

From The Canadian Field-Naturalist, September 1927, p. 136-138

IN MEMORIAM: CHARLES W. NASH

BORN AUGUST 15, 1848. DIED FEBRUARY 13, 1926.

CHARLES W. NASH, Biologist of the Provincial Museum, St. James Square, Toronto, for the past twenty-three years, died at the home of his daughter, Mrs. H. S. Sweatman, 250 Heath Street West, on February 13, 1926. He is survived by two daughters, Mrs. H. S. Sweatman and Mrs. L. Lacey, as well as by grand-children. The funeral service and interment took place at Niagara-on-the-Lake, on Monday, February 15th.

Mr. Nash was born at Bognor, Sussex. England, on August 15, 1848, and received his education at Shoreham Grammar School. On February 13, 1877, he was married to Harriet Burns Campbell, daughter of His Honour E. C. Campbell, first judge of the united Counties of Lincoln, Welland and Haldimand, and late County Judge of Simcoe. Mrs. Nash predeceased him by a few years.

He came to Canada in 1869 when he would be twenty-one years of age, and here his earlier love of nature could find an outlet in a country where there was rare opportunity for the development of a sportsman and naturalist. Very shortly after his arrival in Canada he began lecturing on the subject of birds in relation to agriculture, and he took an early step in conservation by becoming a founder of a game and fish protective association at Hamilton, Ontario, about 1873. I think he has told me that he was the first Secretary-Treasurer of this Society, and it was founded at a time when game was abundant and when only a far-sighted man could foresee the great coming need for game protection.

Mr. Nash brought to Canada high ideals of sportsmanship and never missed an opportunity of teaching these in a country where the abundance of game and the pioneer conditions prevailing must have made them appear rather out of place.

He loved the frontier, and in the eighties went to Portage la Prairie and continued his natural history observations while practising law in that community. Many of these are included in Seton's Birds of Manitoba which, although published many years ago now, is still the outstanding ornithological work on the birds of the province. In 1887 he returned to Ontario and devoted himself exclusively to the study of biology.

In connection with sportsmanship, Mr. Nash was a lover and a breeder of good gun dogs. He kept the same hunting stock generation after generation, and these were of mixed Sussex and Norfolk Spaniel blood. It was always his argument that these large Spaniels were the best all-around hunting dogs for our country, and the tremendous popularity of the Springer Spaniel, as the Norfolk is now called, in recent years shows how truly his insight into sport with the gun guided him in this particular. About 1899 he became lecturer on biology for the Farmers' Institute Bureau of the Ontario Department of Agriculture and in this capacity lectured for years, at the rate of 100 lectures per annum, to farmers, on such subjects as birds in relation to agriculture.

In this capacity and later as Biologist of the Provincial Museum, he published extensively works which have done much to advance the knowledge of wild life, and to advance the protection of wild life in Canada. He always took a keen interest in exhibitions of natural history work and for many years acted as judge in the natural history exhibits of the Canadian National Exhibition at Toronto.

I well remember the first occasion on which I met Mr. Nash. It was a fine April morning and with another boy I was hunting for birds near the Kingston road, just about where the residence of Sir Donald Mann stands now. We had secured a Warbler as a specimen and did not know the species. Mr. Nash, accompanied by his spaniels, happened along the road and meeting us, he at once identified the bird as a Pine Warbler, the first we had ever seen. This contact continued through many years and although we were separated by difference in age, this made no barrier in the case of Mr. Nash. On one occasion we planned and completed a short expedition to Point Pelee to study the bird migration. Mr. Nash was not a young man then, but his good sportsmanship and ability to meet cheerfully all sorts of circumstances made him a charming companion and a very instructive one. A keen sense of humour always pervaded our discussions and while some persons might have taken his expressions of opinion as somewhat outspoken and even blunt, he had a friendly heart to his fellowman as he did to the wild creatures. Many scores of times I have called on him and it must have been rather upsetting to his work to have been so popular with youthful visitors, but I was always courteously received and welcomed. Located as he was in the Normal School Building, his instruction was available for hundreds of teachers who scattered from this school to all parts of the Province and certainly many of them took with them when they left Toronto, some insight into wild life and its protection.

Mr. Nash worked unceasingly in perfecting the collections of the Museum, and extended his efforts over a wide range of subjects. He was an old-fashioned naturalist, and at home in many fields. He was particularly interested of late years in completing coloured casts of the fishes, batrachians and reptiles of Ontario, but in addition to this work in ichthyology and herpetology, he studied in the fields of entomology, mammalogy and ornithology.

The following outline of his activities in Ichthyology has been furnished by Professor J. R. Dymond:

"Mr. Nash's breadth of interest in natural history is perhaps best shown by what he did in connection with the fish of the province. Most naturalists take comparatively little interest in fish, but Mr. Nash knew them as well as he did birds, mammals, insects, etc. In fact, he probably contributed more than any other one individual to our present knowledge of the fish fauna of the province. Not only was he interested in fishes, from the systematic and distributional point of view, but he was concerned with their conservation from both the economic and recreational point of view. His advice on matters of angling and fisheries regulations was sought by provincial officers in charge of these matters. About 1895 he was a member of a commission appointed by the Provincial Government to inquire into the question of the sale of bass and maskinonge. The report of this commission was never published, but acting on their recommendation the sale of these fish was prohibited. In discussing this question Mr. Nash has been heard to

remark that in 1877 bass sold at 3 cents per pound and in 1885 at 40. He championed the poor man's rights in matters of this kind. He deplored the destruction of the angling in Toronto Bay and waters near Toronto, even though the fishes to be taken here were not as high-class game fish as those taken in more remote regions, but these nearby fish were all the poor man could afford to angle for, and Mr. Nash considered their interests perhaps before those of the trout and bass fishermen."

Mr. Nash was a member of the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club--the first number of The Ottawa Naturalist I ever saw was on his desk--and a member and for some years a director of the Entomological Society of Ontario.

The effect of his educational work was to lay a foundation in wild life protection in Ontario on which we are building today, and which has proved invaluable as further wild life protection becomes necessary with the increase in the settlement of our Province. He was a great naturalist of an old-time school that has practically disappeared in modern-day specialization, a conservationist of note, and an educationalist, who reached and touched the grown-ups as well as the youth of our Province, and whose influence extended beyond its boundaries. Ontario, particularly, owes him a debt for his work along these lines, and yet to some of us he meant more than a naturalist, for he was a warm-hearted and true friend

Hoyes Lloyd (with the kind assistance of The Toronto Field-Naturalists' Club)