

## Isaac Norris DeHaven

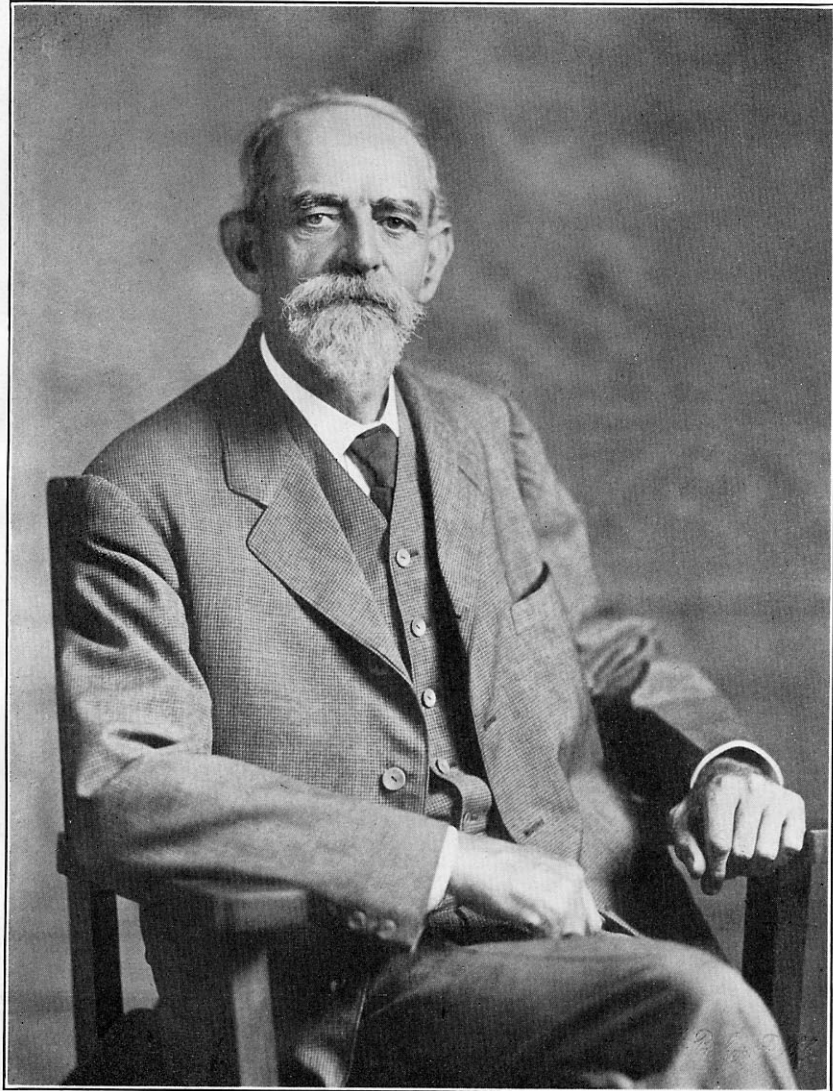
BY WITMER STONE

WHEN the Club first began to hold its meetings at the Academy of Natural Sciences, short accounts of the proceedings were published in the daily papers with the idea of attracting the attention of persons interested in bird study who might care to join our organization.

Among the first to respond was Isaac Norris DeHaven. The fact that he was as unknown to us as we were to him is only an illustration of how individuals interested in the study of nature will carry on their work alone, within easy reach of one another yet without the chance happening which might have brought them together. In constituting that bond of union—that means of communication between kindred spirits—lies perhaps the most notable service that the Club has rendered.

DeHaven was older than the twelve of us who constituted the Club when he joined it on February 16, 1891, being then a man of forty-four years of age, but none of us excelled him in enthusiasm or energy, and the Club recognized his interest by electing him President for the years 1897-98. He was then accustomed to take week-end trips to Atlantic City, N. J., where he maintained a cat boat, the 'Widgeon,' and we were soon enjoying the hospitality of this little craft and her skipper at all seasons of the year. Now we were stalking sandpipers, mayhap, on the broad salt marshes in midsummer, lying out in the skiff in the bitter cold of winter waiting for passing Black Ducks, or perhaps in early spring scouring the strip of woodland that then lay back of Chelsea for Gnatcatchers or moulting Myrtle Warblers, or in autumn collecting series of Sharp-tailed Sparrows in search of the rare Nelson's and Acadian Finches that now and then fell to our guns.

Then in the cozy cabin at night, perhaps with wind and rain outside and always the sound of water lapping against the hull, we enjoyed the products of "Norrie's" culinary skill and slept the sleep of the just on mattress bunks which rolled up under the deck in the day time. Many a savory meal we had of sea bass



*J. A. De Haven.*

and weak fish, and clam chowder, and mudhen and sandpiper stew, and once a carcass of a Blue Heron which we had just skinned went into the pot with most satisfactory results. DeHaven was not a sound sleeper and on more than one occasion I awoke to find him shifting the anchor or sitting on the deck listening to the Mudhens cackling in the sedge, or I have been aroused by a shake of the shoulder to see a Short-eared Owl perched on the wheel or to hear the Night Herons croaking through the darkness overhead.

"Norrie" at once became our authority on the water fowl and everything relating to feathered game, while from us he gathered information on the occurrence of certain of the small birds which, in his concentration on game birds, he had not been aware of. He had been brought up on a copy of Wilson and once he had become acquainted with the subsequently described Ipswich Sparrow, his keen perception recognized that the bird described by Wilson as the male of the Savannah Sparrow was in reality this northern species, which comes from Sable Island to the dunes of the New Jersey coast in winter. This fact had been overlooked by all other ornithologists and it carried the history of the species back some sixty years.

Isaac Norris DeHaven was born in Philadelphia, July 30, 1847, the son of Lieut. Commander Edwin J. DeHaven, U. S. N. and Mary Norris DaCosta. Shortly after his birth his parents removed to Washington D. C., where they lived until May, 1850, when his father was placed in command of the First Grinnell expedition in search of Sir John Franklin, when "Norrie" returned to Philadelphia with his mother until the expedition came back in August, 1851. He then lived for two years on a farm in Cooper's Creek, N. J., and then for a short time in Baltimore, Md., after which he resided in Philadelphia in winter and New Jersey in the summer until moving to Ardmore, where he resided with his two sisters at the time he joined the Club.

At an early age he was much interested in nature and in machinery. He was always a great reader and devoured every kind of book that he came across, coming into possession of many works on birds and animals and on hunting and fishing. As a boy he often played at being an Indian and fashioned for himself all

sorts of Indian weapons and ornaments. He was educated at private schools in Philadelphia, and at the school of the late Henry D. Gregory he made the acquaintance of the late Charles H. Baker and both being interested in animal life they became fast friends and together prepared many specimens of birds' skeletons and skulls, and collected minerals, etc. Through DeHaven, Baker later became a Correspondent of the Club, and their friendship was unbroken until the death of Mr. Baker a few months before DeHaven passed away. He belonged a little later to a club that went camping during the holidays in Hunting-ton County in the mountains of Pennsylvania, and here he met the artist, Arthur B. Frost, who became a life-long friend and spent many days with him on the 'Widgeon' in the waters about Atlantic City.

At one time DeHaven prepared to enter the naval school at Newport but owing to the effects of an attack of typhoid fever he failed in the physical examination, although he passed in all the others. He then studied mechanics in the machine shops, specializing on stationary and marine engines and studying also at the Franklin Institute where he met William H. Thorne, with whom he later formed a partnership and with whom he exhibited an immense lathe of their construction at the Centennial Exposition. The depression in the iron business a year or two later forced them as well as many others out of business and DeHaven entered Rhiele Bros.' shops as a draughtsman, going from there to the shops of William Sellers where he held important positions until he took charge of what developed into the Overbrook Steam Heating Co., where he continued until his retirement a few years before his death, which occurred on March 2, 1924, after a year or more of ill health.

As years passed on and the labor attendant on the care and manipulation of the boat began to tell, while the surroundings at the shore were not what they used to be, he sold the 'Widgeon' and became an ardent devotee of the game of Golf. His interest in sport however, was still maintained and every autumn he repaired to the Virginia and North Carolina coasts where duck shooting was more attractive than on the Atlantic City waters. Some of these trips were to Skidmore's at Cape Charles, made

famous in our Club's annals by the accounts of George Morris, who first introduced DeHaven to this delectable spot. Later on he purchased this island and again entertained members of the Club at a cabin which he had erected there. Here he indulged his ornithological interests at times when game was not in season, adding many interesting specimens to his collection, which at his request has been presented to the Academy by his sisters, and now forms part of the local study series which is made up of the collections of many other members of the Club with whom DeHaven was closely associated.

He joined the Academy in 1896 and used to attend the meetings regularly in the old days. I learn from his sister, who has furnished the data on his early life, that it had always been his ambition as a young man to become eligible to membership in this institution to which his grandfather, John C. DaCosta, had belonged. He was an associate of the American Ornithologists' Union from 1893 to 1908, and contributed a note on Brunnich's Murre at Cape Charles, Va., to 'The Auk' in 1896, while he recorded a number of notes on birds and game to 'Forest and Stream' as well as to 'Cassinia,' though he preferred to place his interesting observations on record by verbally reporting them to the meetings rather than by writing them out for publication.

DeHaven's energy and enthusiasm were contagious. We can picture him in memory, keen with delight as he pulled in weak fish one after another as he lay in his skiff at the exact spot in the channel where his minute knowledge of tides and water told him was the right place; or striding across the brown marshes in pursuit of small marsh sparrows which his unerring gun brought down in ample series; or seeking out the nests of Laughing Gulls with shouts of exultation; and then we can recall his deep booming voice at the Club meetings, as he reviewed the results of our field work at the shore for the benefit of those who were not of the party.

The Club has had no more loyal member than "Norrie" DeHaven. To its every interest he gave his aid and to every individual his generous assistance, and the memories of those delightful days on board the 'Widgeon' will linger as long as life lasts in the minds of those of us who were privileged to share them with him.