

COURTLAND Y. WHITE

1903—1950

ERNEST A. CHOATE

Courtland White joined the D.V.O.C. in 1941. He was educated at the Central High School and the University of Pennsylvania from which he graduated in 1925. He taught in the English Department at the University from his graduation until his death on January 24th, 1950.

He made a hobby of photography and many of his bird pictures were exhibited at the Academy of Natural Sciences. His real enjoyment came from the capture of the bird on film rather than from exhibition. Never hurried when taking a picture, he seemed to prolong the preparation for his own amusement.

I was with him when he photographed a hummingbird on her nest. As he calculated timing, exposure, and distance, he dropped the observation that Walt Whitman colored the hummingbird's eggs to fit the rhyme. This, he said, was something that Whitman should not have done, but, since he was somewhat of a mystic, it was to a certain extent understandable. He then reviewed some of the crimes which some of the more usually circumspect authors have perpetrated on the ornithologically innocent. By the time this discussion was over the timing and exposure had to be recalculated. I am glad to have that hummingbird picture, as it vividly recalls the man and some of his characteristics.

His notes were accurate and methodically arranged, although to him dates, weather, time of day and place were a part of the purely negative virtue of scientific accuracy. He believed that watching with sympathy and understanding was more important.

He has helped some of us to see a little more in birds and nature, and has added to our own observations some of the insight not only of Audubon, Wilson, Lowell and Hudson but of his own.

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