

THE
JOURNALS OF
S. WALDO BAILEY



S. Waldo Bailey and a Peregrine Falcon Chick at Blue Hawk Mountain
Cheshire, Massachusetts

May 5, 1931
1902 - 1963

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What happy memories are bequeathed to that fraternity of out-of-doors lovers, who spend many of their

leisure hours in faring afield; those who tramp the uplands with open mind; or those who loiter along the waterways with observant eyes. To all these brotherhood of the open spaces come peculiar compensations. Not the least of these rewards for apparently aimless roving are the cherished pictures which the treasury of the mind stores, slowly acquiring new wealth as the seasons come and go. During his moments of relaxation from the routine activities of everyday life, a member of this fraternity of the open may freely draw upon this storehouse of experience without endangering or depleting the rich accumulation.

— From the journals of S. Waldo Bailey (c. 1923)

The Journals of S. Waldo Bailey, 1902–1963

PREFACE

One of the more interesting opportunities afforded the Hoffmann Bird Club members has been a recent acquisition of the entire series of journals of S. Waldo Bailey. Born in 1885 in West Newbury, Massachusetts, Bailey worked throughout the state in many capacities, including as a supervisor for the Civilian Conservation Corps in Berkshire County, Massachusetts, Warden at the Lenox Bird and Wildflower Sanctuary (now Mass Audubon's Pleasant Valley), and, his favorite, Warden at the remarkable Bartholomew's Cobble (now owned by The Trustees of Reservations). Spanning sixty full years, his writings chronicle the travels of an incredible naturalist from his early days in Essex County to his prolonged time in the Berkshires. Born just twenty-three years after the death of a more famous writer, Henry David Thoreau, Bailey produced his own detailed observations of his own travels.

Typed and dated on lined paper, and supplemented with hand-printed photographs, the seventeen complete three-ring binders tell a story of a person fascinated by the natural and human history of the northeastern United States and also of the ebb of seasons that rivets anyone attuned to the natural world. Bailey's detailed records of flowering times and migration dates are invaluable to those currently dealing with changing landscapes due to habitat loss, biodiversity changes, and, of course, climate change. Herein is data that records a time before DDT, and during reforestation and changes in species composition. Pick any year and follow along in your own backyard or nearby protected landscape. Bailey died on a field trip just over the Berkshire line into New York in April 1963. His last dated entry was February 27 of that year, though following this are unfinished summaries of his annual bird checklists and short descriptions of his numerous color slide presentations about birds, wildlife, orchids, ferns, trees, the Berkshires and, of course, conservation.

This remarkable document would have been lost had it not been for club member Matt Kelly who had become a confidant of Waldo Bailey's only surviving child, Priscilla. Living in the same house in which she was born, Priscilla Bailey too was a lover of nature, especially of birds. Priscilla was a long-time member of the Hoffmann Bird Club, and her father was a charter member and a past president. At the time of her death in 2015 Matt and other close friends helped to organize her nature library and the extensive collection of materials she inherited from her father. Distant relatives were the legal arbiters of the books, insect collections, Native American artifacts, photographs, and, of course, the journals. Not

particularly interested or equipped to deal with the hundreds of items, they gave some away and kept a few others. The rest they discarded, including the journals, into a dumpster — and that’s when Matt Kelly dove in — literally! Only the years 1919 to 1924 of the journals were never found. After some lengthy negotiations, the family agreed to turn over the writings with the express request that no financial interests would result from the donation. To that extent, Matt was able to get a legal agreement with the family that the Hoffmann Bird Club would be the owner of the journals.

Matt’s immediate thought was to share the incredible information that Bailey had amassed, and he showed some of the pages with members of the Executive Committee of the bird club. All agreed the information should be made available to all. Eventually, he delivered the binders to me to join a growing library of unique natural history and environmental tomes donated by other Berkshire naturalists and their families. We discussed the need to copy the pages — numbering 4,051— and to try to get them onto a server in order to share them with birders, other naturalists, and ecologists interested in original data from New England. In late fall 2018, I was able to find a student, Alex Olney, who was eligible for a Work-Study grant, who then spent countless hours carefully handling every single page and photograph. It took him about four months to scan, check, re-scan, and faithfully compile the journal in Acrobat PDF format. He even re-did all of the pages, once again, in order to make the document searchable (a feat made possible by the meticulous typing of S. Waldo Bailey). The results are attached. We hope you will find it to be as useful, entertaining, remarkable, and fulfilling as we do. Kind of makes you want to keep journal notes of your own, doesn’t it!

Professor Thomas Tynning
Berkshire Community College, 2019

INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

S. Waldo Bailey was born in 1885 in West Newbury, Massachusetts. An avid student of nature, especially birds, he spent much time tramping around the North Shore area of Massachusetts, taking in all he could on birds, botany, insects, and every aspect of natural history. He was also an extremely accomplished photographer, and one of the first in our area to experiment with color photography. Even at an early age, he was an accomplished enough birder to have his sightings published in the prestigious Auk magazine: “Notes on a Massachusetts Mockingbird” (1911), “Red-Headed Woodpecker at Newburyport, Mass.” (1912), and a much-sited feature article, “The Plum Island Night Herons” (1915). He moved to Pittsfield, Massachusetts around 1916. He instantly fell in love with the Berkshires and all of its environs. He shared his love for all aspects of nature with others through years of a public “Course in Nature Appreciation” given at Pittsfield High School in the 1920s. He also had several travelling pre-packaged nature lectures, complete with his own photographs projected through lantern slides. If you find any local group dealing with any aspect of natural history, Waldo was most likely involved, with studies and keen observations of birds, ferns, wild flowers, botany, minerology, Native American artifacts and lore, photography, and much more. Waldo kept extensive and meticulous journals with detailed descriptions and expert observations of nature in the Berkshires.

In 1946, Waldo took the post of Warden for The Trustees of Reservations' jewel, Bartholomew's Cobble in Sheffield, Massachusetts. Waldo held this post until passing in 1963. He was married to Mary H. Bruce. Besides his son, Richard, he left behind his daughter Priscilla, who was also a very keen birder and a long-time member of the Hoffmann Bird Club. After her father's passing, it was Priscilla who saved her father's notes and journals for posterity. She lived to the ripe old age of 95. We are proud to have these journals accessible to the public, which were very nearly lost. We believe that Waldo would appreciate that all of his knowledge and life's work will now help future generations understand, and help preserve, our local natural history.

Believe it or not, after the passing of S. Waldo Bailey there was talk of destroying these journals, on the grounds that the materials were just too personal to their author. Later, I was asked to edit the journals in order to create a book which would be a very condensed version of these journals. I had never had the opportunity to see the journals until the passing of Priscilla Bailey. Once I did see them, I immediately deemed it impossible to edit such meticulous, keen, and historical natural history observations, so prosaically typed out in single space. I found these journals on par with those of Henry David Thoreau, and predict that they may some day be recognized to be in that category. I therefore resolved to share these journals with the world. With a time-span covering sixty-one years, and over 4,550 pages, this amazing journal is densely packed with Bailey's life observations from the North Shore to the Berkshires. You will experience the journals of S. Waldo Bailey just as he wrote them. I highly recommend that inspired readers start a natural history journal of their own!

I would like to thank the following people who made this project possible; Priscilla Bailey, who saved her father's journals, and did not destroy them, and Sue Cook, who notified me just in the nick time to literally save the journals from the dumpster. Sue also located one of the lost journals (a few are still missing). I'd also like to thank my first "Waldo Bailey Committee", with Prof. Thomas Tynning (of Berkshire Community College) and Rene Wendell (who later held the same post as Bailey, as Warden at Bartholomew's Cobble), who first reviewed the journals and decided how to proceed. Following that, Nicole Hall helped in getting materials organized and ready to scan. A huge thanks goes out to Alexander Olney, for his superhuman efforts entailing many hours of scanning all of the 4,500+ pages, and organizing them into manageable segments. And again, I thank Prof. Thomas Tynning for overseeing the project to its completion, and getting everything online and available to the public. Finally, I would like to thank Wayne Hammond, Chapin Librarian at Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts, for agreeing to preserve Waldo Bailey's journals and related materials and make them available for research, both physically and online. It is a privilege to add these to the Chapin Library, one of the finest collections of rare books and manuscripts to be found among American colleges and universities, in which natural history and the history of science are important components.

Matt Kelly
Grafton, New York, April 18, 2019

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