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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF STUART T. DANFORTH 1900-1938

By ALEXANDER WETMORE.

Stuart Taylor Danforth, son of Ralph Emerson Danforth and Bertha T. Danforth, was born in Jersey City, New Jersey, September 23, 1900. According to information obtained from his parents he was a "born" naturalist, his interest in birds and in natural history in general beginning at a very early age. Taught to read and write by his mother, his notebooks recording his observations began at seven years when his parents removed to Ann Arbor, Michigan, where his father was engaged in advanced studies in zoology and botany in the University of Michigan. Books on nature were abundant in this household and these the growing boy devoured eagerly, their influence being evident in his care in his own records, in his accuracy of spelling, and in his arrangement of his observations.

Through his school and college days Danforth's interest in birds never lagged, his only regret being that he did not have more time to devote to such studies. In 1917 his father came to Rutgers University in the Department of Zoology and here Stuart Danforth took his undergraduate work. In zoology he was a student under his father, the class room relation between father and son being entirely on the formal basis of "Danforth" for the son and "Professor" for the father, in spite of the close and friendly relation that they had at home. His ability as a student is attested by his standing near the head in a large class, in spite of the father's confession that he undoubtedly marked him several points lower than he merited, in an intense desire not to be prejudiced in his classes in favor of his own son.

In 1921 when Stuart Danforth received his bachelor of science at Rutgers his father became head of the Department of Biology in the College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts of the University of



Puerto Rico at Mayagüez, Puerto Rico. As Stuart was only twenty-one on recommendation of his professors he decided to work for a year before beginning his graduate work at Cornell, and taught in the Mayagüez High School, living at home with his parents. Naturally the birds of a new region were a major interest with him, and quite naturally this led later in work for his doctorate at Cornell, to a thesis assignment on a study of the ecology of the birds of Cartagena Lagoon, Puerto Rico. These studies involved months of observation in the field, in which his father was often associated, and laboratory work at a table assigned for his use in the laboratories under his father's direction at the college in Mayagüez. His degree of Doctor of Philosophy was conferred by Cornell University in 1925, and his thesis entitled "Birds of the Cartagena Lagoon, Porto Rico", was published immediately in the Journal of the Department of Agriculture (of Puerto Rico).

During the scholastic year of 1925 and 1926 Danforth was an instructor in biology at Temple University, and the following fall when his father returned to the United States he was appointed to his father's position of Professor of Zoology and Entomology in the College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts at Mayagüez, a position that he held with distinction until his death. While occupied constantly during the school year with his classes and his students he improved every opportunity for work in the field. Naturally most of these efforts centered around Mayagüez and Cartagena Lagoon, but his trips extended over the island and included visits to the out lying islets of Desecheo and Mona. Vacation periods were given to more extended journeys in other regions. In all of this work he was usually accompanied by one or more of his students. His field investigations at their end had carried him through the Antillean area from Cuba along the chain of islands that extends to Trinidad.

The summer of 1926 he visited Jamaica, and during the following Christmas holidays he investigated the birds of St. Thomas, St. Croix and St. John. After the close of college in 1927 he traveled extensively in the Dominican Republic and Haiti, including Gonave Island, and the following December made a brief journey to St. Martin and St. Eustatius. The summer of 1931 was devoted to an extensive survey of St. Lucia, St. Kitts, Nevis and St. Thomas, and in 1933 at the same season he visited Cuba, Antigua and Barbuda. The Christmas holidays at the end of that year were given to St. Thomas, Tortola and Jost van Dyke. In June, 1934 he was again

in Cuba, on his way by auto to the United States, and at the end of December that year he collected in Culebra and adjacent islets.

The following summer, with V. Biaggi, he made an extended journey from June to August, beginning at St. Thomas and covering St. Kitts, St. Lucia, Grenada, the Grenadines, and Martinique. In December 1935, again accompanied by Biaggi, he visited Vieques Island, east of Puerto Rico. The year 1937 saw the most extensive of Danforth's explorations in the Lesser Antilles. Beginning at St. Thomas in January he visited St. Eustatius, Saba, Montserrat and St. Vincent, continuing to touch at many of the small islets that make up the Grenadines. In this journey he reached Trinidad, and then returned north to stop in Barbados. In June Biaggi joined him in Guadeloupe, and the two in company made collections on Guadeloupe, Desirade, Marie Galante and other islands.

Six summers during this period were occupied with visits to the United States in which he was accompanied by Ramos, Biaggi, or others of his students. Usually he brought up a car and used this in travel through the country. Much of the time in these journeys he was occupied in the study of specimens in museums and in the assembling of records from ornithological literature pertaining to the West Indies. In this way he gathered in an extensive card file records and data that gave him a complete list of the birds of the various West Indian Islands serving as a guide in his constant studies directed toward the extension of knowledge of the avifauna of this interesting region.

My own acquaintance with Stuart Danforth, which began when he was enrolled as a graduate student at Cornell, came through a mutual interest in the birds of Puerto Rico and a correspondence begun at this time continued until within a few days of his death. Our personal contact came during his work in the National Museum in Washington in the summer seasons that he spent in the United States, and fostered a friendship based on mutual attraction and an absorbing interest in ornithology.

In the course of his work Danforth gathered as specimens about three thousand birds, kept in his home in Mayagüez, representing one of the most important collections that has been made relating to the West Indies. This was the basis of his published work and of his comparative studies, and was given by him prior to his death to the U. S. National Museum to be preserved for work for the future. It is especially important for the rare species that it contains and for its records from many of the smaller islets from which specimens



have not heretofore been available. Following his death the collection was brought to Washington and incorporated in the National collections where each specimen is marked by a distinctive label bearing the statement "Stuart T. Danforth Collection".

While most active in studies of birds Danforth was deeply interested in entomology, especially in the Coleoptera where the Buprestidae were his favorites. He collected insects extensively, and though he published little on this subject many of his specimens are the basis of records in the "Insectae Borinquensis".

Like thousands of others Danforth was an enthusiastic philatelist and confessed of late that he had perhaps put more funds into his stamp collections than he properly should. Geography, mammalogy and herpetology also had appeal to him, and his collection of stamps and his extensive travels led to an interest in railroad and post office business methods. Add to this outline of his activities, a devotion to his teaching and to his students, a deep feeling for movements concerned with the establishment of world peace, and a sincere and simple belief in the Christian faith, and there will appear some picture of the man and his place and stature in life. His influence on his students was always such as to inspire in them a desire to excel in their work and to build in them character that they will carry all through life.

He was above the average in height, and rather slender, modest always in comportment, and of a sensitive, studios disposition. Although quiet he was a charming companion with alert interest in everything in the world about him. Never robust, his work at times was interrupted by illness, but this did not interfere with his plans for future investigations. At the beginning of December, 1937 the writer last saw Danforth in his house in Mayagüez where he was seriously ill, and spent two days with him looking through his collection of birds and talking over many problems of mutual interest. We had hoped to go afield as I wanted to visit Cartagena Lagoon with him but this was not possible under the circumstances. Although he recovered later to some extent he never regained his full health, and in May, 1938 his illness became acute so that he was forced to return to the United States. His death came on November 25, 1938 when he was under the care of his parents at West Boylston, Massachusetts.

His influence will long be felt in Puerto Rico where the esteem in which he was held is fittingly indicated in the following resolu-



tion signed by the Dean of his College in Mayagüez and by forty-two of his colleagues, fellow members of the faculty.

“To Ralph E. Danforth, Bertha T. Danforth and family for the death of their son and brother,

Stuart T. Danforth,

we, the Faculty of the College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts of the University of Puerto Rico, send our sincere condolences and deepest sympathy.

Our colleague for more than twelve years, we have known Stuart T. Danforth as an indefatigable worker, a sound and creative scholar and scientist, a sympathetic teacher, insistent upon the highest standards from his students, a generous and loyal friend to all who were associated with him.

In his passing, Puerto Rico and the institution where he worked with us have suffered an irreparable loss. We shall miss his sorely.

His influence among us was a constant inspiration. May his warmth of personality, his character and his deep Christian faith keep that influence active through the future of our college and in our hearts.”

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