



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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RETIRED FWS SCIENTIST DIES SUDDENLY OF HEART ATTACK

Dr. William Bonar Bell, 71, formerly chief of the Fish and Wildlife Service's Branch of Wildlife Research, who died suddenly in Washington, D. C., on March 30 of a heart attack, "thoroughly earned his recognition as an outstanding pioneer worker in the field of wildlife management," according to Service Director Albert M. Day.

Dr. Bell retired on July 31, 1944, after an association of 28 years with the Fish and Wildlife Service and the former Bureau of Biological Survey.

"He was a tireless worker who took hold of his job with ability and enthusiasm from the very day he joined our organization as an assistant biologist on July 1, 1916," commented Mr. Day. "He advanced rapidly because he had a thorough appreciation of the importance of research as the basis for improving wildlife management practices. He was ever active in furthering the interests of the research which he directed for so many years."

Upon coming into the Bureau of Biological Survey in 1916, Dr. Bell served as chief assistant to the late Dr. A. K. Fisher in the administration of campaigns for the control of noxious rodents and predatory animals.

In 1927, Dr. Bell was placed in charge of the Division of Biological Investigations. In 1935, when the Bureau of Biological Survey was reorganized while J. N. Darling was its chief, the research units were consolidated into a new Division of Wildlife Research, and Dr. Bell was selected to head this enlarged scientific division. A program of wildlife research in cooperation with land grant colleges and State game departments was developed under Dr. Bell's supervision.

Dr. Bell was a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, an associate member of the American Ornithologist's Union, and held memberships in the American Society of Mammalogists, the American Forestry Association, the Society of American Foresters, the Washington Academy of Sciences, the Biological Society of Washington, the Wildlife Society, the University Club of Washington, D. C., and Sigma Xi and Alpha Zeta, honorary scientific fraternities. In addition he was a director of the Illinois Audubon Society and a member of the Chicago Conservation Council and the Chicago Ornithological Society from 1942 to 1944. He is listed in "Who's Who" and in "American Men of Science."

Dr. Bell was the author of many State and Federal biological reports, magazine articles, and other publications on the life history and habits of birds and mammals.

Director Day pointed out that under Dr. Bell's direction the Service began the acquisition of a large quantity of valuable data on the status of birds throughout the country by means of bird censuses taken periodically by a corps of voluntary observers. "This was the beginning of the Service's present day annual waterfowl inventory."

Born in Milton, Iowa, on June 2, 1877, Dr. Bell received his education in Iowa schools. He was graduated from the Iowa State Normal School, and from the Iowa State University with A.B., M.S., and Ph.D. degrees. After graduation he continued his studies of biology and during the summer of 1901 he conducted biological investigations at the U. S. Fish Commission's station at Woods Hole, Mass. In 1905 he carried on special research at the Smithsonian Table, Zoological Station, in Naples, Italy. He held the position of professor of biology in the North Dakota Agricultural College and Experiment Station from 1905 to 1908 and from 1908 to 1916 he was professor of zoology and physiology. During all that period he served as curator of the Natural History Museum and from 1915 to 1916 he was also entomologist of the North Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station.

Prior to his employment with the Federal Government, Dr. Bell represented the North Dakota Agricultural Station in a survey of the birds, mammals, and life zones of the State, made in cooperation with the former Bureau of Biological Survey. Later he cooperated again with the Biological Survey in organizing a campaign for the destruction of ground squirrels in North Dakota and was an important factor in the remarkably successful development of that work.

Dr. Bell is survived by his widow, Mrs. Clara Bell, and two children. The family residence in Washington is located at 803 Rittenhouse Street, N.W. Funeral services were scheduled for 2 p.m., Friday, April 1, at the Trinity Episcopal Church on Piney Branch Road, Washington, D. C., followed by cremation.

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