunches up and fluffs its feathers in a shady retreat within hearing distance of its incubating mate and carries on a long, low-toned monologue, every tone soft and throaty and altogether delicious. What it says then is impossible to translate and probably is none of our business."

Wilfrid Eggleston is authority for the statement that such descriptive writing was eliminated by the "powers that were" from the manuscript of the 1919 'Birds of Eastern Canada.' The wide popular demand for the book surprised them, however, and as it continued beyond their expectation, the author was given a free hand to put what he desired in the 'Birds of Western Canada' and the later 'Birds of Canada.' (Winnipeg Free Press, June 7, 1947.)

Considerable power of language is discernible in some of his field letters. From one of July, 1914, about his experiences on Bonaventure Island: "It was the bird ledges, however, that aroused our enthusiasm . . . To crawl to the crest of the cliff . . . and see a thousand gannets —birds as large as geese—pure white with cream heads and jet black pinions . . . sitting unconcernedly on their nests almost within hand's reach—and ledge after ledge of them down three or four hundred feet . . . and for every bird on the nest there was another in the air sailing in a great circle past the cliff, some so close that one could see the color of their eyes, and others lower down, until the air was full of them—all passing, passing, passing, in the same direction out over the sea and back again like the rim of a great wheel or of a whirlwind bearing a cloud of snowflakes."

A keen sense of humor seemed to have been a life-long trait of Taverner. Among his earliest published ornithological writings are some labelled as humorous and he was ever a prominent contributor to 'The Auklet,' an irregular magazine of A. O. U. *facetiae*. Flourishing in the same era was an informal association of kindred spirits known as 'The Appleton Club.' Although sponsored by no temperance society, its libations were moderate and its attractions were friendship and good fellowship. At the meetings, usually in hotel rooms, Taverner's favorite seat was back against the wall and legs stretched out on the floor, where he alternated as an animated raconteur and an encouraging auditor. In verses written in memory of 'The Appleton Club,' a member had Taverner especially in mind when he said:

"While gay at times with quip or story,
Noblesse is too a vital part,
And can a word of friendship proffer
That finds its way straight to the heart."

Bearing on his personal habits, I may mention that Taverner frequently asserted: "I am a carnivorous animal," and he referred to vegetables in general as "caterpillar food." As to physique, he was 6 feet 2 inches tall and in his prime weighed from 170 to 180 pounds.

Taverner had a strong interest in current affairs and often was so moved that he felt impelled to write a "letter to the editor." Topics of some of these essays were 'Vivisection,' 'Vaccination,' 'Cats,' 'The monetary system,' 'The flag as a symbol,' and 'Democracy betrayed.' In an August, 1941, letter, his prescience was shown in the remark: "Russia may be our ally but she is not our friend." In various communications he expressed doubt of improvement after the war, a view now recognizable as proof of sagacity or of deep knowledge of human nature, or both.

Aside from official travel, previously scheduled, Taverner made several long jaunts for more personal reasons, although museums and scientists were never slighted. One of these in company with his sister in 1927 took him to Victoria and other points in British Columbia, San Francisco, Yosemite National Park, Los Angeles, Tucson, and El Paso. Despite his mechanical ability, Percy would not drive a car, but after their marriage, Mrs. Taverner, a skilled driver, took him on almost daily trips about Ottawa, and in 1932 they went to Percé and Bonaventure Island for further observation and photography of the birds of that sanctuary. In 1937 they went by automobile to the A. O. U. meeting in Charleston, bringing along Mr. and Mrs. Reynold Bray, and later seeing the country and the birds from Okefenokee Swamp, Georgia, to the Florida Keys. In 1939, similarly, an excursion through the Southwest was combined with attendance at the A. O. U. meeting in Berkeley. Whether it was the southern trips or failing vitality that prompted him, he wrote me as early as 1941 that he hoped to live where the winters are "something less than nine months long." And this expression of a hope, frustrated by war-time conditions, was repeated in the last letter I received from him in March, 1947.

In February, 1943, he wrote: "I took a general examination and was ordered to bed. Here I am nearly seven weeks, feeling as well as I ever have." Too strenuous snow shoveling seemed to have been the cause of this heart strain. A heart impairment of long standing

probably dated back to the severe pneumonia of the Chicago period. However, he got to his well-loved summer home at Blue Sea Lake, Quebec, where he "just lazed and read."

On December 27, 1943, when in fair condition, he wrote: "Just got the Saunders Memorial off . . . Hope it is the last of these sad duties I will have to perform. The next probably is on somebody for me. Too bad I cannot see it." [Then I wondered whether I would not be doing just what I have done.]

Toward the end of May, 1944, he reported that he had been laid up again most of the winter and spring, and said: "Now I am allowed to come down stairs but once a day." He again summered at Blue Sea and apologized for not writing, stating: "I got very lazy at the Lake; besides there aren't any words up there." In March, 1945, a letter noted: "No shoveling but I had my usual winter breakdown." That summer there were again no words at Blue Sea Lake. After playing with the idea of going to Florida by trailer or otherwise, he concluded: "I guess we will just crawl into our hole here for the winter and endure it as best as we can, sucking our paws like bears."

In the next two years he was sometimes "laid up" and at others "passively well." However, during this period, "he had many visitors," Mrs. Taverner writes, "whom he enjoyed as keenly as ever, perhaps more so. We had many musical evenings which delighted him and he was always a most gracious host."

On March 10, 1947, in as long, well-conceived, and well-written a letter as I ever received from him, he noted that they had not found a southern retreat, but holed up again, and hoped to break the sequence next fall. Referring to the 1947 A. O. U. meeting planned for Toronto, he wrote: "The gods willing, I certainly hope to attend." In this last letter of our series, extending back to 1905, he ended: "Don't waste any sympathy on me, I am in peaceful and comfortable vegetation without pain or ache, perhaps sometime I will even like being an oyster." Two months later he died.

Throughout his retirement he worked away whenever he could at a 'Manual of Water Birds and Game Birds.' In September, 1942, he wrote: "I have been preparing it for some 20 years and it has just escaped publication by the Department of Mines and Resources by a hair, several times. Lately I completely rewrote it and brought it up to date in a thousand, letter-size, pages and 500 line figures and sketches." In December, 1942, he was still working on it, enlarged the scope by taking in some 50 additional species, and completed his 568th drawing for it.

Revision continued, and by April, 1945, 1,280 manuscript pages plus

50 pages of references marked its growth. In December of that year he wrote: "Just completed a steenth revision of my ms." All of this was rationed activity at the rate of not more than two hours a day. The manuscript was offered to various publishers but war exigencies prevented its acceptance. On one of these journeys it was part of the cargo of a truck that was hijacked, though fortunately the manuscript and illustrations were recovered intact. The work is again being considered for publication by the Canadian National Museum. It certainly should be put in print.

In March, 1945, he told me: "Have arranged for my library to go to the Quebec Provincial Museum where I hope some day it will be used . . . At least it will be kept together as a Canadian reference collection." His ornithological journals (18 volumes), his correspondence with Fleming, and letters written to his mother and sister from the field are deposited in the Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology at Toronto.

A defect in speech—stammering—doubtless kept Taverner from becoming more prominent than he was in the organizations to which he belonged. He seldom read a paper or took part in discussion and as a rule refused all advancement that tended toward a presiding officership; he was, however, President of the Ottawa Field Naturalists' Club in 1938. Yet in smaller groups, where all were familiar, he spoke when the spirit moved him and usually to good effect. One old acquaintance said that what Percy had to say was always worth waiting for. Hoyes Lloyd assures me that this speech impediment was much less noticeable in field and camp life where "he whiled away many a dull hour by singing opera to me. He probably knew them all!" Among friends, the difficulty was ignored and Taverner seemed in no way to be made self-conscious by it. In fact, his entirely unaffected demeanor was one of his special charms—there never was any pose of authority or greatness; the result was ease for all concerned and, therefore, pleasure in his company.

His career exemplifies a type of success which we like to believe is a privilege of the New World, in that character and industry still tell and enable a man to overcome poverty and privation and to reach the heights of his chosen vocation. He was not a great taxonomist, but as a museum builder, he was far ahead of the facilities available to him, and as a popularizer of ornithological knowledge, he was of the first rank. As a human individual, he was both practical and artistic, multi-skilled yet very modest, patient, kindly, and humorous, appreciative of others and greatly appreciated by them. So long as any who knew him survive, his memory will be held in tender recollection.

## BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

Percy Algernon Taverner was born at Guelph, Ontario, Canada, June 10, 1875, to Edwin Fowler and Emily E. [Buckley] Fowler, both of English birth. After this union was dissolved, his mother in 1881 married Albert Taverner or, as the latter spelled the name for stage use, "Tavernier." That form of the surname was used for many years by our subject and his friends (*see* Fleming, Auk, 1901: 33). Later he "unofficially adopted" the name, Taverner, which he used the remainder of his life. "Anyway," he wrote in 1937, "it is the spelling my grandfather used." This grandfather [by adoption], John Taverner, also was of the stage.

Formal education was broken off in high school. He was a student and a practitioner of architecture for some years; Assistant Naturalist and Curator, National Museum of Canada, 1911–1914; Zoologist, 1914–1919; Ornithologist, 1919–1936; Chief, Division of Ornithology, 1936 to 1942, when he retired, as Honorary Curator of Ornithology. He was a member of the Canada Advisory Board on Wildlife Protection; Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada (1935); and member at one time or another of the following scientific organizations: Michigan Ornithological Club (of whose Bulletin he was Associate Editor in 1905); Detroit Academy of Natural Sciences; Wilson Ornithological Club; Cooper Ornithological Club; American Ornithologists' Union (from 1902; elected Member in 1909 and Fellow in 1917; member of the Council for various terms); Ottawa Naturalists Field Club (serving as Ornithological Editor of the Canadian Field-Naturalist, 1912–1942, as President in 1938, and being elected Honorary Member in 1945); and Société Zoologique de Quebec; he was also an Honorary Member of the Linnaean Society of New York and the Brodie Club of Toronto; Colonial Member of the British Ornithologists' Union; and a Mason.

On March 29, 1930, he married Martha Hohly Wiest of Detroit, a talented pianist and teacher of music and an efficient household manager who took care of him, not only in the better years but throughout his decline, with great devotion.

After the series of illnesses, noted in the text, and a slight stroke of apoplexy from which he seemed to be recovering, Taverner died of mesenteric hemorrhage and static pneumonia at Ottawa, Canada, May 9, 1947, and was buried there in Beechwood Cemetery.

## SUBSPECIES NAMED BY TAVERNER

*Dendragapus obscurus flemingi*, Fleming's Grouse. For J. H. Fleming "in recognition of the value of his ornithological work in Canada." Auk, 31: 385–388, 1914.

*Lagopus lagopus leucopterus*, White-shafted Ptarmigan. Ann. Rep. Nat. Mus. Canada, 1930 (1932): 87–88.

*Passerculus sandwichensis campestris*, Prairie Savanna Sparrow. Proc. Biol. Soc. Washington, 45: 204–205, 1932.

*Astur atricapillus laingi*, Queen Charlotte Goshawk. For "Hamilton M. Laing who has been instrumental in uncovering this form." Condor, 42, 1940, p. 160.

### SUBSPECIES NAMED FOR TAVERNER

*Spizella taverneri*, Timberline Sparrow. Harry S. Swarth and Allan Brooks, Condor, 27: 67–69, 1925, from northwestern British Columbia; now regarded as a subspecies of *Spizella breweri*.

### NOTES ON NATURALISTS AND A FEW OTHER INDIVIDUALS MENTIONED

(References are to published biographical information about them)

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LAING, HAMILTON MACK, Canadian naturalist and author, 1883– .

Lambe, William Geoffrey A., Canadian broker and amateur ornithologist, 1862–1941; Taverner's best friend in his early years at Toronto.

Lloyd, Hoyes, Canadian ornithologist and administrator, 1888– .

Macoun, James Melville, Canadian botanist and ornithologist, 1863–1920; Auk, 37, 1920: 346; Canadian Field-Naturalist, 34: 38–40, portrait, 1920.

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