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WILFRED HUDSON OSGOOD: 1875-1947

BY COLIN CAMPBELL SANBORN

To Marion Hudson Osgood and Harriet Amanda Osgood was born on December 8, 1875, a son in Rochester, New Hampshire. He was their first child and was named Wilfred Hudson Osgood.

In 1888, the family, now with five children, Wilfred, Alice (Mrs. Alice M. Gay), Sumner, Hattibel, and Marion (Mrs. Kenneth Dowie) went to California, settling in the Santa Clara Valley.

His brother, Mr. C. Sumner Osgood of Torrington, Connecticut, has written me concerning these early days that "We lived in the Santa Clara Valley when the family removed to California from New England in 1888. My father and my uncle, who was living with us, purchased a thirty acre fruit farm three miles from the village of Santa Clara. Wilfred was then twelve years old. He attended the district school near "Milliken's Corners," and at once began to range the countryside in search of adventure—sometimes birds' eggs, sometimes watermelons from the patch of an unsuspecting neighbor. Rochester, N. H. had been a small New England town, but here he was having his first taste of a strictly rural situation. It was only a short time later that the orchard was sold as an unprofitable venture for New Englanders, and the family moved to Santa Clara. During the three years there he attended high school. In his graduating class was Chester Barlow, who later became one of the charter members of the Cooper Ornithological Club. It was after the family had moved to San Jose that this club was organized, and if I remember rightly the organization meeting was held in the living room of our home.... During his early years in San Jose he was an enthusiastic collector of birds' eggs. He made a large cabinet with a tier of drawers for storing his collection, and his friends used to gather and "talk shop" with him. On one occasion he and his companion Beck (Rollo H. Beck) made a trip to the Farallone Islands as a sort of business venture. They collected hundreds of murres' eggs, and shipped them to San Jose in boxes. (I was enlisted in the fragrant job of "blowing" these eggs, which were then offered for sale to collectors.) Somewhat later this friend Beck made a trip to the Galapagos Islands, and brought back quite a number of the giant turtles, and I know that Wilfred was much interested in this venture also."

After graduating from high school, Dr. Osgood taught in a small school in Wilcox, Arizona, for a year to earn money for his college work. He entered Stanford University in one of the earliest classes, perhaps in the pioneer class. He knew Herbert Hoover, who was in this first class at Stanford.



In 1899, he received his A. B. degree from Stanford although at this time he was with the Biological Survey in Washington. Concerning this, his brother has written me, "While at Stanford he came under the influence of Dr. Gilbert, the head of the Department of Zoology, and of David Starr Jordan, the president. It was at Dr. Jordan's suggestion and recommendation that he left college before finishing his senior year to take the position in Washington." Among the last entries in Dr. Osgood's journal on the Mt. Shasta expedition are the following, "Oct. 12, 1898—Went to Palo Alto and had a great time seeing the boys. Gilbert thinks I can get my degree without spending any time here." And again, "Oct. 14, 1898—Went to Palo Alto again. Put in a petition to Dr. Elliot for permission to finish my work in Washington."

That his formative years in Washington were greatly influenced by his association with C. Hart Merriam, there can be no doubt. He not only worked under him in the Survey, but lived at his house where he met many of Merriam's friends and especially was associated with the geologist, Grove K. Gilbert, who also made his home with Merriam for many years.

In Dr. Osgood's Biographical Memoir of Merriam can be seen how well he knew him, both his best qualities and his faults, and undoubtedly he profited from both in later life. His training in carefulness and thoroughness must have been largely due to Merriam. He was certainly encouraged and aided by him in his first two revisionary papers on *Perognathus* and *Peromyscus*. Dr. Osgood was one of "Merriam's men" and continued in a broader sense with his work and ideas.

While at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, he received his Ph. D. from the University of Chicago, in 1918, his thesis being "A Monographic Study of the American Marsupial, *Caenolestes*."

Dr. Osgood made three trips to England and Europe to study collections there. The first was in 1905–6. In his "Revision of the Mice of the American Genus *Peromyscus*" (p. 10), Dr. Osgood states concerning specimens examined "also important specimens belonging to European institutions especially the British Museum." In another reference (Jour. Mamm., 26: 441, 1945) to this trip, he said, "A number of years ago (1906), by considerable effort and some expense, I visited European museums and made a careful examination of various specimens forming the basis of early descriptions of certain North American mammals. The object was to eliminate, so far as possible, the personal equation in interpreting the descriptions of authors who did not designate types and who frequently confused several species or subspecies as later understood."

These remarks make the object of the trip clear, but whether Dr. Osgood was sent by the Survey or paid his own way has not been discovered. His reference to "considerable effort and some expense" seems to infer that he had at least in part financed the trip.

On coming to Field Museum in 1909 he was sent to the British Museum (Natural History) in London with the collection of mammals made by Akeley and Heller in Kenya Colony in 1905–6. He remained in London about three months identifying this material. In 1930, Dr. Osgood returned to London to identify the collection of Indo-Chinese and Chinese mammals collected by the Kelley-Roosevelts Asiatic Expedition.

On these trips he became personally acquainted with the British mammalogists Thomas, Hinton, Pocock, Dollman, and others. He thought a great deal of Thomas, both personally and as a mammalogist, and on hearing of his death sadly remarked that the British Museum would not be the same place without him.

Dr. Osgood held but two positions during his lifetime. He was with the Bureau of Biological Survey, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., as Assistant Biologist for twelve years from 1897 to 1909. He then came to the Field Museum of Natural History (now the Chicago Natural History Museum) in Chicago where he remained until his death. Here he held posts as Assistant Curator of Mammals and Birds 1909–1920, Chief Curator of Zoology 1921–1941, and Curator Emeritus 1941–1947.

He grew with the Museum and developed the Department of Zoology to what it is today. He came after Dr. D. G. Elliot and Carl Akeley had had charge of the mammal collection for some years. Each had kept his material separate, study skins belonging to Elliot and material for exhibition kept in Taxidermy by Akeley. These were now brought together in one catalogue, the same number placed on both skin and skull instead of a different one for the skull; original labels were kept on the skins instead of being filed, and, in all, the care of the collection was placed on a more modern footing. He also saw that the actual date of publication appeared on the papers printed by the Museum and had added to the library many important books and serials.

Dr. Osgood not only placed operations on a practical basis while in the old building, but was largely responsible for the forming of the Zoological Staff and especially for the plans for enlarged exhibition when the Museum opened its present building in 1921. There were but four members on the Zoology Staff in 1921 compared with fifteen and twelve Research Associates in 1947.

One of those selected by Dr. Osgood for the Staff was his old friend, Edmund Heller, for Curator of Mammals. He had first been associated with Heller at Stanford and in the Cooper Club in its earliest days. He took Heller to the Queen Charlotte Islands and Cook Inlet with him on his second Alaskan trip. Curiously enough, Dr. Osgood replaced Heller in the Museum at Chicago and started to work on Heller's African collection. Heller had wanted to identify this collection himself, but instead went to Africa with Roosevelt and made another collection which he did report on. Dr. Osgood was always a very staunch friend of Heller's and never failed to extoll him as one of the greatest of field collectors.

In 1926–1927 there were seven zoological expeditions in the field, each of which had, in some part, come under Dr. Osgood's supervision. During his term as Chief Curator, fifty-three habitat groups of large mammals were added to the exhibition series. These included three new halls, one of Asiatic mammals, one of marine mammals, and one of whale models. The synoptic series of mammals was also renovated and reinstalled. Besides mammal exhibition, Dr. Osgood

had the responsibility of overseeing the installation of seventeen bird groups, six fish groups, and two reptile groups, and the entire renovation of the synoptic series of birds. The planning and supervision of the large exhibition program occupied a large part of his time. The research collections increased enormously during these years, mainly through expeditions. With all this, Dr. Osgood still found time to edit all the zoological publications, continue his research, and to go on five major expeditions. On his retirement in 1941, the Museum published a Testimonial Volume to him comprised of eleven papers on mammals by some of his colleagues and members of the Museum Staff. Mr. Stanley Field, President of the Museum, says of him in a review of his work in this volume, "The great growth of Field Museum has coincided with Dr. Osgood's regime as Chief Curator of Zoology. This growth has been twofold: in the direction of exhibition on one hand and in the development of the scientific collections and of the researches based on them on the other. No one in Field Museum's organization has played a more active or more effective part in this vital development period of the Museum than has Wilfred Hudson Osgood."

EXPEDITIONS

During his adult lifetime, Dr. Osgood made thirty collecting trips, some of but a few weeks, others of almost a year. While with the Biological Survey he was sent five times to Alaska, and once each to California, Utah, Maine and Canada, and western United States. His foreign trips for the Museum included six to South America, one to Africa, and one to French Indo-China. Besides these, there were twelve short trips to various parts of the United States and Mexico, and one return to Alaska for the Government on seal investigation in 1914.

Dr. Osgood's first professional field work was a trip (Pl. I) in the Mt. Shasta and Mt. Lassen area, from July to October 1898, in company with C. Hart Merriam, Vernon Bailey, W. K. and R. T. Fisher, and Lyman L. Merriam. His younger brother, Sumner Osgood, went as cook. During the summer the party was visited by John H. Sage. The material collected was reported on by Merriam in North American Fauna No. 16. Two of the mammals collected by Osgood were described as new.

The next year, 1899, he made his first visit to Alaska and was in charge of the trip. He was accompanied by Dr. Louis B. Bishop as voluntary companion and Alfred G. Maddren as assistant. They went from Skagway over the White Pass to Lake Bennett at the headwaters of the Yukon. Here they built a flat-bottomed boat, eighteen feet long with a five foot beam, of cedar and spruce and sailed it down to Circle. The party separated here and Bishop left by steamer for St. Michael while Osgood and Maddren went in a small boat purchased in Circle. In trying to tie to a snag on the bank, the boat was drawn under and capsized, throwing them both in the icy water. Osgood caught hold of a wooden chest of specimens as it floated by. The boat, soon torn loose by the current, was carried past them bottom side up and they managed to swim to it and each get an arm over it. After being carried along for half a mile, they struck a log jam at the tip of a small island where they managed to get ashore, but the boat was carried under and disappeared. All they could see of their duffle was a duck that had been lying on the bottom of the boat. It was caught in a crotch of a submerged tree in a very swift current some thirty feet from shore, and impossible to reach.

After getting a fire started with one dry match, eating wild rose fruit and a handful of wet oatmeal, they burned some drift logs into lengths and made a raft, finishing late at night. The next morning they found their boat had caught in a log jam and were able to retrieve it and also get the duck, which they had for



Osgood at Mt. Lassen, California—1898

breakfast. Resuming their journey, they were picked up two days later by a passing steamer and taken to St. Michael. The results of this trip appeared in North American Fauna No. 19. Ten new mammals were described from the fifty-four species collected.

In 1900, the Survey again sent Osgood to Alaska, this time to collect in the Queen Charlotte Islands and Cook Inlet. He took with him his friend of the Cooper Club, Edmund Heller. The report on the trip was published in North American Fauna No. 21 the next year.

The late summer of 1901, from August 24 to November 1, was spent investigating prairie dog colonies in Kansas, Nebraska, North and South Dakota, and Montana. On this trip Osgood met Otto Widman, Merritt Cary, and J. D. Allen for the first time. His journal describes prairie dog towns of from two acres to six or seven hundred acres. He experimented with many kinds of poison and



PLATE II Osgood in Abyssinia—1926

gas as means of exterminating them, but nothing seems to have been published concerning these investigations.

In 1902, a trip extending from July to November covered the base of the Alaska Peninsula. He was accompanied by Alfred G. Maddren as assistant and Walter Fleming as camp hand. Mr. W. Gorman, botanist for the Department, accompanied them for part of the trip. The route covered Lakes Iliamna and Clark, the Chulitna River and Nushagak River to Nushagak, across Bristol Bay, up the Ugaguk River to Becharof Lake, across the mountains to Kanatak, and by open boat to Cold Bay. This last leg was almost disastrous as the boat was caught in a sudden storm and nearly capsized. It was a very arduous trip with much rain and wind. The report appeared in North American Fauna No. 24.

The summer of 1903, from May to October, was spent with Mr. Ned Hollister collecting on the Yukon River between Eagle and Circle, Alaska, and at the head of Seward Creek under the brow of Glacier Mountain. From Dr. Osgood's journal, this appears to have been a much pleasanter trip than some of his others to Alaska as they were not exposed to so much rain and bad weather. It was also the beginning of a long friendship with Hollister.

In 1904, two trips were made. The first tying in with the work in 1903, covered Coal Creek in the Ogilvie Range, and the second on the MacMillan River. The party of the first trip consisted of Dr. Osgood, Mr. Charles Sheldon, and the well known artist, Mr. Carl Rungius. On the second trip they were joined by Mr. Frederick C. Selous of England and a number of citizens of Dawson. The party was divided into three sections and Dr. Osgood hunted with Mr. Rungius for about two months. His full report on these two years' work appeared in North American Fauna No. 30.

On his return from Europe he was sent, in 1907, into Maine and the Maritime Provinces of Canada to study the methods of silver fox farming. The results of his investigations were published in Farmers' Bulletin No. 328—Silver Fox Farming.

His last trip for the Survey was through southern Utah from August to October 1908. He described a new *Sorex* from this collection and years later Goldman described a new subspecies of *Thomomys* from it. This ended his work with the Survey as in 1909 he came to Chicago and started on a new field of study.

From 1909 to 1947, while associated with the Field Museum of Natural History, later the Chicago Natural History Museum, Dr. Osgood went on eight major expeditions outside the United States. Those covered six to South America, one to Africa, and one, financed by himself, to French Indo-China. Besides these, he collected on twelve other local trips, mainly vacations or hunting trips in various parts of the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

His first trip was to Venezuela and Colombia in 1911 with Stanley G. Jewett, Sr., where collecting was carried on in the Lake Maracaibo region and on the highlands south of it. This was the beginning of years of collecting and study of South American mammals. Eleven new mammals were described from the collection.

In 1912, accompanied by Malcolm P. Anderson, an important trip was made across northern Peru, an almost untouched area at that time. From the coast at Pacasmayo they went inland through Cajamarca, Balsas, and Chachapoyas to Moyobamba, thence by foot to Balsa Puerto and so by canoe to Yurimaguas and thence by steamer down the Amazon. About 2000 birds and mammals were collected and sixteen of the mammals were described as new.

There now came a lull of about eight years, due in part to unsettled conditions brought on by World War I. During this time, many new exhibition labels were prepared by Dr. Osgood and a card index of the mammal collection was made. Packing collections for removal to the new building and plans for their installation began in 1918 and occupied nearly four years.

In 1914 Dr. Osgood served for six months on a Government commission to study and make recommendations for the management of the fur seals on the Pribilof Islands.

With Mr. Boardman Conover, Dr. Osgood made another trip to Venezuela in 1920, working around Lake Maracaibo and the Sierra de Perija for some five months.

On Dr. Cory's death in 1921, Dr. Osgood was made Curator of the Department of Zoology, and with the opening of the new building began a new era in the history of the Museum with large exhibition and expedition programs.

In November 1922, Dr. Osgood led the Marshall Field Chilean Expedition accompanied by Mr. Boardman Conover and Colin C. Sanborn. After some months in southern and central Chile, Dr. Osgood collected around Buenos Aires and Tucuman, Argentina, returning to Chicago in July 1923.

Three years later he led the Field Museum-Chicago Daily News Abyssinian Expedition (Pl. II) which was in the field from November 1926 to April 1927. Other members of the expedition were Louis A. Fuertes, Alfred M. Bailey, Suydam Cutting, and Jack Baum. No complete report was published on the mammal collection, but a number of new forms were described in two short papers. "Artist and Naturalist in Ethiopia," the combined diaries of Dr. Osgood and Louis Fuertes, giving their impressions and notes for each day, was compiled by Dr. Osgood and gives a very complete history of the expedition.

In 1937, he went alone to French Indo-China on an expedition financed by himself. He made large collections of mammals and collected specimens for a group of gibbons and for one of pea-fowl. He was in the field from February to April.

Ever since the Chilean Expedition of 1922, Dr. Osgood had been awaiting the opportunity of returning to Chile to collect in the Magallanes area and on Tierra del Fuego, besides visiting places missed on the previous expedition. This became possible in 1939 when the Magallanes Expedition was arranged. Dr. Osgood was joined on his steamer in Peru by Colin C. Sanborn and John M. Schmidt and the party continued to Chile. About three months were spent traveling on Tierra del Fuego and in the Magallanes region in the expedition truck and the first comprehensive collection of mammals from the region was made. While Dr. Osgood suffered a few digestive upsets, on the whole his health was good and he fully enjoyed the trip.

His last foreign expedition was in January–February of 1941 when he was a member of the Mandel Galapagos Expedition which traveled on the yacht "Carola" to the Galapagos and made a short stop at Talara in northern Peru.

His mammal collections totaled 7531, about half for the Biological Survey and half for the Chicago Natural History Museum.

SCIENTIFIC WORK AND PUBLICATIONS

Dr. Osgood's first contribution to natural history was published in the Oologist in 1892 when he was seventeen years old. While his work with the Biological Survey took him repeatedly to Alaska and he prepared four reports on these trips, it is significant that his thirteenth paper was a revision of the pocket mice of the genus *Perognathus*, and this was followed a few years later by his revision of the genus *Peromyscus*, showing an early interest in rodents and a realization of the need for generic revisions. His early publications naturally dealt mainly with these two genera and with the natural history of Alaska.

Of all his scientific works, Dr. Osgood is probably as well known for his work on *Peromyscus* as any other. While other revisions had appeared in the Fauna series by others on the Survey, it was one of the largest dealing with more forms and a greater number of specimens, about 27,000. It has stood as a pattern for future workers and today remains with few changes as the only revision of the genus. This widespread North American genus with its large number of races has naturally interested the geneticists who make continued reference to this revision.

His first work at Chicago was the identification of Heller's and Akeley's Kenya collection, but with this out of the way, he started on South American mammals which became his main interest. During his work at Chicago, forty-nine (onequarter) of his publications dealt with South and Central American mammals and their nomenclature. These included the "Monographic Study of the American Marsupial, *Caenolestes*" and the "Mammals of Chile." An example of Dr. Osgood's thoroughness is that while he had the "Mammals of Chile" practically completed by 1926, he would not publish it until he could get material from Magallanes and Tierra del Fuego, so he waited thirteen years for the opportunity to complete the Chilean collection before he would publish the work in 1943. He left an almost complete card file of the mammals of South America that was being prepared for publication at the time of his death.

His South American research was interrupted by the preparation of the report on the mammals of the Kelley–Roosevelts and Delacour Asiatic Expeditions and a report on some of the more important rodents from three African expeditions.

A total of fourteen new genera and subgenera and 263 new species and subspecies of mammals were described by Dr. Osgood, and thirteen mammals, three birds, one toad, two fishes, and one plant were named for him.

It is remarkable that he was able to do as much research as he did with the load of administrative work he carried at the same time, which included the editing of the publications of the Department of Zoology.

CLUBS AND ASSOCIATIONS

From the first, Dr. Osgood took a leading part in the scientific societies. His first office was President of the Cooper Club in 1893, followed by Treasurer in 1894, and Vice-President in 1896. During his stay in Washington he was Recording Secretary of the Biological Society of Washington from 1901 to 1904 and Corresponding Secretary from 1905 to 1909.

When the American Society of Mammalogists was formed, he served as Vice-President from 1919–23 and as President from 1924–26. He also served for long periods on the Bibliography, Conservation, and Nomenclature Committees. He was a Trustee of the Chicago Zoological Society since 1933. The American Ornithologists Union elected him as Associate in 1893, a Member in 1901, and a Fellow in 1905. In other groups he was a Member of the British Ornithologists Union; Corresponding Member, London Zoological Society; Member, Division of Zoology, National Research Council; Geographic Society; Boone and Crockett Club; Explorers Club; and University Club of Chicago. He remained a bachelor and during his years in Chicago lived at the Quadrangle Club of the University of Chicago He served one term as President of the Club.

During the twenty-five years that it was my great good fortune to be associated with and trained by Dr. Osgood, it was his character of carefulness and thoroughness that was perhaps the most impressive. This may have been inherited from New England ancestors or it may have been acquired on his early hazardous expeditions to Alaska where he had a number of very narrow escapes. He did not seek adventure as such and repeatedly stated that expeditions were hard work and not adventures. A motto he gave me and which he must have followed was, "Be sure you are right and then look again."

In his research and writing he was particularly careful, and at times, it might be said, even over-cautious. Because of this, others sometimes got ahead of him, but his record of accuracy has proven this trait a good one.

Dr. Osgood in the Museum and in the field was two different people and no one knew him until they had seen both of these sides. Administrative duties and a press of work were more apt to bring on an attack of the stomach trouble that so long plagued him and which made him seem preoccupied. He greatly enjoyed field work and on an expedition he was always in better health, almost carefree and much happier. This, however, was only a change in the outward man. The inner man never changed, and in the Museum or in the field Dr. Osgood was always helpful, generous, and considerate. When first with him in the Museum he sent me with a request to one of the workmen in the building and said, "Don't tell him, ask him."

In the field he was an excellent trapper and often got a larger catch with twenty-five traps than others who set out one hundred. This was because he never set a trap unless he was sure it was in a used runway or near food that would attract rodents. Although an enthusiastic collector he was still soft-hearted toward some of the mammals he had to collect. On my first trip with him to Chile, we had a young live pudu that sickened and had to be put out of the way. He wanted the animal, but hated to kill it. The collector of course won, but he said bitterly as he was sharpening the knife, "In this game, Sanborn, you could kill your own brother if you needed him for a specimen."

Those working under Dr. Osgood's direction were supervised, but never realized until later the unobtrusive direction they had had from him. I shall always be indebted to him for the years of patient help and guidance he gave me.

His friends were not all in the museum field. He had the friendship and respect of men of equal caliber of the University of Chicago with whom he lived at the Quadrangle Club. At the Memorial Service held for Dr. Osgood at Bond Chapel. University of Chicago, Professor Frank H. O'Hara of the English Department said, "... We remember the individual who enriched us by being with us. By being a part of the university community for over thirty years. By listening, and talking, and living tolerantly—and at the same time affirmatively. By being his own big-statured self. Someone once said that the greatest truths are the simplest, and so are the greatest men. We lived with one of these simple great. And knew that he was great. And that he had no need of the tag of titles. And I suppose that most of you who are here today have for a long while called him simply "Oz"—And will always think of him as "Oz"—With respect— With affection—And with great good cheer."

At the same Service, Mr. Tappan Gregory, an old Chicago friend of Dr. Osgood's and known to mammalogists for his excellent flash-light photos, said of him, "... His interests were comprehensive and keen, and he was ever alert for opportunity to serve. For one of his fine intellect and positive opinion, he had extremely broad-minded perspective and was sensitive to the views of others, always ready to modify his own judgments when persuaded of error. On any matter of public concern or private interest, his arguments were constructive, his approach fair, his conclusions just. He commanded universal respect and admiration for what he did, affection for what he was—generous in his appraisal of others, modest for himself, companionable, of a lively sense of humor and unfailing dignity and grace, courageous, and patient beyond belief. We shall miss him, but let us not mourn too grievously that he has preceded us by a few sure steps along the inevitable trail. Let us rather rejoice in the happiness he brought us and keep fresh the memories of glad days together.

> 'E'en as he trod that day to God So walked he from his birth In simpleness and gentleness

And honor and clean mirth.' "

After a short illness, while in Billings Memorial Hospital for a general check-up and rest, the end came suddenly at 3:00 p. m. on June 20, 1947. We use the term "the end" in regard to the physical, but for a man like Wilfred Hudson Osgood, there can never be an end.

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