

by J. Lawrence Smith

## George Breiding: The Passing of a Pioneer

With the recent death of George Breiding, West Virginia lost a native son who was an interpreter, defender and protector of the rich natural heritage of our state.

I met George in 1957 when I was in high school and he presented a slide program at a meeting of the Brooks Bird Club in Charleston. Among the slides were one of prickly pear cactus and a nest of Long-eared Owls. I couldn't wait to see cactus growing wild in West Virginia and search for owls!

George's excitement about birds and wildlife was contagious and many persons came under his tutelage when he was Naturalist and responsible for nature education at Oglebay Park at Wheeling for many years. As a youth, George was inspired by Naturalist A. B. Brooks at Oglebay and became active in the Brooks Bird Club in its early days.

For many years he was employed by state government in programs of education and wildlife conservation. Following graduation from Ohio State University in 1948 he became editor of "Outdoor West Virginia," forerunner of "Wonderful West Virginia." He was associated with Oglebay Park from 1950 to 1963. He retired in 1978 following several years as an Extension Specialist with West Virginia University.

He was among the early observers to define the distribution of Swainson's Warbler in the central Appalachians. In 1944, he discovered the bird on lower slopes of Big Black Mountain in Kentucky. I envied him for his observations of the hybrid offspring of the Golden-winged and Blue-winged Warbler. On a tract of brushland he owned near Wadestown, Monongalia County, he had the good fortune of finding, on a number of occasions, both the Brewster's and Lawrence's Warbler.

Rare are persons such as George who can not only communicate the wonders of nature, but inspire "disciples" as well. West Virginia was made richer with his life lived among the mountains and we are now poorer with his passing.

A memorial scholarship has been created in his name for Oglebay Institute's Junior Nature Camps.

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