

## In Memoriam: Thomas L. Quay

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### Tom the Quack

There aren't many Carolina Bird Club members from the last century who didn't know Dr. Tom Quay. He was an ornithological institution in this state. Tom died on April 16, 2012 at age 96.

Many of us remember Dr. Quay as a Professor of Ornithology at North Carolina State University. He helped establish the Fish and Wildlife curriculum. He was deeply interested in his students, in wildlife research and in the conservation of natural resources. His research interests included various sparrows, Cliff Swallows, Mourning Doves, woodcock, waterfowl, shorebirds, and colonial nesting waterbirds. He was mentor to many graduate students, and many went on to have extraordinary careers themselves. Names like Hester, Parnell, Soots, Sykes, Grant, McCrimmon, Fussell and Hamilton come to mind.

I took ornithology as an undergraduate in 1973, and later was Dr. Quay's teaching assistant in 1979. Our class field trips were memorable. There was a time I saw him dive into a Carteret County salt marsh to emerge grinning while holding a Black Rail. We visited Rachel Carson Sanctuary to view nesting terns and skimmers. He introduced us to roosting Chimney Swifts at Lacey School in Raleigh, and hiked us into a blackbird roost by flashlight at night. Tom Quay helped me get my first job—Paul Sykes told me Quay did the same for him. He was that committed. Tom and I remained close friends through the years, eating breakfast monthly at Baxleys or Finches. He invited me to call him "*Tom the Quack*".

Tom came to Raleigh in 1938 to begin his graduate studies. His mentors were Professors Cary Bostian, Z. P. Metcalf and B. W. Wells—folks who have campus buildings named after them. The campus was on the rural fringe of Raleigh, and Tom would walk to his research sites. Much of the wildlife research was descriptive then, and some would say simpler—if by simple you mean drawing maps by hand, calculating everything longhand, and using a Remington typewriter for each draft of your thesis.

Tom completed his Master's studying "The Ecological Succession of Winter Birds at Raleigh NC" in 1940. His PhD dissertation, "The Ecology of the Savannah Sparrow in Winter at Raleigh, NC", was finished in 1948—the first PhD awarded at NCSU—and he assumed a faculty position thereafter. He taught for 32 years. Dr. Quay was chairman of 53 graduate student projects and served on 300 graduate student committees. He has been

recognized for his contributions many times, and in 1994 Dr. Quay was inducted into the NC Wildlife Federation's Conservation Hall of Fame.

Tom was also a birder and a long-time member of the Carolina Bird Club. He attended the 1938 Christmas Bird Count in Raleigh with T. Gilbert Pearson and the Brimley brothers, and did not miss another Raleigh CBC (other than the war years) through 2006. He was editor of *The Chat* from 1951–1953.

Mentoring students was very important to Dr. Quay and so in the 1990s an endowment entitled the Thomas L. Quay Wildlife and Natural Resources Undergraduate Experiential Learning Award was created to provide opportunities for undergraduates to experience research—he would want me to mention that to you, so that you can consider making a donation.

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## **Fifty Years Ago in *The Chat*—September 1962**

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Evening Grosbeaks had been unknown in the Carolinas until a large irruption in the winter of 1951–1952. During the following decade a series of irruptions occurred, and in the September 1962 issue, B. R. Chamberlain summarized in great detail the 1961–1962 irruption, the fifth in the series. In this flight, Evening Grosbeaks reached Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. In the Carolinas, the first individuals appeared at the end of October but arrivals peaked in December, and birds remained into early May, with some being noted on spring counts.

Attention was being given to the rapid increase of Cattle Egrets, which had first appeared just a few years before. They too were noted on some spring counts, and field notes summarized records from a number of locations in North Carolina. They were reported as far north and inland as Durham and Raleigh, NC.

Also in the summary of spring counts, the Charleston, SC count once again reported a single Bachman's Warbler.

A Cinnamon Teal at Knott's Island, NC in April 1962 was the second sight record for the state. B. Rhett Chamberlain relayed a report of Prothonotary Warbler near Elkin, NC, with the comment "reports of Prothonotary Warbler above the fall line in the Carolinas are scarce". Mrs. Robert P. Holmes reported on two male and three female Pine Grosbeaks at Mt. Olive, NC, on 9–10 April 1962, "watched all day by groups of people which at times were large enough to obstruct traffic on the nearby street".

—Kent Fiala, editor