

## Edward William Nelson

### *Honorary Member President*

The second president of the ASM and an Honorary Member, E. W. Nelson was born near Manchester, New Hampshire, on 8 May 1855 and, like his predecessor, Merriam, is said to have been interested in the out-of-doors as a child. During the Civil War he lived with his grandparents on a farm in the northern Adirondacks while his father served in the Union Army and his mother nursed in a hospital in Baltimore. He attended a one room rural school until 1886 when his mother, now widowed, moved to Chicago and enrolled him in schools there. His formal education appears to have been somewhat spotty, but continued until 1875. However, even by 1872 he had participated in a field collecting expedition to the western United States and after assuming a teaching position in Dalton, Illinois, in 1875 began to publish on birds. Like Merriam, he also went to Washington, met Spencer Baird at the Smithsonian, and was sent on a government expedition to Alaska. During this trip he carried out a variety of observing and collecting activities, including geography, ethnography, and zoology. Other expeditions to Alaska followed, resulting in a series of ethnographic and biological publications, although not trained as a scientist. Nelson was obviously an excellent self-trained natural historian.

By 1890 he was working for the Bureau of Biological Survey, as a special agent on the Death Valley Expedition. Thereafter, he and Edward A. Goldman began a series of field studies in Mexico, which continued almost unabated until 1929 when he retired. During his later years, he became increasingly involved in administration of the Survey, being named Assistant Chief in 1914 and Chief in 1916, and serving until 1927. For the next 4 years, he continued his research as a Principal Biologist for the Survey. Subsequent to his retirement, he spent some time in California, but died in Washington, D.C. on 19 May 1934.

#### *Obituaries*

Goldman, E. A. 1935. Edward William Nelson—Naturalist, 1855–1934. *Auk*, 52:135–148.

Lantis, M. 1954. Edward William Nelson. *Anthropological Papers of the University of Alaska*, 3(1):5–16.