

ERNEST GRANT TABOR, NATURALIST — 1864-1954

ALLEN H. BENTON

The naturalist, Ernest G. Tabor, died on Easter Sunday (April 18, 1954) in Meridian, New York, at the age of 89. He was not a professional biologist. His list of published papers is small, including a half dozen contributions to *Bird Lore*, a note or two in the old *Ornithologist* and *Oologist*, and a note in *The Kingbird*. His papers, though short, were masterpieces of keen observation, and have been cited by such ornithologists as A. C. Bent, Frank Chapman, and O. S. Pettingill. His discovery of the nest of a dickcissel in central New York in 1937, the first known nesting in the state since 1865 was a tribute to his ability to recognize the unusual. In 1948, at the age of 84, he assisted me in a survey of the breeding birds of Cayuga county, and took great delight in journeying to the old haunts from which he had been away so long.

In the later years of the last century and the first years of this, Tabor was well known in ornithological circles. He exchanged specimens with many noted ornithologists, and for a time belonged to the American Ornithologists Union. He was a friend of Dr. Frank Chapman, and loved to recount the story of their photographic expeditions to Otter Lake, near Meridian. On one such expedition, they removed a small segment of the Otter Lake marsh, for transplantation to the American Museum of Natural History. In 1906, when Tabor became clerk of the board of supervisors of Cayuga county, he was forced to give up most of his nature activities, and it was a quarter of a century before he was again able to give much time and energy to this hobby.

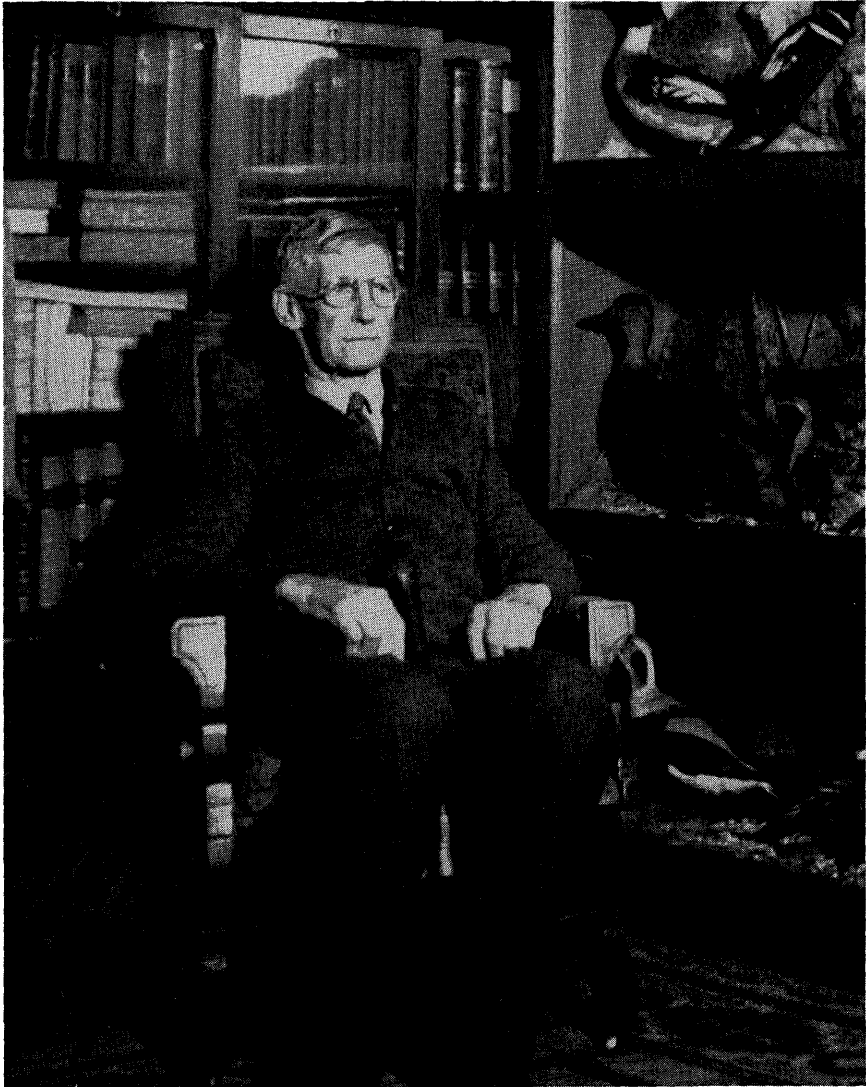
Besides these contributions to science, Tabor educated several generations of young Meridianites in the wonders of nature. His home—filled with mounted birds and nests, mammals, and other fascinating objects—was a mecca for the children of the village. He knew nature and loved all phases of it. He knew where the rare birds nested, where the orchids bloomed in the bogs, and he was liberal in dispensing the fruits of his years of study to those who were interested.

In connection with his love for wild things, Tabor early took up nature photography. With inexpensive equipment he photographed everything which would sit still. Many of his photographs were used in E. H. Eaton's *Birds of New York*, and some of them were made into slides to be used by the State Museum for educational purposes. Eighteen of his best pictures were published in *Bird Lore* between 1899 and 1905.

Thoreau said of himself that he had traveled widely around Concord. It might equally well be said of Ernest Tabor that he traveled widely around Meridian. Like Thoreau, he took occasional trips to the mountains, in his case the Adirondacks. Unlike Thoreau, he was in no sense withdrawn from his fellow man. He was gregarious, in his youth a baseball player of note. He had many consuming interests, but natural history was always at the top of the list. In later years, when old age prevented active field work, he expended his abundant energy in working on a collection of stamps, coins, and Indian relics.

There are many capable professional biologists in America today; there are all too few amateurs with the breadth of vision, the ability to observe and record data, the enthusiasm to give the love of nature to others, and the persistence to study one area or one species, which would permit them to make real contributions to science and humanity. Such a one was Ernest Grant Tabor, an amateur naturalist in the finest sense.

New York State College for Teachers, Albany, N. Y.



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