

ETCETERA

Turtles and Literature

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Archie Carr, recipient of first Hal Borland Award from the editors of Audubon.

ARCHIE CARR, known worldwide for his pioneering studies of sea turtles in tropical oceans and on exotic beaches, is the first recipient of the Hal Borland Award, to be presented annually by the editors of *Audubon* to "an individual who, through writing, photography, or art, has made a lasting contribution to the understanding, appreciation, and protection of nature."

One of the most literate natural scientists in America, Archie Carr's devotion to the craft of writing, his delight in words, and his concern for the natural world shine through in all of his many books and articles. His book *THE WINDWARD ROAD: ADVENTURES OF A NATURALIST ON REMOTE CARIBBEAN SHORES* not only received critical acclaim as a classic of nature writing, it created worldwide concern for the plight of the sea turtles.

As Frank Graham Jr. wrote in the March 1982 issue of *Audubon*, in a profile of Carr and his conservation activist wife Marjorie: "Added to *THE WINDWARD ROAD*'s literary excellence is its value as propaganda. Books such as *SILENT SPRING* and *THE POPULATION BOMB* had the initial advantage of making plain the details of a problem about which many people were at least faintly concerned. Archie Carr's book created interest in a situation which, before then, had come to hardly anyone's

notice. Sea turtles, whose oceanic habitat and out-of-the-way nesting beaches make them among the least conspicuous of large animals, might have slipped into extinction without even a commemorative paragraph in the daily papers."

Carr is graduate research professor of biology at the University of Florida in Gainesville, and the Hal Borland Award was presented at a dinner in the courtyard of the Florida State Museum attended by some 250 of his colleagues, friends, and admirers.

The award, co-sponsored by Carl Zeiss Inc., includes a pair of 10x40 Zeiss Dyalit binoculars, rubber-armoured for protection in the foul weather naturalists and natural scientists often encounter.

Archie Carr is a longtime resident of Florida with a half-century association with the university, where he studied biology as an undergraduate, did his master's work on the chemistry of local lakes, and earned his doctorate with a thesis on the distribution of Florida reptiles and amphibians. His books include *HIGH JUNGLES AND LOW, ULENDO*, and *SO EXCELLENT A FISHE*, about studies of the green turtle by Carr and his colleagues. And he has written numerous articles about the natural history of northern Florida and especially the Suwannee River country.

Like most good writers, Frank Graham noted in his profile, Archie Carr is a

good reader. "My mother and father encouraged me to do a lot of reading when I was a child," he told Graham. "I loved the words, and I would pore over every line, savoring the words and saying them over to myself as I read. I found myself studying the style of the writer, and even today I am a slow reader."

THE WINDWARD ROAD, Graham wrote, "is not strictly about natural history. Its real subject is Archie Carr's exuberant sense of adventure, as acted upon by turtles and turtle boat captains, a pair of sapphire eyes in the dark, queer smells carried on tropical winds, night sounds in a swamp, and—well, the stuff of life." One chapter, "The Black Beach," involved Carr's meeting with a local woman at a turtle's nest on a Costa Rican beach. Published in *Mademoiselle*, it won an O. Henry Award as one of the best short stories of 1956.

(Carr's son Chuck, more formally known as Archie Carr III, writes of another, decidedly more dangerous encounter on a Costa Rican beach in "Foiling the Pantera Negra," our Earth-Watch feature on page 26.)

Finally, again quoting Graham, "The quality of writing turned out by some of our better naturalists is high, but there is seldom a shift in the earnest, even solemn, tone. For the most part, humor in nature writing is rare, and cultivated only by cutesy-poo animal lovers. Archie Carr, when the occasion demands, can be every bit as earnest and solemn as—well, Ralph Nader. Yet, though he demeans neither the people nor the wild creatures he writes about, there is quiet humor, a half-concealed chuckle, on nearly every page of his books."

The Hal Borland Award was established by the National Audubon Society's board of directors to honor the memory of one of America's best-loved nature writers. The son of a country newspaper editor in Colorado, Hal Borland grew up on the High Plains early in this century, became a newspaperman like his father, and joined the staff of *The New York Times* in 1937. Four years later he wrote a nature essay that appeared on the Sunday editorial page, the first of more than 1,700 nature editorials that ran every week until his death in 1978. A contributing editor to

Audubon for a decade, Borland was the author of more than two dozen books on nature. His own contributions to the understanding, appreciation, and protection of nature are legion.

The color plates of endemic Hawaiian birds that accompany Steve Yate's article, "On the Cutting Edge of Extinction," beginning on page 62, are reproduced from two books that are as rare as their subject matter. AVES HAWAIIENSES: THE BIRDS OF THE SANDWICH ISLANDS, by Scott B. Wilson, and THE AVIFAUNA OF LAYSAN AND THE NEIGHBOURING ISLANDS, by Walter Rothschild, were published in London in the 1890s for a small number of subscribers, 250 copies being the limit for the latter title.

Most of the plates were drawn by F.W. Frohawk for the Wilson book. Three paintings, of the 'akepa, 'elepaio, and the extinct black mano were done by J.G. Keulemans for the Rothschild volume. All are masterpieces in the best tradition of the nineteenth-century English ornithologist John Gould.

Wilson spent the years 1887-88 investigating the birdlife of the islands at the behest of his zoology professor at Cambridge, Alfred Newton. In Newton's words, Wilson "brought back such a collection as had never before been made there." He also was appalled at the decimation of Hawaii's avifauna, due largely to destruction of the native forests. Wilson's comments in the *Ibis* in 1890 were particularly prophetic:

"It would be a disgraceful thing if such a Garden of Eden should be bereft of its birds, more especially as I am convinced that these islands have a great future before them as the great health resort, to say nothing of the vast number of tourists who will flock to see the volcanic wonders of Hawaii, from all quarters of the globe. On their behalf I appeal to the landowners and to the Legislature of Hawaii to unite in protecting their country's birds. I would suggest that not only should forest lands be fenced in so far as practicable, but that no exotic birds should be introduced. It would not be rash to say that ere another century has elapsed but few native species will remain."

Indeed!

Audubon Cover Proofs

A limited number of unfolded proofs of the July cover of blacktail deer bucks are available. A copy will be sent protected in a sturdy mailing tube upon receipt of a check for \$10. Write: Cover, National Audubon Society, 950 Third Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022.

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