

# FEATURE STORY

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By RALPH CLARK

MADISON--Member of the Wisconsin Conservation Commission. Professor of forestry and wildlife management at the University of Wisconsin.

Director of the National Audubon Society and past president of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters.

Noted ornithologist and author of one major book and numerous articles on wildlife in early Wisconsin.

This is. tall, pipe-smoking A. W. Schorger, who is to be found in a host of places throughout Madison during the course of a day -- from his office in the UW forestry and wildlife department to the stacks of the State Historical Library, working on tasks that vary from addressing the Legislature to his full-time occupation -- research.

Schorger is currently working on a history of the wild turkey in North America, for which he has been conducting research for two years.

"Already I have over 5,000 references -- from journals and diaries to newspapers and periodicals -- but even so the book will not be finished for several years," he says.

Schorger's interest in wildlife research began early in his youth.

"One day while I was riding along the old Kilbourn Road in northern Ohio with my uncle," he once wrote, "We came to a segment of the highway then bordered by fields. He told me that the area was once covered with a large beech forest.

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"In spring when there were beechnuts on the ground, huge flocks of wild pigeons would appear. Their numbers were so great that the earth was shadowed and dung struck the dry leaves like hail," he added.

"Men stood in the rift in the forest and fired at the passing birds until the road was dotted with their blue bodies, and more were killed than could be carried."

"The extinction of a species once so numerous seemed incredible," Schorger wrote, and when he came to Wisconsin in 1909, he spent the spare time of a score of years on interviews, correspondence, and search of literature -- out of which came his book "The Passenger Pigeon" and a dozen scientific papers on other Wisconsin game animals.

Schorger's books and articles give strong evidence of tireless research. In his short article on the "Black Bear in Early Wisconsin," he lists some 248 references.

In writing his book on the passenger pigeon, he "compiled a bibliography of approximately 2,200 titles. If there were included all the references in the newspapers of the various states, the list would readily extend to 10,000," he writes.

Carefully studying every newspaper that has ever been printed in Wisconsin, Schorger has also completed articles on the prairie chicken, the sharptailed and ruffed grouse, the quail, squirrels, the white-tailed deer and the elk in early Wisconsin. He has also written a history of the steel trap and its use in North America.

Most of his material, however, comes from journals and dairies kept by traders, explorers and early settlers, he says.

His latest article, "The Moose in Early Wisconsin", appears in the forthcoming Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters.

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Schorger was born in 1884. He received his Ph. B. from Wooster College, Ohio, in 1906. After receiving his M. A. degree from Ohio State two years later, Schorger became an assistant chemist in the Bureau of Standards in Washington. From there he went to the Bureau of Internal Revenue.

He came to Madison in 1909 to work as a research chemist in the Forest Products Laboratory until 1917, receiving his Ph. D. from the University of Wisconsin in 1916.

In 1917, Schorger became the director of chemical research at the C. F. Burgess Laboratories and from 1931, he held a concurrent position as president of United Investors.

Later, he became president of the Burgess Cellulose Co. of Freeport, Ill., and he retained this position until his retirement in 1950. He has held his position as professor of wildlife management at the University of Wisconsin since 1951. Lawrence College conferred an honorary Ph. D. degree on Schorger in 1955.

When Schorger appears before the Legislature this week in behalf of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters, he will present to the legislators the functions of the Academy -- functions which, no doubt, include elements of his own personal philosophy.

"There are three main functions of the Academy," Schorger says. "First, all the papers which appear in its Transactions relate to the natural resources of Wisconsin and to the research which is being done in the state.

"Second, the Transactions are exchanged with some 650 domestic and foreign learned societies -- providing an important program of mutual benefit.

"Third, the Academy sponsors the junior academy meetings once a year where the members listen to papers and projects of high school students -- students who are encouraged to specialize in science."

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