

JOHN DORNAN

1896-1978

John Dornan was born in South Africa. At an early age he was taken to Northern Ireland where he acquired a lilting brogue that he never lost. He served the British Army in World War I, and was wounded in action. Following his war service he joined the merchant marine for a number of years. He was fond of telling of many trips around the Horn, and of visits to exotic ports. One story that I recall John telling was the attempt by England to sell the entire island of Jamaica in 1919 for one million dollars. He came to this country in the early 1920's and became a master woodworker and builder. John had always been interested in nature and birds in Europe. Upon taking up residence in Wyndmoor, Pa., he continued this interest by birding often in the Wissahickon Valley.

John joined the DVOG in 1940 and became a life member. He often told a story about birding at Cape May Point shortly after his arrival in America. John loved the Cape May Point area, and while on a birding visit observed a man whom he suspected might be a game warden or policeman. Not knowing if he was trespassing, and fearing eviction, John hid until the man disappeared. Later John was to meet the gentleman who turned out to be the great Witmer Stone, and they enjoyed birding together.

John traveled extensively in his pursuit of his interest in natural history. One of his favorite places was East Africa. He visited the rich wildlife areas of Africa on at least five occasions. On these trips he became a lifelong friend of Don Turner and John Williams, the leading ornithologists in East Africa. Another of his friends was Rena Fennessy, the noted wildlife artist. John was proud of her bird prints, personally signed, that she sent to him. He also made two or three trips to the Antarctica, and visited South Georgia Island, Tierra Del Fuego, and the Falkland Islands.

John was a member of the Wyncote Audubon Society and often gave lectures and showed his excellent motion pictures to that group as he did for the DVOG. His last presentation to the DVOG was in February, 1978. John honored the DVOG upon his passing with a sizable and welcome bequest.

Although John was not born in America, he continually sang the praises of our country, and was thankful to live in the United States for most of his adult life. He was an extremely warm and interesting person. Everyone that met John formed an immediate liking for him. He died in June, 1978 after a short illness. Our club has lost a fine birder and a great gentleman.

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