

Nathan Clifford Brown

Nathan Brown was descended from two of Maine's most prominent and prosperous families. One grandfather was an Associate Justice of the US Supreme Court. Although he lived to age 84, he was always frail and subject to frequent illness. He grew up in Portland, Maine, and it was on his father's estate in Portland that he first developed a lasting interest in birds.

Brown entered Bowdoin College in 1873. Illness prevented him from continuing, but Bowdoin nevertheless awarded him an honorary degree in 1883. Nathan became expert at taxidermy and bird skin preservation, at which endeavors he was a perfectionist. His early work was mostly in Maine, and he continued to spend much time there throughout his life. He also worked in Alabama, resulting in a publication described by Howell as "the first modern list of the birds of Alabama". This included the first discovery of Swainson's Warbler in Alabama, and some of the earliest studies of its habits. He also established the presence of Le Conte's Sparrow east of the Mississippi River, and its (rare) presence in central Alabama even in winter. Brown spent the winter of 1880 in Kendall Count, Texas, the first of several trips there. He investigated the range and habits of the Golden-cheeked Warbler, and also the Aimophila sparrows. Starting in 1903 and continuing intermittently for ten years, Brown worked in Kershaw County, South Carolina. Later Nathan traveled extensively in Europe, and indulged in literary work, publishing in the literary journals of the time numerous short papers on a wide variety of topics.

Nathan Clifford Brown was a Founder, Fellow, and Fellow Emeritus of the American Ornithological Union. In the later part of his life, his infirmities kept him from field work, and indeed even from reading, but despite that, he continued to maintain strong interest in the progress of American ornithology.



Melospiza l. lincolni

TEXAS Kendall County.

Feb. 25, 1880

Mar. 10, 13, 18, 1880 - N. C. Brown

Spec. Mus. Comp. Zool.

Ident. by H. C. Oberholser, 1937.

Nathan C. Brown Migration Card

Information for the biography and picture were collected from the following resources:

Norton, A.H. 1942. In Memoriam: Nathan Clifford Brown. AUK: 59(4):471-476

BPP office volunteer, Bob Hartman contributed this biography to our newsletter, thank you Bob!