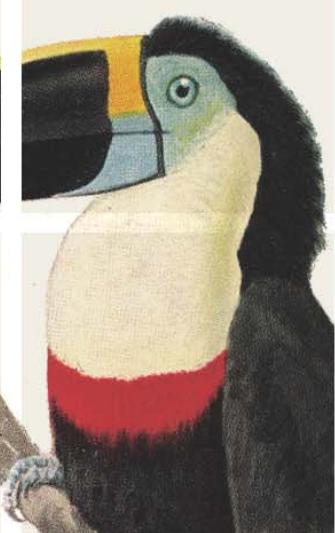




# Birds of Empire, Birds of Nation

A History of Science, Economy, and Conservation  
in United States-Colombia Relations



Camilo Quintero Toro







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*To Cata, who brings magic  
to my life every day.*



# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments · xi

**Introduction · 1**

Birds and a Place for Nature in United States-Colombia Relations · 1

**1. Commodities and Fashion Objects · 13**

Natural History Collections: The Birds of Colombia Travel to Europe · 16

Decorating Women's Hats · 21

The Rise of Conservation · 24

A Closer Look at the Colombian Context · 30

**2. Power and Imperial Relations · 39**

Turn to Scientific Expeditions · 42

Early Expeditions: Santa Marta 1898-1899 · 47

Changing Questions, Changing Styles in the Field · 51

Perceiving Colombia Through the Landscape · 58

Everyday Cultures and Field Styles of North American Expeditions · 66

The La Salle Brothers and the AMNH Connection · 72

**3. Nation, Nature, and Naturalists · 87**

Collecting Colombia's Avifauna · 90

Nation and Nature · 98

Political Economy and the Interactions of U.S. and  
Colombian Naturalists · 109

The Importance of Region: Naturalists in Popayán · 124

<b>4. Environmental Bridges and National Parks</b>	· 131
Wildlife Protection Goes Global	· 135
Migrating Birds: The ICBP in Latin America	· 137
Promoting Nature Protection in the Western Hemisphere: The North American Initiative	· 141
Organizing and Institutionalizing Bird and Nature Protection in Latin America	· 147
Latin American Conservation from Within: Colombia's Struggle to Defend Wildlife	· 151
An Ornithologist's Push for National Parks	· 157
<b>Conclusion</b>	· 165
<b>Bibliography</b>	· 171
Archives	· 171
Books, Articles and Essays	· 171

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# Introduction

## Birds and a Place for Nature in United States-Colombia Relations

As soon as one enters the newly remodeled Instituto de Ciencias Naturales (ICN)—Natural Sciences Institute—at the Universidad Nacional in Bogotá, one finds an enormous interactive panel with a big title in white letters that reads in both English and Spanish: “*Colombia País Megadiverso / Colombia, a Megadiverse Country.*” Moving a little closer one can see that the panel is divided into sections—plants, birds, butterflies, freshwater fish, amphibians, reptiles and mammals—that show a little bit of Colombia’s natural world through pictures. A yellow and blue macaw stands close to a wax palm and a salamander. The purpose of the panel is to inform the visitor about the great number of plant and animal species that Colombia has. For example, 1,850 bird species have been recorded in the country, which makes it the nation with the most diverse avifauna in the world. Colombia is also the country with the most number of amphibian and butterfly species, 700 and 3,019, respectively. We also learn that Colombia is second place in the world in the number of vascular plant species (35,000) as well as freshwater fish (1,500).

Interestingly enough, the panel also teaches us about the other countries that are close to Colombia in number of plant and animal species. For example, Perú ranks second in the number of birds with 1,703 species, and ranks fourth in the count of freshwater fish with 855. Brazil stands second in the world in number of amphibian species, with 517, and has more vascular plant species and freshwater fish than Colombia with 55,000 and 3,000, respectively.

For a historian of science the entrance to the ICN presents far more questions than answers. It invites us to think about the way we perceive the concept of nation and its relation to nature. In terms of birds, for example, the countries that rank number one through four—Colombia, Perú, Brazil and Ecuador—in this apparent race to have the most number of bird species, are all neighboring countries separated only by human-constructed political frontiers. If birds apparently have no national frontiers, why do we place this category upon them?

Furthermore, why is there a fascination with the diversity of bird species? It is by showing the number of bird species that the exhibit is intended to make every Colombian feel patriotic about the natural world that inhabits his or her country. How did naturalists come to collect these thousands of specimens and learn to differentiate an important part of Colombia's fauna and flora? What is the story of these collections? How were they formed and by whom? What was the dynamic between the different people who participated in bird collecting, including amateurs, locals, and scientists of different nationalities?

This book seeks to answer these and other questions by focusing on the study and perception of Colombian birds from the late nineteenth century through the first half of the twentieth century, as a pretext to analyze social, scientific and environmental relations between the United States and Colombia. When I first started thinking about this project, my main interest rested in the study of North American scientific expeditions to Latin America, especially to Colombia. North American ornithologists in the first decades of the twentieth century developed a fascination with Colombia's avifauna because of its vast diversity. Several scientific expeditions were sent to Colombia to hunt and collect thousands of bird specimens that were later sent and housed in U.S. museums of natural history for scientific study. These expeditions were the perfect case to understand the scientific side that accompanied North America's political, economic and cultural expansion into Latin America at the turn of the twentieth century.

The histories of the bird collections housed today in museums of natural history were the perfect place to begin this query. Institutions like the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, the Natural Sciences Institute in Bogotá, or the Museum of Natural History in Popayán—stitutions with an important place in both North American and Colombian science—hold collections with thousands of Colombian bird skins that represent the entirety of bird species found today in Colombian territory. Understanding how ornithologists and collectors formed these collections revealed a rich story of international scientific relations and power structures throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Nevertheless, I soon discovered that birds, more so than the naturalists who studied them, had a wonderful and ample story to tell. Colombian birds gained international recognition when they became entangled in the large global trade of the late nineteenth century to supply the millinery (hat) industry of New York, Paris and London, when European and North American women started wearing feathers as adornments on their heads. Colombia's avifauna was also part of a different kind of trade during the 1930s and 1940s, when Colombian and North American naturalists sought to understand and identify the main

characteristics of Colombia's—and South America's—avifauna by exchanging bird skins, information and gifts as part of their scientific practice. Likewise, Colombian birds were also part of the efforts to promote conservation policies in Latin America between the 1940s and 1960s. North Americans at the time realized that while migratory birds were protected in the United States, they had no protection once they traveled on their southward journeys to South America escaping the cold winters of the north. The creation of the first national parks in Colombia had much to do with the preservation of birds.

Reconstructing the story of Colombian birds, then, allows me to build a history that not only analyzes the early and complex scientific relations between the United States and Colombia, but also takes into account the importance of North America's growing influence over Latin America as well as Colombia's changing economic, cultural, and social history to understand different perceptions of the natural world in both countries. Colombians and North Americans constructed nature in radically different ways, which in turn responded to the very different historical milieus in which each of them was rooted. In 1915 a Colombian snowy egret and its natural world was very different for a North American naturalist who lived in a world where the United States' economic, political, and cultural influence in Latin America was growing, than it was for a Colombian naturalist who lived in a country that constantly looked beyond its borders in order to modernize itself. For a North American, the study of birds could bring a view of the natural world where U.S. imperialist intentions over Latin America were entirely legitimized. For a Colombian naturalist, the study of birds offered another way to promote relations with the United States and to incorporate Colombia in the international arena of science. Furthermore, the same snowy egret had a very different set of meanings for a naturalist placed in Bogotá, the capital of Colombia, than for an inhabitant of Arauca, the poor and isolated region in Colombia where most egrets were hunted to supply the demand of wealthy women that rushed to New York City hat shops looking for exotic birds to decorate their heads.

At the same time, a toucan in 1940 had a different meaning to a North American who, in the midst of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy, approached Latin America as an important economic and political ally, than to a Colombian rooted in a context in which nationalism had become a very strong current. For North Americans, birds and nature became tools to promote pan-American cooperation and integrate Latin America as a coherent region that worked closely with North American interests. For several Colombians, the study of birds was an important step to value nature as a national treasure. Discovering that Colombia was the country with the greatest diversity of birds was, for some naturalists, as emblematic for national identity as the national anthem.

In other words, a study of the changing meaning of Colombian birds allows us to understand the many ways in which imperialism, nationalism, and international economic relations, among others, influenced the construction of nature, science and the environment in United States-Colombia relations in the last decades of the nineteenth century and first decades of the twentieth.

This approach where birds are the main force guiding the narrative of the book allowed me to find what I believe is its main contribution: the place of nature and science in thinking new connections between imperialism and nationalism in history. The transnational aspect inherent in the history of Colombian birds allows me to frame this book within the history of science and imperialism. In the past three decades, scholarship in the history of science and imperialism has recognized the power of science in exercising control over the colonies and expanding empire. The periphery, once thought of as the mere recipient of western scientific knowledge, has become a dynamic place of appropriation, assimilation and influence upon scientific work in the metropolis.<sup>1</sup> Obtaining hegemony in another culture is a far more complex and ambiguous process than historians of science initially thought when they first turned their attention to the study of empires over thirty years ago.<sup>2</sup> In recent years several articles and books begun to enrich our understanding of the role that science and medicine played in the consolidation of U.S. international power in the late nineteenth century and the twentieth century. Scholars of U.S. scientific imperialism have convincingly made the argument that science and medicine were important allies in U.S. expansion in the twentieth century. In this way, research within the history of science and imperialism, which until recently largely focused on the interactions between European countries and their colonies in Latin America, Africa or Asia, has also found in the United

1. The literature on science and imperialism is vast. Some of the most representative collections can be found in: Antonio Lafuente, Alberto Elena, and M. L. Ortega, eds., *Mundialización de la ciencia y cultura nacional: Actas del Congreso Internacional “Ciencia, Descubrimiento y Mundo Colonial”* (Madrid: Doce Calles, 1993); Roy M. MacLeod, ed., *Nature and Empire: Science and the Colonial Enterprise* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Patrick Petitjean, Catherine Jami, and Anne Marie Moulin, eds., *Science and Empires: Historical Studies about Scientific Development and European Expansion* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992).

2. See for example: David Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State, Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-Century India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Richard Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens, and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Nancy Rose Hunt, *A Colonial Lexicon of Birth Ritual, Medicalization, and Mobility in the Congo* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); William Kelleher Storey, *Science and Power in Colonial Mauritius* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1997).

States an important case that deserves attention.<sup>3</sup> Although it is not my intention to argue that North America's global expansion in the twentieth century had similar characteristics to Europe's formal imperialism between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries (although we should not forget that Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Philippines became formal North American colonies), it is useful to think of the United States as an informal empire, especially when analyzing scientific and environmental relations.

The idea of looking at the United States as an empire is certainly not new in academia. Between the 1960s and the 1980s several scholars, including the Wisconsin School headed by William Appleman Williams, as well as the so-called dependency theorists in Latin America, constantly explained the relationship between the United States and Latin America as imperial. These studies argued that since the Latin American region had a strong economic dependence on the United States, North Americans had an enormous power to define and control the political and social course of the region. After all, during the first half of the twentieth century North America became Latin America's main economic partner, buying raw materials from its southern neighbors, selling to them North American manufactured products, and loaning them money in ever increasing foreign debts.<sup>4</sup>

Although the perspective of these scholars was very helpful to counterbalance the modernization theories of the 1950s, it was focused on an economic aspect, leaving aside other historical variables such as culture and society. Furthermore, these scholars analyzed the history of North American international relations from a dichotomist perspective. They understood the relations between the United States and the world as a relationship between oppressors and oppressed, without taking into account other levels of complexity with intermediate actors that could not be clearly placed in one side or the other.

3. Warwick Anderson, *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine and Race Hygiene in the Philippines* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Marcos Cueto, ed., *Missionaries of Science: The Rockefeller Foundation and Latin America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); Stuart George McCook, *States of Nature: Science, Agriculture, and Environment in the Spanish Caribbean, 1760-1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002); Armando Solorzano Ramos, *¿Fiebre dorada o fiebre amarilla?: La Fundación Rockefeller en México (1911-1924)* (Guadalajara: Universidad de Guadalajara, 1997); Paul S. Sutter, "Nature's Agents or Agents of Empire? Entomological Workers and Environmental Change during the Construction of the Panama Canal," *Isis* 98, no. 4 (2007).

4. William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, 2nd ed. (New York: Dell Pub. Co., 1972); Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967); Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, *Dependencia y desarrollo en América Latina; ensayo de interpretación sociológica*, [1. ed. (México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1969); Andre Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America: Historical Studies of Chile and Brazil* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967).

The idea of North American imperialism has been recently analyzed under new perspectives influenced by cultural history. Seeing the encounter between the United States and the world as more than the history of a relation between conquerors and subordinates or exploiters and victims, recent work has begun to look at the many levels that characterized these encounters and the active role that different sectors of society played in them. In the Latin American case, North America's imperialism could also be labeled as 'imperialism by invitation' because many Latin Americans welcomed the United States' growing presence in the region in the twentieth century. To be sure, the relations between North and Latin Americans were unbalanced and North Americans often obtained a better gain. However, Latin Americans also had their own agendas and used this relationship for their own benefit. Likewise, it is important to understand that North America's expansionist policy had a strong influence not only on the culture of those places with strong North American intervention, but also on the national culture of the United States, in which imperialism has gone unrecognized as a way of life. At the same time that the United States expanded its influence over the world, North American culture changed within its own political frontiers. In this way, North American imperialism has not been exclusively economic, but has influenced and has been influenced by other factors such as education, consumption culture and science.<sup>5</sup>

American imperialism differs from the more commonly studied forms of European imperialism in that it never attempted to establish formal colonies. While European empires were characterized by having formal administrators in their colonial possessions in Africa and Asia with the power to regulate internal affairs, the United States never desired a direct form of control over its Latin American neighbors. On the contrary, many North Americans in the twentieth century openly rejected any form of straight colonialism. However, a lack of colonial administrators or the desire to formally control the lives of

5. Gilbert Joseph, Catherine LeGrand, and Ricardo Donato Salvatore, eds., *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease, eds., *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993); Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Ricardo Donato Salvatore, ed., *Culturas imperiales: experiencia y representación en América, Asia y África* (Rosario, Argentina: Beatriz Viterbo, 2005); Ann Laura Stoler, ed., *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). The idea that empires were not coherent units when they began their expansion policies and were in fact shaped in many ways by the imperial experience had its origins in scholarship on European imperialism, Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

populations overseas did not mean that the United States did not develop a wide expansionist project over Latin America in the twentieth century. Through military interventions, bank loans, presence of corporations, cultural exchange, multilateral cooperation, among many others, the United States developed the power to constantly influence the fate of Latin Americans. In this way, this work understands American imperialism as the many situations in which the United States used its growing economic, social, and cultural presence in Latin America to create power relations that leaned heavily on the American side in detriment of Latin American interests.

In the realm of science, the growing presence that the United States acquired during the twentieth century in Colombia was reflected in the relationships between North American and Colombian naturalists. Colombian scientists often turned their eyes towards the North to follow closely the scientific work carried out in the United States. Although Colombian science developed a dynamic of its own with specific interests at hand, naturalists constantly resorted to the work, libraries, universities, and museums in the United States to focus their studies. Colombian academics tried hard to gain recognition among their North American colleagues and not only welcomed them when they carried out expeditions on Colombian territory, but also gave them a privileged position in their careers. Colombians constantly invited North Americans into their everyday scientific practices, creating hierarchies that from the beginning gave North Americans a position of power. North American naturalists happily encouraged their relationship with Colombians. They saw in their colleagues a point of support to obtain scientific recognition. Colombia presented great potential in the study of natural history studies and only with the local knowledge that Colombians gave them, were they able to appropriate Colombian nature. Of course, even if the balance of power leaned to the North American side, Colombians gained much from this informal imperial relation, especially because they acquired privileged positions within Colombia's scientific community and society. In other words, North America's influence in Latin America should be studied taking into account the local contexts in which these relations were possible. Although Latin American history was influenced by North American presence, it was not determined by it.<sup>6</sup>

This book pays special attention to the role of nationalism and state formation to understand the perception of nature in Colombia. In the first decades of the twentieth century different efforts, both private and state-funded, emerged in this

6. Some well-researched books that include cultural perspectives in their approach to U.S.-Latin America relations include: Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940*; Louis A. Pérez, *Cuba and the United States: Ties of Singular Intimacy* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990); Louis A. Pérez, *The War of 1898: the United States and Cuba in History and Historiography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

country to comprehend its natural world. These efforts materialized in a time of a strong national pride in Latin America in general. Rulers in countries like Brazil, Mexico and Colombia embraced nationalist policies seeking to strengthen their nations by creating a sense of common identity among its peoples. They put a lot of effort on defining their national identity based on the value of local folklore, arts, popular idiosyncrasies and native cultures. Historians have given important attention to the relation between nation formation and cultural politics in these countries,<sup>7</sup> and in recent years scholars have started to study the place of nature in Latin American nation-building processes.<sup>8</sup> This book is indebted in many ways to these literatures. I try to trace how during the first half of the twentieth century nature slowly became a national treasure in Colombia. Birds, as well as plants and animals in general, became as important as the indigenous past or popular folklore in defining what it meant to be Colombian.

However, the main argument I would like to convey to the reader is that historians of science and historians in general still need to understand the way in which nationalism and imperialism interact with each other. In my case in particular, I will study the ways in which the formation of the Colombian nation interacted with and was influenced by U.S. imperialism during the first decades of the twentieth century. After all, it was in part thanks to the vast studies that several ornithologists in the United States carried out in the first half of the twentieth century that many Colombians felt—and still feel—patriotic about the number of birds in their country. Likewise, it was partly thanks to the interventions of some bird conservationists in the United States, and their

7. See: Catalina Muñoz, “To Colombianize Colombia: Cultural Politics, Modernization and Nationalism in Colombia, 1930-1946” (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2009); Renán Silva, *República liberal, intelectuales y cultura popular* (Medellín: La Carreta Editores, 2005); Mary K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930-1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997); Mary K. Vaughan and Stephen E. Lewis, eds., *The Eagle and the Virgin: Nation and Cultural Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Daryle Williams, *Culture Wars in Brazil: the First Vargas Regime, 1930-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).

8. One important example can be found in Stuart McCook who studied plants and the way in which scientists tried to include them as important actors in the consolidation of Latin American nations. McCook’s work was pioneer in our understanding of the way in which some Latin American countries gave plants a civil status in their societies. See: McCook, *States of Nature: Science, Agriculture, and Environment in the Spanish Caribbean, 1760-1940*. Other important examples include: Seth Garfield, “A Nationalist Environment: Indians, Nature, and the Construction of the Xingu National Park in Brazil,” *Luso-Brazilian Review* 41, no. 1 (2004); Regina Horta Duarte, “Pássaros e cientistas no Brasil: Em busca de proteção, 1894-1938,” *Latin American Research Review* 41, no. 1 (2006); Vanderlei Sebastião de Souza, “Arthur Neiva e a ‘questão nacional’ nos anos 1910 e 1920,” *Hist. cienc. saude-Manguinhos* 16 (2009); Matthew Vitz, “Revolutionary Environments: The Politics of Nature and Space in the Valley of Mexico, 1890-1940s” (Ph. D. diss., New York University, 2010).

fruitful relations with Colombian naturalists, that Colombia's government implemented some of the first laws regarding wildlife nature conservation in the country and created the first national parks, a landmark in placing Colombia in the international arena as one of the most biodiverse countries in the world. Latin American nationalist movements of the first half of the twentieth century are often studied as a counteraction and opposition to foreign influence, particularly American expansionism. Moreover, Latin American nationalisms throughout the twentieth century are frequently related to anti-imperialist and anti-American movements.<sup>9</sup>

Nonetheless, we need to ask in which ways did U.S. imperialism complement or help shape Latin American nationalisms and vice versa. By studying the way in which North Americans and Colombians perceived Colombian birds and nature in the first decades of the twentieth century, we can see a more complex perspective. I argue that U.S. scientific imperialism, represented here by the powerful and privileged position that American naturalists had in the study of Colombian avifauna, complemented and was complemented by the strong desire of Colombian naturalists to include nature as an important part of the Colombian nation. Although the relationship between Colombians and Americans was unbalanced and clearly leaned towards the American side, the interaction served interests on both sides.<sup>10</sup> In the end, if we continue to see Colombian nationalism—and Latin American nationalisms in general—and U.S. imperialism as conflicting processes we will be overlooking important historical dynamics.

I want to finish this introduction with one final idea. By focusing on birds—and the ways in which birds and bird skins flowed back and forth between the United States and Colombia—as the main axis that guides this book, I owe a big debt to the lessons of commodity history. I build on the efforts of many scholars like Arjun Appadurai, Sidney Mintz, Paul Gootenberg and others. Instead of focusing on specific regions or human characters, these scholars have shown that following objects in their travels from one place to another as well as in time—following “things in motion” as Appadurai aptly puts it—reveals a

9. Some important studies have started to ask about the emergence of nationalisms in relation to foreign investment and international dynamics. See: Julio Moreno, *Yankee Don't Go Home!: Mexican Nationalism, American Business Culture, and the Shaping of Modern Mexico, 1920-1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, *Mexico at the World's Fairs: Crafting a Modern Nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

10. In this way bird specimens became what Susan Leigh Starr and James Griesemer termed “boundary objects,” that is, scientific objects that ease the intersection of different social worlds. In this case, Colombian birds united American and Colombian naturalists despite having different interests and incentives. See: Susan Leigh Star and James R. Griesemer, “Institutional Ecology, ‘Translations’ and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley’s Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907-1939,” *Social Studies of Science* 19, no. 3 (1989).

great deal about the different cultures that encounter them, how these cultures interact with each other, and how the perceptions and constructions of these objects in one culture can alter their place in another.<sup>11</sup>

This book builds on the idea that the histories and biographies of scientific objects can help us articulate histories of different places and cultures over longer periods of time.<sup>12</sup> As historians of science, especially those that look at science with an international or transnational approach, we are fascinated by the way in which scientific ideas and scientists move from one place to another. However, we have largely overlooked the way in which scientific objects flow from region to region and from continent to continent. Objects can tell us much about the way in which scientists interact with each other and present a fertile approach to study global scientific relations. The transfer of plants, animals, chemicals, telescopes, microscopes, to name just a few, can tell us much about power relations involved in international science.<sup>13</sup> In the case of this book, the vast flow of birds to museums of natural history in the United States, and on a smaller scale to Colombian institutions, can tell us much about the scientific traditions in each country.<sup>14</sup>

11. Studies on commodity history are too numerous to mention here. Some important examples include: Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Paul Gootenberg, ed., *Cocaine: Global Histories* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986); John Soluri, *Banana Cultures: Agriculture, Consumption, and Environmental Change in Honduras and the United States* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005).

12. James Secord has recently argued that looking and analyzing knowledge and things in transit can help us find a solution to the overspecialization that has taken over the history of science as a discipline. See: James A. Secord, "Knowledge in Transit," *Isis* 95, no. 4 (2004): 665. For a well crafted collection of essays in biographies of scientific objects see: Lorraine Daston, ed., *Biographies of Scientific Objects* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

13. The trade of plants and its relation to botanical practices is an important exception in the study of the movement of scientific objects, especially in the last decade. See: Mauricio Nieto Olarte, *Remedios para el imperio: Historia natural y la apropiación del Nuevo Mundo* (Bogotá, Colombia: Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia, 2000); Londa L. Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); Londa L. Schiebinger and Claudia Swan, eds., *Colonial Botany: Science, Commerce, and Politics in the Early Modern World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

14. A recent reflection on the place of material culture and history in museums is: Samuel J. M. M. Alberti, "Objects and the Museum," *Isis* 96, no. 4 (2005). Case studies about the role of imperial and international factors in museums include: Alice L. Conklin, "Civil Society, Science, and Empire in Late Republican France: The Foundation of Paris's Museum of Man," in *Science and Civil Society*, ed. Lynn K. Nyhart and Thomas Hoyt Broman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Maria Margaret Lopes and Irina Podgorny, "The Shaping of Latin American Museums of Natural History, 1850-1990," in *Nature and Empire: Science and the Colonial Enterprise*, ed. Roy M. MacLeod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

The idea, then, is to analyze the ‘social life of the birds of Colombia.’ From the early commerce of feathers for the millinery industry, to the rise of wildlife conservation in Latin America, and through the enormous efforts that North American and Colombian naturalists and collectors made to understand Colombia’s diverse avifauna, Colombian birds have acquired very different meanings and have been perceived in different ways by different cultures, in different places, and at different times in history.



*Millinery Trade Review* 1, No. 12 (1876): 1.

# 1

## Commodities and Fashion Objects

AT THE END of the nineteenth century an enormous international trade of birds and feathers flourished, driven by new fashion trends in Europe and the United States. Adorning one's head with the plumage, and sometimes whole bodies of birds, became the vogue of upper and middle-class women. Thousands of bird skins from places as different as New Guinea, India or South America were sent each year to milliners in New York, London and Paris to supply this latest craze. The trade became a publicly debated subject. For many men and women in Europe and the United States, the demand raised the possibility that many bird species would soon go extinct unless a halt was put to the hunting of fashionable feathers. Others believed that birds were so abundant that no influence of man could ever decimate their numbers. In 1891, for example, Adolphe Boucard, a French naturalist and an avid commercial bird dealer, wrote:

What are about one million or two millions of birds sent annually to Europe; chiefly from Brazil, Trinidad, Colombia, South America, and from India, against such number of birds as Nature can boast of. Even supposing that the fashion would continue forever, it is my opinion that certain species of birds are so common that it would take hundreds of years before exhausting them.<sup>1</sup>

Boucard's optimistic perspective, shared by many, soon changed. Within twenty years after Boucard's text was written, the United States, one of the largest consumers of feathers, prohibited the trade of birds for commercial purposes, siding with conservationists that lobbied strongly to protect their winged friends from possible extinction. Similar measures were also taken a little later by England and France, after which the trade of feathers rapidly declined.

1. Adolphe Boucard, quoted in: Charles A. Kofoid, "A Little Known Ornithological Journal and Its Editor, Adolphe Boucard, 1839-1904," *The Condor* 25, no. 3 (1923): 88.

The story of the feather trade for the millinery industry and the eventual triumph of conservationists is not new to American environmental historians.<sup>2</sup> But the importance of birds in the emergence of conservation has been told exclusively from the perspective of American consumers, conservationists, hunters, and scientists. We have yet to understand how the traffic of birds and its eventual ban was part of an international economy that shaped relationships to nature, not only in the United States, but in countries that supplied the millinery trade. Were conservationist ideas influenced by the situation in other regions around the world? What were the local conditions of the countries in which birds were extracted and what can the feather trade tell us about their changing valuation of nature? This chapter argues that the international commodification of birds and the growing demand for feathers in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century in Europe and the United States, not only influenced the rise of nature conservation in North America, but had a direct effect on ecology and the social relations of many Colombians at the time.

To analyze these problems it is useful to frame this work in the lessons provided by commodity history. There is little question that the study of commodities has transformed our views of history. Historical interest in commodities has expanded beyond the frame of political economy found in more traditional Marxist approaches to consider commodities as a vehicle for integrating materialist and cultural approaches to environmental history and the history of science.<sup>3</sup> Commodities have also become an important means for pursuing transnational and world history. Studying sugar, bananas or cocaine as important actors, instead of just as simple economic components, has given us the chance to understand how changing tastes and increase in demand for

2. Robin W. Doughty, *Feather Fashions and Bird Preservation: A Study in Nature Protection* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975); Frank Graham and Carl W. Buchheister, *The Audubon Ark: A History of the National Audubon Society*, 1st University of Texas Press ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992); Joseph Kastner, "Long Before Furs, It was Feathers that Stirred Reformist Ire," *Smithsonian* 25 (1994); Jennifer Price, *Flight Maps: Adventures with Nature in Modern America* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

3. Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Wim M. J. van Binsbergen and Peter Geschiere, eds., *Commodification: Things, Agency, and Identities: (The Social Life of Things Revisited)* (Münster: Lit, 2005). The literature on specific commodities is extensive. Some examples include: Sophie D. Coe and Michael D. Coe, *The True History of Chocolate* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996); Mark Kurlansky, *Salt: A World History* (New York: Walker and Co., 2002); Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise: A Social History of Spices, Stimulants, and Intoxicants* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993). Recent work in environmental history and the history of science has complemented this perspective, see: Harold John Cook, *Matters of Exchange: Commerce, Medicine, and Science in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); John Soluri, *Banana Cultures: Agriculture, Consumption, and Environmental Change in Honduras and the United States* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005).

certain products, or lack of it, affects many lives on both sides of the trade. Latin America in particular has received important attention in this respect. An increasing likeness for sweetness in England throughout the nineteenth century changed the course of many lives back in the Caribbean. The emergence of bananas as the fruit of choice of middle and working classes in the United States and Canada influenced the lives of thousands of people in Latin America.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter builds on this effort by looking at one problem in particular: what happens when the commodity in circulation is not an agricultural product that is in principle a renewable resource, but is an animal that would simply disappear if constantly killed? Exploiting non-renewable resources, especially if it is an animal, has a different historical, geographical and ecological impact than a renewable resource. This was precisely what happened in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when birds from South America—and many other regions in the world—began to be killed and traded to decorate the hats of women in Europe and the United States. If commodity history is trying to bring our attention to the way in which peasants and workers were influenced by the changing tastes of people in northern and more industrialized economies, it is also important to ask how these changing desires have shaped the relationships between people and the environment in the regions where resources were being extracted. Precisely because thousands of North American and European women around the world started using birds and feathers in their hats, birds were turned into profitable commodities involved in a global trade.<sup>5</sup> In this case, the fashion trends in North America and Europe ended up affecting not only the many people involved in the feather trade business, but also the lives of many animals, people, and the environment in which they lived.<sup>6</sup>

I analyze how the commodification of birds in international trade changed the meaning of Colombian birds. From being natural history objects gathered and studied for the sake of classifying the natural world and to understand geographical variation, they turned into fashion objects desired because of

4. The classic work that can still be viewed as one of the foundations of the new commodity history is: Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986). Some of the more recent approaches, especially for their value in the Latin American context are: Marcelo Bucheli, *Bananas and Business: The United Fruit Company in Colombia, 1899-2000* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Paul Gootenberg, ed., *Cocaine: Global Histories* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

5. The increase in the demand for birds and feathers in the United States responded in large part to the rise in circulation of fashion magazines and ladies journals in the second half of the nineteenth century such as the famous *Delineator* or *Harper's Bazaar*. These publications constantly suggested fashion trends based on the style of aristocrats in London and Paris who had included birds and feathers in their accessories since the eighteenth century.

6. For a recent study of the place of Brazil in the feather trade see: Helmut Schindler, "Feathers in Fashion," *História, Ciências, Saúde-Manguinhos* 8, no. suppl (2001).

their rarity and beauty. The chapter will also look at the rise of conservation in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century, arguing that it did not only emerge from domestic events but also needs to be understood taking into account an international context. The international trade of birds as commodities influenced the vision that North Americans developed about preserving their own natural resources. Perceptions of nature conservation, however, were different in Colombia. As Colombia's natural resources, such as birds, became highly commodified, nature was often valued solely for its monetary significance. I will also argue, then, that in order to understand the rise and fall of the bird trade for the millinery industry, the local conditions of the region where most birds were hunted—a peripheral region in a highly centralized country—need to be addressed.

### Natural History Collections: The Birds of Colombia Travel to Europe

During the first half of the nineteenth century one of the main goals of ornithological practice in Europe was the classification and creation of bird lists. The Linnaean tradition of the eighteenth century that attempted to organize the natural world prevailed well into the nineteenth century as naturalists, often in the service of empire, attempted to gather the entirety of nature's specimens across the globe. Museums, central warehouses of these vast natural history collections, were rapidly becoming centers of taxonomic research.<sup>7</sup> Collections of birds, of course, were not of a local character only. In a world characterized by imperialism, European naturalists constantly received specimens from distant and not-so-distant lands. From the Middle East, South America, or just the outskirts of London, collections of birds gathered by commercial collectors were constantly received with much interest by ornithologists all over Europe.

Colombia was one among many countries in the world that furnished the specimens upon which Europe built its scientific collections of birds. Records of birds gathered by European collectors in Colombian territory date to the early 1830s, described by French natural historians in the *Jardin des Plantes* in Paris. The Baron Nöel Frédéric Armand André de Lafresnaye (1783-1861), a French ornithologist and avid bird collector, was probably the first person to describe a list of birds from this country in the *Revue Zoologique*. During the

7. For studies on the role of large natural history collections in museums see: Paul Lawrence Farber, "The Development of Taxidermy and the History of Ornithology," *Isis* 68 (1977); Ronald Rainger, *An Agenda for Antiquity: Henry Fairfield Osborn & Vertebrate Paleontology at the American Museum of Natural History, 1890-1935, History of American science and technology series* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1991); Mary P. Winsor, *Reading the Shape of Nature: Comparative Zoology at the Agassiz Museum* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

1830s, Lafresnaye continued to report other species from Colombia that were new to science. In 1844, Prince Charles Lucien Bonaparte, nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte, presented a catalogue of thirty-eight species from Bogotá, the capital of Colombia, in a meeting of savants in Milan, based on a collection of birds received by Marchese Orazio Antinori.<sup>8</sup>

However, Philip Lutley Sclater (1829-1913) was the first to recognize and publicize the importance of Colombia as a country with a sizeable number and variety of bird species and its potential for ornithological study. Sclater, founder of *The Ibis*, England's most important ornithological periodical and the official journal of the British Ornithologists Union, became in mid-nineteenth century one of the most recognized ornithologists in England. For more than forty years, he also served as the secretary of the Zoological Society of London. In 1855 he published a piece in the *Proceedings of the Zoological Society* with the title "On the birds received in Collections from Santa Fe di Bogota." Sclater suggested that more than 435 bird species existed in Colombia. It was a remarkable figure; no other country in the world could boast such a wealth of avifauna.<sup>9</sup>

Sclater's article offers a window into many of the themes that fascinated ornithologists and bird watchers at the time. For example, counting the number of bird species in specific regions or countries had particular importance. Understanding which species of birds were common to different countries, as well as how many birds were endemic to specific regions, became part of a larger trend to understand geographical variation. The work of Charles Darwin and Alfred Russell Wallace helped to focus attention on the importance of geographical distribution in reaching new conclusions about the natural world, and Sclater was a clear supporter of this vision. Understanding why some regions had more species diversity than others was rapidly emerging as an important question in natural history.<sup>10</sup>

Sclater pointed out that the 435 species he identified were by no means the total number of bird species in Colombia. "The list, though large, is, I must own, very incomplete... Were the catalogue perfect or nearly so, the number contained would be much greater, amounting, I should say, to upwards of 700

8. For brief but relevant information on the importance of both Lafresnaye and Bonaparte see: Bo Beolens and Michael Watkins, *Whose Bird? Common Bird Names and the People They Commemorate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 59, 197.

9. Philip Lutley Sclater, "On the Birds Received in Collections from Santa Fe di Bogota," *Proceedings of the Zoological Society* 23 (1855).

10. Charles Darwin, *Journal of Researches into the Natural History and Geology of the Countries Visited During the Voyage of H.M.S. Beagle Round the World: Under the Command of Capt. Fitz Roy*, 2nd ed. (London: J. Murray, 1845); Alfred Russel Wallace, "On the Law which has Regulated the Introduction of New Species," *Annals and Magazine of Natural History* 16 (1855); Alfred Russel Wallace, "On the Monkeys of the Amazon," *Proceedings of the Zoological Society* 20 (1852).

at least. My object in promulgating it thus crude is to start a foundation upon which a more perfect work may be established.”<sup>11</sup> According to the reports of the European collectors, Sclater explained that all the birds received from Colombia were gathered in or around Bogotá, probably no more than a 100 mile radius outside of the city. “If this is really the case,” Sclater revealed, “the number of different species occurring within so limited a range would appear truly marvelous.”<sup>12</sup> By 1857 Sclater’s number had already climbed to 510 species.<sup>13</sup> The sheer abundance of bird species in Colombia captured the attention of ornithologists in Europe, the United States, and Colombia throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

No nearby country could boast the number of bird species concentrated in Colombia. According to Sclater, Robert Hermann Schomburgk reported 420 bird species for Guiana; Prince Maximilian counted 362 birds for south-east Brazil; Johann Jacob von Tschudi documented 460 species in Perú; and Félix Manuel de Azara identified 448 species in Paraguay. “It is somewhat remarkable”, Sclater explained “that from so limited a district a list in many respects so deficient should contain as many as 435 species, and it would seem without doubt to indicate that this region is extraordinarily rich in ornithic life.”<sup>14</sup> The question of why such a small region could contain so many bird species puzzled Sclater. He speculated that the great variety of elevations in the country might account for the phenomenal species diversity.<sup>15</sup>

Sclater’s views on species distribution and abundance were influenced by the wider currents in nineteenth-century biogeography. Naturalists started asking questions about zoological divisions in relation to certain geographical areas. Why did some animals not exist outside certain regions? How were geographical boundaries established in the natural world? Mountainous environments were particularly interesting since different animal and plant species were found at different altitudes within the same mountain. Ever since Alexander von Humboldt climbed mount Chimborazo, in Ecuador, and suggested that the change in climate and vegetation of a mountain in the tropical region according to altitude was similar to the change of climate and vegetation according to latitude north and south of the equator, naturalists continued studying the

11. Sclater, “On the Birds Received in Collections from Santa Fe di Bogota,” 131.

12. Sclater, “On the Birds Received in Collections from Santa Fe di Bogota.”

13. Philip Lutley Sclater, “Further Additions to the List of Birds Received in Collections from Bogota,” *Proceedings of the Zoological Society* 25 (1857).

14. Sclater, “On the Birds Received in Collections from Santa Fe di Bogota,” 132.

15. Comparing Colombia’s richness in terms of avifauna with other regions and countries of the world became a central part of the study of ornithologists interested in the region, especially during the twentieth century. For a detailed study on the importance of numbers see chapter 4 of this book.

effects of altitude on the variation of animal and plant life.<sup>16</sup> Sclater's interest in Colombia's bird life responded to this desire to understand the great diversity of wildlife in Colombia's mountains.

Sclater's piece is also a gateway to understand the different ways in which these birds were acquired, collected, and sold in European markets. Sclater revealed that the first birds gathered in Colombia and exported to Paris were sent by a French collector in Bogotá in the early nineteenth century. "Since that time, the natives have been taught the method of preparing skins, and large collections have been constantly imported both into England and France from the same quarter."<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, Sclater explained, "[the skins] are collected by the native Indian hunters in the forests of the New Grenadine Andes, and brought into the capital to be disposed of to the persons who transmit them to Europe."<sup>18</sup> The Colombian trade of birds and feathers for natural history collections started in the 1830s and 1840s and was controlled primarily by European dealers who sold natural history specimens to European collectors and museums. However, European dealers turned this activity into a lucrative economic enterprise in places like Colombia, Brazil, Venezuela and the Caribbean by training locals on the proper ways to hunt and skin all kinds of animals, including birds. It is probable that after the initial years in which Europeans collected and prepared the birds themselves, the locals in each country carried out all the collecting and hunting, while Europeans stayed in Bogotá, Rio or Cayenne as administrators of the business.<sup>19</sup>

16. After 1802, when Humboldt climbed mount Chimborazo, he suggested Alexander von Humboldt, *Personal Narrative of Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of America, During the Years 1799-1804*, 3 vols. (London: H.G. Bohn, 1852).

17. It is not clear whether Sclater uses the term "native" to talk about indigenous people or locals, regardless of their ethnicity. Because of Colombia's history of *mestizaje* (ethnic fusion) it is probable that most feather hunters were *mestizo* rather than indigenous. For a study in Colombian race and ethnicity see: Virginia Gutiérrez de Pineda and Roberto Pineda Giraldo, *Miscegenación y cultura en la Colombia colonial, 1750-1810*, 1. ed., 2 vols. (Santafé de Bogotá, D.C., Colombia: Colciencias: Universidad de los Andes, 1999.)

18. Sclater, "On the Birds Received in Collections from Santa Fe di Bogota," 131.

19. Note that the feather trade in Latin America was not new at this time. Since pre-Hispanic times, indigenous peoples all over Latin America had valued and commercialized feathers for ritual and artistic purposes. During the colonial period, this tradition was taken over by the Spaniards who used the indigenous techniques to create sacred images. See: Alejandra Bravo, *El arte plumaria entre el pasado y el presente* (Cochabamba, Bolivia: Editorial "Los Amigos del Libro", 1999); Santiago Muñoz, "El 'Arte Plumario' y sus múltiples dimensiones de significación. La Misa de San Gregorio, Virreinato de la Nueva España, 1539," *Historia Crítica*, no. 31 (2006); Ruben E. Reina and Kenneth M. Kensinger, *The Gift of Birds: Featherwork of Native South American Peoples*, University Museum monograph; 75 (Philadelphia, PA: University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania, 1991).

Commercial collecting of natural history specimens went well beyond supplying the needs of a closed circle of natural historians. Natural history objects became a fashionable part of European society. From home decorations, to cabinets of curiosities, to private natural history collections, nature became part of the culture of consumption and trade that occupied the life of European elites. The collection and trade of specimens, especially if they came from rare and exotic places, became a lucrative business at the time. Commercial collecting was not a rare activity and even naturalists that would gain important prominence in the nineteenth century, like Alfred Russell Wallace, started their careers by selling animals in Europe from distant places like South America and Southeast Asia.<sup>20</sup>

In the mid-nineteenth century, most Colombian birds were obtained by simple monetary acquisition. European or local hunters collected the birds as raw materials and sold them to European museums or natural historians, among others, who converted these birds into classified species. Birds, just like other raw materials, were extracted and later sold to European markets. This form of trade reflected the strong and enduring economic links between Europe and South America, despite the fact that Colombia, like the rest of South America, gained its political independence from Spanish rule in the early nineteenth century. At the end of the colonial period, Colombia—or New Granada as it was known—had an economy that relied upon the export of raw materials to Spain in exchange for a great number of imported manufactured products. After independence, Colombian elites turned away from Spain as their main commercial partner.

Nevertheless, since the country still needed a market for its natural resources as well as a provider of manufactured products such as textiles and guns, they turned their attention to France and England as new economic partners. Breaking the colonial legacy proved to be much harder than initially expected. Colombia had no choice but to go from one European market to the next in order to preserve its financial well-being. By the mid nineteenth century direct trade with England and France became the rule, a situation that remained practically unchanged throughout the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>21</sup> Birds proved to be just one of the many commodities that Colombia opened to foreign commerce at the time. But the export of birds initially paled in

20. Jane Camerini, “Wallace in the Field,” in *Science in the Field*, ed. Robert Kohler and Henrika Kuklick, *Osiris* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 44–65.

21. Jorge Orlando Melo, “La evolución económica de Colombia, 1830-1900,” in *Manual de historia de Colombia* (Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Cultura, 1982); Frank Safford, “Commerce and Enterprise in Central Colombia, 1821-1870.” (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1965); Frank Safford and Marco Palacios, *Colombia: Fragmented Land, Divided Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 163–164.

comparison to coffee, tobacco, and quinine, the staples of Colombia's export trade.<sup>22</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, however, with a new vogue in women's fashion, the value of birds as an export commodity would quickly change.

### Decorating Women's Hats

In the nineteenth century, commercial collecting of nature led to an unexpected turn in the uses that Europeans and Americans found for exotic birds. Starting in the mid-nineteenth century and peaking at the turn of the twentieth century, birds became much more than the curios that adorned private collections or taxonomic specimens that lined the shelves of natural history museums. Birds found their way onto the heads and hats of upper-class women all over Europe and the United States.

The fashion of decorating hats with birds was not confined solely to the second half of the nineteenth century. The French court in the late eighteenth century converted feathers into a fashionable trend among the elite members of European society, a look apparently started by Queen Marie Antoinette, who often used large peacock and ostrich feathers as part of her attire. Although use of birds in hats declined during the first half of the nineteenth century, it never disappeared completely. Nevertheless, a resurgence in trimming hats with birds did occur in the last three decades of the nineteenth century, when the craze for elaborate feathered headdresses, encouraged in part by the fashion suggestions of the home and ladies journals of the time, reached its all time high. Fashionable hats became a common accessory for women. Wings, heads, as well as entire bodies from small and exotic birds could be found decorating the heads of upper and middle class women in Europe and the United States.<sup>23</sup>

In 1886 Frank Chapman (1864-1945), an avid bird protector in North America and future curator of birds at the American Museum of Natural History, decided to take two afternoons to walk the streets of New York City in the

22. On coffee and tobacco see: Marco Palacios, *El café en Colombia, 1850-1970: una historia económica, social y política*, 3. ed. (Bogotá: Planeta, 2002); Luis F. Sierra, *El tabaco en la economía colombiana del siglo XIX* (Bogotá: Dirección de Divulgación Cultural, 1971).

23. Some examples can be found in: Aileen Ribeiro and Valerie Cumming, *The Visual History of Costume* (London: Batsford, 1989), 186, 192, 193. For a quick reference on the ways in which hats changed in the last decades of the nineteenth century see: Blanche Payne et al., *The History of Costume: From Ancient Mesopotamia Through the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992). See also: Doughty, *Feather Fashions and Bird Preservation: A Study in Nature Protection*, 82-83.



*Millinery Trade Review* 22, No. 3 (1897): 1.

uptown shopping districts around 14<sup>th</sup> street, trying to identify as many birds as possible in the hats of women. Although many of the birds were unidentifiable because of mutilation, Chapman was able to classify 40 different species perched on the top of women's heads. Chapman counted around 700 hats, of which 542 had feathers on them.<sup>24</sup> Given this high demand, it is not surprising that birds from around the world, as well as the feathers they carried, soon became precious commodities to embellish fashionable hats, especially if they were from rare and exotic specimens. Collecting birds for the millinery trade came to be a lucrative activity for collectors worldwide and became a global enterprise.

Pamela Swadling has recently documented in a beautifully illustrated book how thousands of birds of paradise were shipped from New Guinea during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century for the millinery industry. The beautiful plumage of these birds, a source of admiration for many European explorers and naturalists including Alfred Russell Wallace, became one of the first and favorite trimmings for hats and bonnets in the plume trade.<sup>25</sup> Although among the most expensive and most requested birds, birds of paradise were not the only birds involved in a massive global trade of skins. Before ostrich farms were established in the United States as part of the need to supply raw materials for milliners, ostriches were exported from places like Cape Colony, Morocco, and Egypt.<sup>26</sup>

South America played an important role in this global trade of birds. Colombia, Venezuela, and Brazil were the most important countries in the supply of egrets, the most prized species in the feather trade next to birds of paradise and ostriches. Likewise, South America also exported many of the smaller birds, especially hummingbirds, whose skins became very likable as decorations, particularly in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>27</sup>

In 1917 Frank Chapman estimated that “[since the mid-nineteenth century] thousands, possibly even millions, of birds collected primarily for millinery purposes, have been shipped from Bogota.”<sup>28</sup> We do not know for certain the exact number of birds Colombia traded with Europe and North America, but a look at Colombia’s statistical reports for exports at the turn of the twentieth

24. Frank M. Chapman, “Birds and Bonnets,” *Forest and Stream* 26, no. 5 (1886), 84; Frank M. Chapman, *Autobiography of a Bird-Lover* (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1933), 38–39.

25. Pamela Swadling, *Plumes from Paradise: Trade Cycles in Outer Southeast Asia and Their Impact on New Guinea and Nearby Islands until 1920* (Coorparoo DC, Queensland, Australia: Papua New Guinea National Museum in association with Robert Brown & Associates, 1996), 83–92.

26. Doughty, *Feather Fashions and Bird Preservation: A Study in Nature Protection*, 4–5.

27. Doughty, *Feather Fashions and Bird Preservation: A Study in Nature Protection*.

28. Frank M. Chapman, “The Distribution of Bird-Life in Colombia: A Contribution to a Biological Survey of South America,” *Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History* 36 (1917), 11.

century suggest that Chapman could have been right.<sup>29</sup> What is clear is that bird skins became valuable commodities in comparison to other exports of the time. While the average price of coffee around 1870 was \$0.15 per kilogram, stuffed animals averaged \$2.97 per kilogram. In 1899 the average price of bird skins was \$4.8 pesos/kg, well above the going price of \$0.24 pesos/kg for coffee in the same port in the same year.<sup>30</sup> The fact that wealthy women were willing to pay high prices to obtain rare feathers from distant places drastically increased the economic value of birds for most of the last third of the nineteenth century, well beyond the price natural history objects had before the rise of this new fashion trend.

### The Rise of Conservation

The boom in the feather trade found an unexpected but strong opposition in the United States at the turn of the century. The last decades of the nineteenth century witnessed a strong change in the way North Americans approached the uses and abuses of nature. The stories of the bison and the passenger pigeon, two species that after being overly abundant were close to extinction after massive and uncontrolled hunting, led many North Americans to reconsider their policies regarding wildlife preservation. At the same time, the formation of Yosemite in California as a natural reserve in 1864, and the creation of Yellowstone as the first national park in history in 1872, reflected a changing awareness in nature protection in the United States.<sup>31</sup>

The massive numbers of birds that were killed each year in order to satisfy the demand for the millinery industry became another important factor that unified many people around the growing cause of conservation.<sup>32</sup> North American women played an important role in the emergence of this movement. Although many women were in part responsible for promoting and sustaining the trade of birds for millinery purposes, other women promoted awareness of

29. Dirección Nacional de Estadística, *Estadística de Colombia* (Bogotá: Imprenta de Medardo Rivas, 1876), 21-28.

30. Francisco de P. Monsalve, *Revista Mercantil* (Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional, 1902), 44.

31. For excellent and critical accounts on the changing perceptions of nature in the American context at the time see: William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1995).

32. Doughty, *Feather Fashions and Bird Preservation: A Study in Nature Protection*; Graham and Buchheister, *The Audubon Ark: A History of the National Audubon Society*; Kastner, "Long Before Furs, it was Feathers that Stirred Reformist Ire."; Oliver H. Orr, *Saving American Birds: T. Gilbert Pearson and the Founding of the Audubon Movement* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1992).

the cruelties involved in this practice. Women created and organized most of the Audubon Societies that appeared in the late nineteenth century, which were later joined under the flag of the National Association of Audubon Societies, one of the most influential organizations in the promotion of laws that banned the killing of birds for millinery purposes.<sup>33</sup>

The Audubon Societies, especially through *Bird-lore*—the official journal of the Societies founded by Frank Chapman—attempted to raise awareness among women of the cruelties involved in the plume trade. They also emphasized the important international dimensions of the slaughter of birds for the millinery trade. Chapman saw the problem of bird conservation extending well beyond the borders of the United States. It was precisely overseas where most birds were killed and little was done to protect them. In response to the push by conservationists to shut down the importation of feathers, milliners argued that most birds were not harmed during the process. Making reference to the egret feathers, most of which came from South America, milliners argued that the plumes were usually gathered from the ground. According to milliners, large egret farms had been established in countries like Venezuela solely for the purpose of collecting feathers for the millinery trade. No birds, they insisted, were killed on these large egret farms.

Many conservationists in the United States argued that this was a fallacy and a tactic to divert attention away from the wholesale slaughter of birds implicated in the millinery trade. In an article published in *Bird-lore* with the title “The egret hunters of Venezuela”, George Cherrie, a North American naturalist, explorer, and a good friend of Frank Chapman, described his experiences during an expedition to the Apure River, in the heart of the Venezuelan plains, close to the border with Colombia. Cherrie explained how “concerning the egret farms said to be established in Venezuela, the only farming of the kind I saw or heard of was of the same character as the numerous parrot farms I observed! In nearly every native house one sees from one to half a dozen parrots, and it is also not uncommon to see two or three egrets picketed in front of a rancho.”<sup>34</sup> Cherrie refuted the myth that large farms had been established and concluded his piece by arguing that due to over hunting, the egrets had become very rare in the region to the point where it stopped being profitable to hunt them.

Many collectors involved in the hunting of egrets for the millinery business in the last decades of the nineteenth century decided to side with conservationists, presenting their own stories and experiences as proof of the carnage involved in the business. In *Our Vanishing Wildlife: Its Extermination*

33. Price, *Flight Maps: Adventures with Nature in Modern America*.

34. George Cherrie, “The Egret Hunters of Venezuela,” *Bird-lore* 2, no. 2 (1900), 51.

*and Preservation*, a very influential book published in 1913 and now considered one of the foundational texts in North America's conservation movement, William Temple Hornaday included the testimony of A. H. Meyer as an important example of a collector-turned-preservationist.<sup>35</sup> Meyer, an ex-plume hunter who worked for many years in Venezuela and Colombia, presented his testimony in 1911 before the Legislature of the State of New York as part of an effort by the National Association of Audubon Societies to regulate the feather trade. Trying to refute the idea that egret farms had been established in South America where no harm was done to birds in the process of plume gathering, Meyer explained, "My work led me to every part of Venezuela and Colombia where these birds are to be found, and I have never yet found or heard of any *garceros*<sup>36</sup> that were guarded for the purpose of simply gathering the feathers from the ground. No such conditions exist in Venezuela. The story is absolutely without foundation, in my opinion, and has simply been put forward for commercial purposes."<sup>37</sup>

Meyer then explained how "the natives of the country, who do virtually all of the hunting for feathers, are not provident in their nature, and their practices are of a most cruel and brutal nature. I have seen them frequently pull the plumes from wounded birds, leaving the crippled birds to die of starvation, unable to respond to the cries of their young in the nests above, which were calling for food."<sup>38</sup> Meyer, more than accepting his activities as cruel and his role in the business, used the figure of the locals as the cruel people, presenting himself as an innocent person that had no clear knowledge of how the trade worked during his years as collector. In this way he legitimized the view of North Americans as more civilized people, in comparison to the more brutal Latin Americans. It was the locals who were to blame for the barbarities of the bird trade. Meyer thus left his reputation intact, while defending the conservationists' cause.

Meyer concluded his testimony by explaining that of the ninety two pounds of heron feathers that he and his associates sent in a year from South America, only five of them were from feathers gathered from the ground. "The plume-birds have been nearly exterminated in the United States and Mexico, and the same condition of affairs will soon exist in tropical America."<sup>39</sup>

Not all collectors, however, agreed with the conservationist perspective. Adolphe Boucard (1839-1904), a French ornithologist, naturalist and bird

35. William T. Hornaday, *Our Vanishing Wild Life: Its Extermination and its Preservation* (New York: New York Zoological Society, 1913).

36. Large forest regions where egrets nested.

37. Hornaday, *Our Vanishing Wild Life: Its Extermination and its Preservation*, 130.

38. Hornaday, *Our Vanishing Wild Life: Its Extermination and its Preservation*.

39. Hornaday, *Our Vanishing Wild Life: Its Extermination and its Preservation*, 131.

collector ardently defended the hunting of birds for the millinery trade.<sup>40</sup> Boucard began his career as a natural history collector in the 1850s near San Francisco. Later on, after the 1860s, he moved south and conducted several collecting expeditions in Mexico and Central and South America. He managed his business from Paris until the 1890s when he moved to London, where he continued to trade natural history specimens, particularly birds. Boucard is now remembered in the ornithological community as the discoverer of new species of humming birds, and many collections both in the United States and Europe hold many specimens of these little birds thanks to him.

Boucard had little problem with the killing and collecting of birds to decorate women's hats. In the first issue of *The Humming Bird*, a journal he published between 1891 and 1895, he argued that there was no need to protect birds around the world.

It appears that a severe battle has been fought lately against the wearing of beautiful humming birds, and bright birds in general, from sympathy to the poor Innocents... I must say a few words to the general public, and especially to the fair sex of both worlds, to explain that it will make very little difference to the wingy tribes, if Ladies condemn themselves in not wearing as adorns to their perfections the most brilliant jewels of Creation, such as Humming Birds, blue Creepers, bright Tanagers, wonderful Trogons, and Birds of Paradise, etc., etc., which enhance so harmoniously with their charms.<sup>41</sup>

Boucard continued to explain that in the forty years he had been a naturalist, he had seen thousands and thousands of birds in his travels around North and South America. In Mexico, for example, he witnessed an invasion of swallows that had ruined a sugar-cane plantation, which belonged to a friend. And, an overwhelming number of hummingbirds could be found in Central and South America. Furthermore, he argued, if women stopped wearing birds as ornaments, these small birds would become food for birds of prey and other animals. Boucard concluded his piece with an estimate of the number of bird skins that were exported each year: Colombia exported around 200,000; Brazil and Trinidad 300,000; Mexico and Central and South America 100,000; Japan 100,000; India 200,000; Africa 100,000; and Europe 500,000. The overall

40. See: Kofoid, "A Little Known Ornithological Journal and Its Editor, Adolphe Boucard, 1839-1904." Another brief reference on Boucard can be found in: Barbara Mearns and Richard Mearns, *The Bird Collectors* (San Diego: Academic Press, 1998), 301

41. Boucard, Adolphe quoted in: Kofoid, "A Little Known Ornithological Journal and Its Editor, Adolphe Boucard, 1839-1904.", 87-88.

total was 1,500,000, which was nowhere near the 100,000,000 birds Boucard estimated were killed each year for eating purposes.<sup>42</sup>

At the turn of the twentieth century, the debate between conservationists and milliners reached its peak. Milliners not only argued that their practices were not damaging to birds, but also that they shared the love for nature that was prominent among preservationists across the nation. For many years, the *Millinery Trade Review* featured a display of birds in nature on its cover that could have easily been on the front page of *Bird-lore*. Furthermore, milliners argued that the plume trade was one of the bases of their business and, if prohibited, it would leave many families without an income. When Senator Hoar, for example, introduced into the U.S. Senate one of the first bills to regulate the traffic of feathers for millinery purposes, the editorial of the *Millinery Trade Review* replied:

The task of crushing such a measure will be made more difficult than at the last session, but crushed it must be, and every man or woman connected with the millinery trade must lend his or her aid in connection with that of the Millinery Merchants' Protective Association. His or her living in the seasons to come depends upon the rise or fall of this most iniquitous and childish measure.<sup>43</sup>

Conservationists, however, were determined to ban the plume trade. Thanks to their strong lobbying efforts, the last decades of the nineteenth century and the turn of the twentieth saw the emergence of several laws intended for the protection of birds in North America. In 1886 the American Ornithologists Union Committee on the Protection of Birds drafted the Model Law, a piece of legislation intended to prohibit plume hunting in many states. William Dutcher, one of the associates of the Committee, an avid conservationist, and future chairman of the National Association of Audubon Societies, began a strong lobbying campaign to promote the passing of the Model Law in many states. With the help of T. Gilbert Pearson, one of the most renowned names in American conservation and bird protection, several states had banned the killing of some native birds by the end of the century.<sup>44</sup>

In 1900, just a few years after the first Audubon Societies were formed, the Lacey Act was passed by Congress prohibiting the interstate shipment of

42. Kofoed, "A Little Known Ornithological Journal and Its Editor, Adolphe Boucard, 1839-1904," 88-89.

43. "Trade and Sentiment," *Millinery Trade Review* 25 (1900).

44. For more information on the life of Dutcher and Pearson see: T. S. Palmer, "In Memoriam: William Dutcher," *The Auk* 38, no. 4 (1921); Board of Directors of the National Audubon Society, "In Memoriam: T. Gilbert Pearson," *Audubon Magazine* 42 (1943).

birds that were killed in violation of state laws. The Lacey Act was a starting point to ban the trade, and Audubon Societies continued to press state governments so they would integrate bird protection laws in their legislatures. By 1905, thirty three states had incorporated the Audubon Model Law, or at least a form of it.

However, conservationists felt that the international trade of birds, perhaps the most important part of the business, was still unharmed and continued to lobby with this goal in mind. The first triumph in this direction had to wait until 1910 when William Dutcher, head of the National Association of Audubon Societies, helped to pass a bill in New York that banned the selling of birds throughout the state for commercial purposes. The "Audubon Plumage Law", or the "Audubon Plumage Act" as it came to be known, was seen at the time as a direct hit on the international trade of birds for millinery purposes. Since New York was one of the biggest markets for feathers in the United States, and served as an entry port for the commercialization of birds for hat decoration, the bill considerably reduced the capacity of milliners to continue using plumes as trimmings.<sup>45</sup>

In *Our Vanishing Wildlife*, William Temple Hornaday proudly explained the laws and changes that conservationists around the United States achieved at the turn of the century for the protection of birds. In particular, he argued that the fight against the millinery industry had given results in New York and it was sure to become an example for other cities around the world, particularly London and Paris, which still permitted the trade of birds and feathers for the fashion industry. As he explained, "it is entirely fitting that in this subject [the extermination of birds for millinery purposes] New York should send a message to London. New York is almost a spotless town in plume-free millinery, and London and Paris are the worst places in the world. We have cleaned the house."<sup>46</sup>

The year 1913 finally marked the moment when conservationists thought they had won the battle against the international trade of birds. Lobbying efforts around the country helped establish the Tariff Act,<sup>47</sup> which contained a sub-section that prohibited "the importation of aigrettes, egret plumes or so-called osprey plumes, and the feathers, quills, heads, wings, tails, skins, or parts of skins, of wild birds, either raw or manufactured, and not for scientific or educational purposes."<sup>48</sup> Although the Tariff Act was a much larger document

45. "Senate Passes Bird Bill," *New York Times*, April 22 1910, 3; "Piffling Legislation," *New York Times*, March 26, 1910, 8.

46. Hornaday, *Our Vanishing Wild Life: Its Extermination and its Preservation*, 114.

47. The Tariff Act of 1913 also known as the Revenue Act regulated the tax of many items that were imported to the U.S. It also imposed for the first time the income tax.

48. U.S. Statutes at Large, Vol. 38, Part 1, Chap. 16, 146-52. "Schedule N-Sundries." Sub-section of "An Act to reduce tariff duties and to provide revenue for the Government, and for other purposes." H.R. 3321, Public Act No. 16, 148.

intended to reduce the tariff duties existent at the time, the sub-section that dealt with bird protection was an enormous achievement for the many men and women that had, since the late nineteenth century, tried to ban international commerce of birds and their plumes for the millinery trade. Drafted by Hornaday, the document was the culmination of the lengthy campaign put forward by the National Association of Audubon Societies, with the help of T. Gilbert Pearson and the influence of hundreds of women that created awareness about the cruelties involved in the decorations of women's hats.

Of course, importers and manufacturers rejected this new resolution and sent many statements to the U.S. Senate arguing that their point of view had not been heard. Many people would lose their jobs and form of subsistence if the government agreed to ban the import of plumes. Furthermore, they argued that the birds from which the feathers were taken were prejudicial to agriculture or were used for food, and therefore taking their plumes was not an inhumane act. “[T]he birds whose plumage is now commercially used are either game birds killed for food purposes or are useless and pestiferous birds, noxious to and destructive of agricultural and other interests in the countries of their habitat,” argued E. J. Arribalzaga, a member of the plume industry.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, despite these claims, the law remained untouched. Hornaday, Pearson and their followers had won the battle.

England and France established similar laws in 1917. These measures, combined with changes in women's fashion as well as the advent of World War I, vastly reduced the trade of birds and feathers from Latin America. By 1920 the trade had stopped almost completely.

### A Closer Look at the Colombian Context

Most of the birds that Colombia exported for the millinery industry came from a small, peripheral and poor region called Arauca.<sup>50</sup> Arauca is situated in the Llanos Orientales, in eastern Colombia, bordering with Venezuela. The Llanos is a vast grassland starting in the slopes of the eastern *cordillera* and continuing into Venezuela. Its grassland characteristics were favorable for cattle raising,

49. *Tariff Schedules: Briefs and Statements Filed with the Committee on Finance, United States Senate; Sixty-third Congress, First Session on H.R. 3321*, 3 vols. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1913), 1582.

50. For a detailed study on Arauca and the Llanos region in general see: Jane M. Rausch, *The Llanos Frontier in Colombian History, 1830-1930* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993); a study that analyzes the implications of the República Independiente del Arauca is: Renán Vega Cantor, *Gente muy rebelde: protesta popular y modernización capitalista en Colombia, 1909-1929* (Bogotá: Ediciones Pensamiento Crítico, 2002), v. 3.

around which a cowboy sub-culture, the *llaneros*, was formed. However, its tropical environment presented its inhabitants with many obstacles, including seasonal floods, difficult communications, mosquitoes and diseases, which led to the failure of government efforts in the nineteenth century to encourage migration into the area.<sup>51</sup> The population in the Llanos was so small that by 1910 the town of Arauca, which was the capital of the *Comisaría* de Arauca,<sup>52</sup> had only 500 houses and 3,472 inhabitants.<sup>53</sup> In the early twentieth century Arauca had very little communication with the central government. There was no telegraph line between this region and Bogotá and the mail took forty days from Bogotá to Arauca due to the lack of good roads.<sup>54</sup>

Arauca's case illustrates the high level of centralization that permeated Colombian government at the turn of the twentieth century. At the time, political leaders focused most of their attention and organizational efforts in a small fraction of the national territory. The little infrastructure that the country had was concentrated on an export economy that linked the mountainous regions of the center, including cities like Bogotá and Medellín, with a couple of ports on the Caribbean coast. However, it takes only a minute of looking at a map of Colombia to realize that this region was only a small fraction of Colombia's territory. Colombia is traversed from south to north in its western region by three *cordilleras* or mountain chains that constitute the northern tip of the Andes. Most of Colombia's population lives in these mountainous regions and it is in this region that the most important cities and economic centers are located. To the east are the Llanos Orientales or Eastern Plains (including the Arauca region), and to the south is the Amazon region. Together they amount to 56% of the nation's territory where little more than one percent of the population lives today, isolated in terms of communications.<sup>55</sup> Throughout history Colombia's leaders have often forgotten this very large part of the national territory.

At the turn of the twentieth century many thinkers and leaders legitimized this lack of interest in the frontier regions arguing that Colombia's future rested in the mountainous region. According to them, it was in the temperate climates of the Andes, above 1000 meters over sea level, that one could find civilized

51. See: Rausch, *The Llanos Frontier in Colombian History, 1830-1930*.

52. *Comisarías* were small administrative units of the Colombian territories, established by the government in 1910 to give them different status from the larger *departamentos*. By establishing the *comisarías*, the Executive Power was enabled to support them directly.

53. Jane M. Loy, "Rebellion in the Colombian Llanos: The Arauca Affair of 1917," *The Americas* 34, no. 4 (1978): 509.

54. Loy, "Rebellion in the Colombian Llanos: The Arauca Affair of 1917," 510.

55. Frank Safford and Marco Palacios, *Colombia: país fragmentado, sociedad dividida, su historia* (Bogotá: Editorial Norma, 2002), 16.

people. Due to its proximity to the equator, temperatures in Colombia remain constant throughout the year and variations depend on altitude. The low areas in the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, in the valleys between the *cordilleras*, as well as in the Llanos and Amazon region, are hot and humid with average temperatures over 85 F. For Colombian government leaders seated comfortably in Bogotá, the frontier territories, with hostile environments and extremely warm climates, were savage and untamable places with little prospects for the future.<sup>56</sup>

In a small piece written in 1910 Max Carriazo, a native of Arauca, explained how the Colombian government had completely forgotten the region. Among the many arguments he put forward, the writer mentioned how the official map of Colombia at the time omitted Arauca as part of the national territory. Likewise, there was no military personnel to defend the region, the prisoners often had to be released because there was no money to sustain them, and there was no building for a primary school. Arauca was only remembered when it was time to collect taxes. Furthermore, he argued, "Since the Province is so far away from Bogotá, it is not strange that it is forgotten by Colombian journalists, geographers and legislators, as well as the Administration." He then concluded, "Perhaps Panama with less motives opted for separation."<sup>57</sup>

Carriazo's mention of Panama made reference to 1903, when Panamanian elites, aided by North American interests, declared their independence from Colombia. Contrary to the United States, where the frontier and its colonization became an important part of the North American experience, Colombian leaders never saw the Colombian frontier as important. During the nineteenth century the Colombian state made little efforts to incorporate regions like Panama into the national project, a situation that would remain constant throughout the twentieth century as well.<sup>58</sup> The loss of Panama, at least for some scholars, is still representative of the many ways in which

56. For a collection of essays on frontiers and geography in Colombian thought in the nineteenth century see: Alfonso Múnera, *Fronteras imaginadas. La construcción de las razas y de la geografía en el siglo XIX colombiano* (Bogotá: Editorial Planeta, 2005).

57. Max Carriazo, *Llanos orientales: artículos publicados en el Nuevo Tiempo* (Bogotá: Imprenta del Nuevo Tiempo, 1910), 65–66.

58. The argument of the absence of the state in Colombia in territories away from the important urban centers has often been made by scholars of Colombia. However, it is important to keep in mind that some academics have stressed the pitfalls of this argument pointing out that in some regions, while the state was indeed absent in many respects, it was present in others like raising taxes or military recruitment, and, most important, inhabitants from these far away regions often made efforts to participate in national life. See for example: Malcolm Deas, "La presencia de la política nacional en la vida provinciana, pueblerina y rural de Colombia," in *Del poder y la gramática, y otros ensayos sobre historia, política y literatura colombianas* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Editores, 1993).

Colombian leaders failed to construct a nation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>59</sup>

After the loss of Panama, Colombian leaders became very aware of the possibility that regions far from the capital where the state had little or no presence could try to obtain independence from the central government in Bogotá. Although protests in the years after the loss of Panama occurred in some regions of the country, only one became a truly separatist attempt, even if it only lasted a month: the case of the Independent Republic of Arauca. On December 30, 1916, Humberto Gómez, a cattle farmer of the region who was also involved in trafficking of *garza* feathers, started a revolt to protest Arauca's situation of abandonment. Gómez, supported by other disgruntled *araucanos*, decided to sack the treasury of the city of Arauca and declare Arauca as an independent republic. As soon as the news of the revolt reached Bogotá, the central government sent troops to the region and reclaimed the Arauca province as part of Colombia.<sup>60</sup>

This episode allows us to gain a little more perspective on the nature of the Colombian regions where many birds for the millinery trade were gathered in the early twentieth century. They were for the most part regions far away from Bogotá or any major urban center. Most important, there was little presence from the government and therefore little regulation on the commercial products intended to be sold out of the country. Moreover, for many *araucanos*, Arauca was close to Venezuela in more than geographic proximity. As a frontier town between both countries, it housed people of both nationalities, who freely moved over the border. Since there was little presence of the Colombian state, it was very easy to export goods through Venezuela, thereby averting Colombian taxes. A traveler that visited Arauca in 1890 explained that export products were usually shipped to Ciudad Bolívar, a city in Venezuela, where they were later sent to the European and North American markets as Venezuelan and not Colombian products.<sup>61</sup> It is then probable that a large portion of the birds killed in the region for millinery purposes were reported as Venezuelan exports.

A writer at the time explained that "plume hunting in that region was the most valuable of the periodic industries in which its inhabitants were involved."<sup>62</sup> The great price of egret feathers in international markets led many *araucanos* to hunt these birds as a way to earn a living.

59. Alfonso Múnera, "Panamá: ¿La última frontera?", in *Fronteras Imaginadas: la construcción de las razas y de la geografía colombiana en el siglo XIX colombiano* (Bogotá: Editorial Planeta, 2005).

60. See: Loy, "Rebellion in the Colombian Llanos: The Arauca Affair of 1917," and Vega Cantor, *Gente muy rebelde: protesta popular y modernización capitalista en Colombia, 1909-1929*, 207 ff.

61. Ernesto Camejo, *Breves apuntes sobre Arauca* (Bogotá: Escuelas Gráficas Salesianas, 1940), 41.

62. Carriazo, *Llanos orientales: artículos publicados en el Nuevo Tiempo*, 21.

The hunting for plumes started in the region towards the 1880s, when the demand for egret plumes began to increase in Europe and the United States. Peasants of the region started gathering plumes from the ground in the large cattle *haciendas* where they worked. The landowners of these *haciendas* had little problem in letting their workers pursue this business as a side activity. It involved little profit and for the most part did not affect work in cattle.<sup>63</sup> Plume hunting was carried out between July and October, the flood season in the plains when ranching was not practiced. This period coincided with the time when great herons changed their feathers leaving large numbers of them on the ground.<sup>64</sup>

However, things changed drastically by the last decade of the nineteenth century and the turn of the twentieth, when the same pound of feathers increased its price tenfold. Instead of being a periodic activity for some peasants, it became a large enterprise managed by the elite classes of the region. A large dispute between landowners, merchants, government functionaries, and poachers emerged over the control of the different *garceros*. Likewise, the way in which feathers were collected changed drastically. Instead of gathering feathers from the ground, locals hunted egrets not only on private but also on public lands. As historian Jane Rausch aptly put it, “Lured by the prospect of fast profits, armed men invaded the *garceros* and shot the birds, rather than waiting to collect feathers that [the egrets] moulted naturally.”<sup>65</sup>

However, it was not only the desire to obtain a fast profit that prompted many inhabitants of the region to start killing thousands of egrets each year. Two kinds of egrets were killed: the *garza real* or great egret (*Casmerodius albus* or *Ardea alba*) and the *chumbita* or snowy egret (*Egretta thula thula*). In the case of the great egret, the feathers that were collected from the ground had much less value than those obtained directly from the skin of the bird. The plumes taken from the *garceros* from the ground were considered of second and third class quality, especially because they had probably spent several days in the open. Only those feathers taken right off the dead animals were considered first class. In the case of the snowy egret, the only way of getting their feathers was by killing them, since these birds never changed their plumage.<sup>66</sup>

There is little question that in the last decade of the nineteenth century and first decade of the twentieth century thousands of birds were killed in the plains of Arauca to supply the demands of the millinery trade. From each great egret seventy feathers at most could be obtained with an approximate weight

63. Camejo, *Breves apuntaciones sobre Arauca*.

64. Carriazo, *Llanos orientales: artículos publicados en el Nuevo Tiempo*.

65. Rausch, *The Llanos Frontier in Colombian History, 1830-1930*, 289.

66. Carriazo, *Llanos orientales: artículos publicados en el Nuevo Tiempo*, 21-22.

of seven grams. This meant that around 5,000 feathers were needed to form a pound, or approximately seventy birds. From each snowy egret more feathers could be obtained. However, the feathers were much smaller so many more feathers were needed for each pound. Around 560 snowy egrets were needed for a pound of first class feathers.<sup>67</sup>

The numbers for the Arauca exports in 1908 allow us to get an idea of how important feathers were for the economy of the region in this period. In that year, 7,500 heads of cattle were exported at \$8 pesos each for a total of \$60,000 pesos. The second largest export was egret feathers for a total of \$10,000 pesos. The rest of the exported products amounted to \$14,000 pesos, for a total income of \$84,000 pesos in exports.<sup>68</sup> This means that egret feathers represented 12% of the region's export revenue during the year. Furthermore, it means that egrets were arguably the most valuable commodity in this economy. Unlike cattle, egrets did not demand an investment. A gun, plenty of ammunition and the will to spend hard days in the wilderness was all somebody needed to make a profit from the feather trade.

By the end of the 1910s the trade of egrets stopped almost completely. The prohibition of the feather trade in the United States in 1913, followed by similar measures in England and France, combined with the advent of World War I as well as a changing fashion that was no longer obsessed with birds as decorations in hats, were all contributing factors in the rapid decline of the feather trade. Harvesting egrets as a natural resource paralleled many similar boom-bust cycles experienced by Latin American economies in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. National or regional economies in Latin America tended to concentrate on a single product in high demand by European and U.S. economies, resulting in booms that resulted in a significant flow of foreign currency into Latin American economies. However, when the external market failed for any reason (change in taste, economic depressions, better production methods elsewhere, etc.), local economies also collapsed. This was the case of Arauca and the egret feather boom that climbed exponentially at the turn of the century and collapsed in the 1910s. By the 1920s the inhabitants of Arauca had to turn their attention to other economic activities.<sup>69</sup>

67. Carriazo, *Llanos orientales: artículos publicados en el Nuevo Tiempo*.

68. Carriazo, *Llanos orientales: artículos publicados en el Nuevo Tiempo*, 54.

69. For some examples of other boom-bust cycles in Latin American economies see: Paul Gootenberg, *Imagining Development: Economic Ideas in Peru's "Fictitious Prosperity" of Guano, 1840-1880* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Gilbert Joseph and Allen Wells, "Corporate Control of a Monocrop Economy: International Harvester and Yucatan's Henequen Industry During the Porfiriato," *Latin American Research Review* 17, no. 1 (1982); Barbara Weinstein, *The Amazon Rubber Boom, 1850-1920* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983).

Unfortunately, most of the profits obtained from the trade in Arauca left few benefits for the region. Due to high levels of corruption, the money remained in private hands instead of being a constant source of revenue for the municipality. In the late part of the nineteenth century the money stayed in the hands of the peasants that started the collection of feathers. However, when prices rose and the business was taken over by the owners of large *haciendas*, the revenues stayed in the hands of the wealthiest people of the region and were never invested in improving the infrastructure in Arauca. In addition, since there was so little presence from the central government and most plume exports left through Venezuela, Colombia had no formal records of this activity and therefore could not claim any taxes over it. Schools, better roads, or even a telegraph line to connect the area with the rest of the country could have been built at the time with the money from this very lucrative business. None of this happened.

To make things worse, the massive killing of egrets also had an important impact on the ecological balance of the region. With the number of egrets in decline in the first years of the twentieth century, the insects and pests that affected the cattle increased substantially. Egrets helped control the insect population that affected proper raising of cattle. By the 1930s, the cattle population had been decimated, altering the region's economic base and, therefore, the average income of the people.<sup>70</sup> The ecology of the region, including its most important form of subsistence, namely cattle, had been altered by the changing fashions and tastes of women and the commercial practices of milliners in Europe and the United States.

I am aware that there is one important aspect that needs further attention: better voices for the subaltern. Although I have tried to give a sense of the isolated and poor conditions in which the locals of Arauca decided to turn their full attention to the massive hunting of birds in order to improve their living conditions, we need a better sense of how these *araucanos* perceived their landscape. Unfortunately, obtaining this information in Colombia is not an easy task. The national archives in Colombia have little references on Arauca. The fact that the central government often identified this region as a frontier land, with little impact on the main economic activities of the country, also means that few documents survive to rebuild the history of this province. Future research will hopefully find ways to fill this gap.

The trade of birds between Colombia and the United States did not stop completely in the early twentieth century. Although the trade of birds with commercial purposes waned drastically in the 1920s, the 1913 Tariff Act stated clearly that birds that had scientific value could be imported to proper

70. Camejo, *Breves apuntaciones sobre Arauca*.

institutions in the United States, such as museums of natural history. North American scientists took advantage of this and during the first decades of the twentieth century collected thousands of specimens from all over the world. We now turn to the study of the vast numbers of birds that North Americans brought from their early ornithological expeditions to Colombia.



Bills of toucans drawn by Louis A. Fuertes. Frank M. Chapman. "The Distribution of Bird-Life in Colombia: A Contribution to a Biological Survey of South America." *Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History* 36 (1917): 1-729, plate 38

## 2

# Power and Imperial Relations

VISITING THE LARGE museums of natural history in the United States is an overwhelming experience. Walking around the halls of the American Museum of Natural History in New York City (AMNH), the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, or the National Museum of Natural History in Washington reminds us of the enormous diversity of life on our planet. Dioramas on the bird life of Southeast Asia are completely different from those on the avifauna of South or Central America. The exhibits on the mammals of North America have little resemblance to animal life in Australia. What few visitors realize is that the specimens in diorama displays represent a very small fraction of the vast collections of plants and animals that are housed behind closed doors. More than 2 million specimens of animals from all over the world now reside in natural history museums in New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. These millions of stuffed birds, reptiles, mammals, and fishes killed for research purposes are to a large extent the result of global relations and international influence developed by the United States over the twentieth century.

Understanding how these collections were formed reveals a rich story of imperialism, international scientific relations, and power structures throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This chapter focuses on the collections of birds that North American ornithologists at the AMNH gathered from Colombia through scientific expeditions in the last decades of the nineteenth and first decades of the twentieth centuries. In doing so, it explores the role of imperialism in American science. At the same time that the United States was expanding its economic, political and cultural influence over Latin America, North American naturalists, who had already begun to look outside their own borders in their quest to understand the natural world, extracted from Colombia thousands of bird skins and carried them to the United States with the idea of developing better scientific studies about the natural history and the origins of life in Latin America.

This case study allows us to continue understanding the place of the United States as an important actor in the historiography of imperialism and science.

As already explained in the introduction, recent studies have made an effort to analyze the importance of science and medicine in the overwhelming expansion that the United States experienced in the late nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth.<sup>1</sup> These studies owe a large debt to the lessons provided by the scholarship on science and imperialism, a literature that greatly expanded our comprehension of the complex dynamics between colonies and metropoles, but until recently tended to focus on the interactions of Europe and its colonies in Asia, Africa or Latin America overlooking the United States as an imperial power.<sup>2</sup>

Literature on science and imperialism also seemed to side with the view that along with the decline of European imperialism, large natural history collections lost their powerful status and were allegedly replaced by laboratory practices as the keystone of science. For example, in an evocative and thoughtful piece James Secord made a statement that I believe to be somewhat problematic. Secord wrote that, “[the] power over the natural world no longer seems to rest—as it did before the twentieth century—in centralized inventories of nature. Instead, the modern bureaucratic state works through the laboratory.”<sup>3</sup> According to Secord, during the peak of European imperial expansion and domination around the 1880s, big natural history collections were the keystone of scientific power. The first half of the twentieth century witnessed the decline of European imperialism, and Secord argues this was also the time when experimental biology arose, making science no longer dependent on fieldwork

1. Some examples include: Warwick Anderson, *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine and Race Hygiene in the Philippines* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Marcos Cueto, ed., *Missionaries of Science: The Rockefeller Foundation and Latin America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); Stuart George McCook, *States of Nature: Science, Agriculture, and Environment in the Spanish Caribbean, 1760-1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002); Armando Solórzano Ramos, *¿Fiebre dorada o fiebre amarilla?: la Fundación Rockefeller en México (1911-1924)* (Guadalajara: Universidad de Guadalajara, 1997); Paul S. Sutter, “Nature’s Agents or Agents of Empire? Entomological Workers and Environmental Change during the Construction of the Panama Canal,” *Isis* 98, no. 4 (2007).

2. The literature on science and imperialism is too extensive to cite here. Some important examples include: Richard Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens, and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Antonio Lafuente, Alberto Elena, and M. L. Ortega, eds., *Mundialización de la ciencia y cultura nacional: actas del Congreso Internacional “Ciencia, Descubrimiento y Mundo Colonial”* (Madrid: Doce Calles, 1993); Roy M. MacLeod, ed., *Nature and Empire: Science and the Colonial Enterprise* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Paolo Palladino and Michael Worboys, “Science and Imperialism,” *Isis* 84, no. 1 (1993); Patrick Petitjean, Catherine Jami, and Anne Marie Moulin, eds., *Science and Empires: Historical Studies about Scientific Development and European Expansion* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992).

3. James A. Secord, “The Crisis of Nature,” in *Cultures of Natural History*, ed. Nicholas Jardine, James A. Secord, and E. C. Spary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 454.

and, thus, on imperial domination.<sup>4</sup> For Secord, the dreams that large natural history museums, built during the reign of empire, would eventually contain all the species of the globe were imperial fantasies, utopian projects. In the twentieth century, museums, zoos, herbaria, and related collection-based institutions faced economic challenges with the end of colonialism and the rise of laboratory science.

This chapter argues that the relation between imperialism and natural history remained very strong in the first half of the twentieth century, and that natural history collections continued to have vital importance for the development of science in the twentieth century. As European imperialism declined, the United States emerged as a powerful economic and cultural force internationally in the early twentieth century. Although the United States did not establish itself as a military empire throughout the world in the same way that European empires had (with important exceptions like Puerto Rico and the Philippines, among others), the strategy of economic and cultural imperialism adopted by the United States had substantial influence in regions like Latin America, the Pacific and Asia.<sup>5</sup>

Science and medicine accompanied and aided North America's global expansion in the first decades of the twentieth century. From the development of enclaves like the United Fruit Company or the Tropical Oil Company, to state- and military-sponsored natural history surveys, to scientific expeditions undertaken by natural history museums and geographic societies, the reach of American science expanded far and wide throughout the world. The dream of collecting, classifying and housing all the specimens of the world in one place, supposedly dead with European imperialism, became the dream of ornithologists, paleontologists, entomologists, etc., in institutions all over the

4. Raymond F. Betts, *Decolonization*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004); Julian Jackson, ed., *Europe, 1900-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Martin Thomas, *The French Empire Between the Wars: Imperialism, Politics and Society* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).

5. See: Gilbert Joseph, Catherine LeGrand, and Ricardo Donato Salvatore, eds., *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease, eds., *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993); Ricardo Donato Salvatore, ed., *Culturas imperiales: experiencia y representación en América, Asia y África* (Rosario, Argentina: Beatriz Viterbo, 2005); Ann Laura Stoler, ed., *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). Although highly revised after their initial publication more than 30 years ago, the work of William Appleman Williams and Walter LaFeber remains a good introduction to the study of the United States as an informal empire. See: Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967); William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, 2nd ed. (New York: Dell Pub. Co., 1972).

United States. North American scientists used North American economic outposts and enclaves to help define their field sites and benefited from private businesses that had gained prominence overseas. Back in the United States, these naturalists used North America's growing global network to obtain specimens, compare results and complement their research. Museums, aquariums, and zoos in the United States, just like their European counterparts in the nineteenth century, became monuments to North America's force and worldview.<sup>6</sup> The collections of birds gathered by the AMNH in Colombia at the turn of the twentieth century should be analyzed taking into account the new place that the United States gained at the time in the international arena.

### Turn to Scientific Expeditions

During the nineteenth century, North American ornithology gained a lot of ground as a discipline. Aided in no small part by the thousands of amateurs that submitted and reported new sightings and species, professional ornithologists by the end of the century had mapped almost the entirety of the avifauna in the United States. Furthermore, with the creation of the American Ornithologists' Union in 1883, ornithologists had organized themselves around a powerful institution that allowed them to put forward innovative theories—such as the use of trinomial nomenclature to designate subspecies—that gained acceptance not only in North America but abroad as well.<sup>7</sup>

At the turn of the twentieth century North American ornithologists took their next step by focusing on birds from other regions around the world, especially Latin America. As Frank Chapman, curator of the ornithology

6. These natural history collections became important scientific tools. For example, the American Museum of Natural History in New York City was able to gather a collection of hundreds of thousands of birds during the first decades of the twentieth century. This was the collection that Ernst Mayr used to develop his ideas about evolution, today considered one of the foundations of the modern synthesis, one of the most influential theories in biology during the twentieth century. The same could be said about George Gaylord Simpson, another important player in the development of the modern synthesis. Simpson also used the enormous collection of fossils that the AMNH was able to collect in the first decades of the twentieth century to present new theories about the tempo and mode of evolution. Ernst Mayr, *Systematics and the Origin of Species from the Viewpoint of a Zoologist* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942); George Gaylord Simpson, *Tempo and Mode in Evolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944). For important historical accounts on the modern synthesis see: Vassiliki Betty Smocovitis, *Unifying Biology: The Evolutionary Synthesis and Evolutionary Biology* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996); Joseph Allen Cain, "Common Problems and Cooperative Solutions: Organizational Activity in Evolutionary Studies, 1936-1947," *Isis* 84 (1993).

7. Mark V. Barrow, *A Passion for Birds: American Ornithology after Audubon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 95.

department at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, wrote in his autobiography about his memories of this period:

North American ornithologists, with few exceptions, had not gone far beyond the limits of their own country... In view of the close relations existing between many North and South American birds and because of the bearing of these relations on the problems of their origin, distribution, and migration, it seemed obvious that we should be obliged to go abroad to study the birds of our own hemisphere.<sup>8</sup>

In Chapman's account, exploring South America seemed like the logical next step in the progress of North American ornithology.

North America's expansionist interests in Latin America extended well beyond birds. The United States began to see Latin America not only as a potential customer of manufactured goods but also as an excellent source of raw materials. At the time, South American governments were focusing their economies on the production and exportation of unprocessed goods and were dependent on the importation of manufactured products. The United States wanted to gain advantage of the situation by replacing Europe as the region's main economic partner, providing industrialized products to its southern neighbors while buying the raw materials that they were producing.<sup>9</sup>

By the end of the nineteenth century North America was producing more manufactured goods than could be consumed or bought by North Americans alone. The need to look for new markets made North American leaders and corporate owners turn their eyes to Latin America and the Pacific. Expanding economic relations with the Caribbean, the countries in Central and South America, as well as islands and Asian countries with ports in the Pacific became the preferred alternative to sell the economic surpluses produced by the United States. The Spanish-American War of 1898, which made it clear that the United States had strong political as well as economic expansionist interests, should be understood in this context. In that year, the explosion of the *Maine*, a North American battleship, gave the U.S. government a good pretext to go to war

8. Frank M. Chapman, *Autobiography of a Bird-Lover* (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1933), 205.

9. For two recent accounts of the history of Latin America's foreign relations with the United States see: Mark T. Gilderhus, "US-Latin American Relations, 1898-1941: A Historiographical Review," in *A Companion to American Foreign Relations*, ed. Robert D. Schulzinger (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2003). For a general context of Latin American history at the period see: Leslie Bethell, *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, vol. 4 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), Tulio Halperín Donghi, *The Contemporary History of Latin America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).

with the weakened Spanish empire. In a few months North American troops defeated the Spaniards and the United States took control of Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines.<sup>10</sup>

In the years following the Spanish-American War, the United States drastically expanded its influence over Latin America. Increasing loans from private banks to Latin American governments, as well as a growing presence of North American corporations in the region, increased and solidified the already large commercial links between both regions. By 1904, North American imperialist interests became more explicit when Theodore Roosevelt established the corollary of the Monroe Doctrine. For Roosevelt, Europe's colonial interests over Latin America had to be stopped. To prevent further European encroachment, Roosevelt argued, the United States had the right to police Latin America and intervene at will. The legacy of "Manifest Destiny", America's supposed natural mission to civilize and democratize the Americas, was still present in the first decades of the twentieth century.<sup>11</sup>

Roosevelt's interventionist policy was clearly reflected in his involvement in the independence of Panama from Colombia in 1903. Since the nineteenth century when the gold rush led thousands of people to settle California, American leaders and entrepreneurs looked for better ways to connect the east and west coasts of the United States. Railroads partly fulfilled this gap, but they could not meet the demands of America's ever growing economy in the late nineteenth century, which sought not only to connect both coasts in more efficient ways, but also looked for new markets in Latin America and the Pacific. Military and commercial boats were dependent on a long trip through the strait of Magellan to travel from the Atlantic to the Pacific (or vice versa). The need for an inter-oceanic canal through Central America that could rapidly increase the transnational flow of goods and resources became evident. In 1903, when local elites from Panama decided to declare independence from the highly centralized Colombian government, Roosevelt saw a perfect opportunity to gain favor for the construction of such a canal.

10. For a good reference to the growth of U.S. imperialism in the Caribbean in 1898 see the centenary special issue: "Islands in History," *Radical History Review* 73 (1999). For an important account on the Cuban side of the war and its consequences see: Louis A. Pérez, *Cuba and the United States: Ties of Singular Intimacy* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990); Louis A. Pérez, *The War of 1898: The United States and Cuba in History and Historiography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

11. Some recent and important biographies of Theodore Roosevelt that analyze in some extent his international visions are: H. W. Brands, T. R.: *The Last Romantic* (New York: Basic Books, 1997); Edmund Morris, *Theodore Rex* (New York: Random House, 2001). A more conservative approach to his international view is: Richard H. Collin, *Theodore Roosevelt's Caribbean: The Panama Canal, the Monroe Doctrine, and the Latin American Context* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990).

He dispatched a fleet of North American boats to Panama to prevent Bogotá from squelching the movement for Panamanian secession and, in exchange for this help, demanded that the Panamanians relinquish a zone in which a canal could be built and where Americans would have full control. In 1913, after an enormous investment in labor and money, the canal was finished. Colombia never fully recognized Panama's independence and resented the role that the United States played in the process. Colombia's government saw U.S. involvement in the canal as nothing short of imperialism. In a diplomatic effort to ease lasting tensions between the United States and Colombia, in 1914 President Woodrow Wilson offered an official apology to Colombia for the role his country had played in Panama, as well as a monetary compensation of \$25 million.<sup>12</sup>

With full control of Puerto Rico and the Panama Canal Zone, as well as impressive financial investments from both private and public sources, the United States had gained a strong political, economic, social and cultural foothold in Latin America by the second decade of the twentieth century. An informal empire had come into existence, characterized by a lack of formal colonies but with the power to set an agenda overseas. By the end of World War I, Europe had lost its supremacy in Latin America and the United States emerged as the new power over the region.

Science and exploration were important allies of North America's expansionist interests from the start. For example, in 1890, two years after the National Geographic Society was founded, president Gardiner G. Hubbard considered South America to be an important region that deserved special attention and devoted his annual address to explain and analyze some of its main geographical, political, economic, and anthropological aspects. The address—published a year later in the *National Geographic* magazine with the title “South America: Annual Address by the President,”—was a call to use science as a way to effectively help U.S. interests overseas through scientific expeditions and surveys documenting Latin American resources, landscapes, and life. Commercial interests, in particular, were in Hubbard's mind. As he explained:

The recent meeting of the Pan-American Congress has called attention to South America, a part of our continent under republican forms of government and rich in products which we lack, while it relies mainly

12. Walter LaFeber, *The Panama Canal: The Crisis in Historical Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Eduardo Lemaitre Román, *Panamá y su separación de Colombia* (Bogotá: Intermedio, 2003); David G. McCullough, *The Path Between the Seas: The Creation of the Panama Canal, 1870-1914* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977).

on other foreign countries for goods which we manufacture. North America and South America should be more closely united, for the one is the complement of the other.<sup>13</sup>

The National Geographic Society was not alone in this new interest in the region. Many scientific organizations in the United States, such as the American Museum of Natural History in New York, the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., the Museum of Comparative Zoology in Cambridge, and the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh also began to focus their attention on South America, as a new era of economic, cultural, and scientific expansion opened with the dawn of a new century.

As the United States slowly usurped Europe as the main political and economic force in Latin American countries such as Colombia, American ornithologists also began to replace European ones in the study of the avifauna of the region. While European naturalists in the nineteenth century largely relied on commercial collectors all over the world to supply their natural history collections in either small private collections or larger museums, naturalists in the United States turned to scientific expeditions as the main form of acquiring birds for study. Nevertheless, American naturalists still depended on the trade of birds from commercial collectors. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, institutions like the Museum of Comparative Zoology in Cambridge, Massachusetts, purchased hundreds of birds from Colombia hunted and prepared by commercial collectors. Likewise, other naturalists such as Witmer Stone at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia amassed collections sold by collectors in Colombia.<sup>14</sup>

For most of the nineteenth century Colombian birds were simply one among many economic commodities extracted by a few European or local entrepreneurs that saw animal skins as a lucrative business. These collectors would often contact or sell these specimens to specialized dealers in Europe, who would then find interested buyers.<sup>15</sup> In this way, a clear gap between the collector and the last buyer of birds existed. The first was usually interested in the money that could be obtained from the trade, while the ultimate customer used the birds as an adornment—be it on a hat or in a home—or as a raw material to produce scientific knowledge.

13. Gardiner G. Hubbard, "South America: Annual Address by the President," *National Geographic Magazine* 3 (1891): 1.

14. Witmer Stone, "On a Collection of Birds From the Vicinity of Bogotá, with a Review of the South American Species of *Speotyto* and *Troglodytes*," *Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia* (1899).

15. Jane Camerini, "Wallace in the Field," in *Science in the Field*, ed. Robert Kohler and Henrika Kuklick, *Osiris* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 62–64.

By the turn of the twentieth century the scientific expeditions carried out by the United States changed this trade relation in an important way: while European ornithologists acquired the birds of Colombia by monetary acquisition, American scientists became directly involved in the collecting process. And, as they started pursuing scientific expeditions at the turn of the twentieth century—exclusively for the purpose of collecting specimens for study—, they gained control over the direction in which ornithological studies of the region were headed.

This change reflected in many ways the economic context of the time. During the nineteenth century, Europeans extracted raw materials from Latin America using intermediaries. Latin Americans, often from the elite, organized large enterprises to extract copper, coffee, tobacco, etc. Europeans then bought these articles from Latin Americans and carried them to Europe to supply the demand. Americans, however, altered this European exchange model by organizing economic enclaves such as the United Fruit Co. or the Standard Oil Co. that oversaw the direct extraction of natural resources in Latin America and relied less on Latin American middlemen.<sup>16</sup> American ornithological expeditions to Colombia offer a window on how science became an integral part of changing transnational economic and diplomatic relations between the United States and Colombia during the first half of the twentieth century.

### Early Expeditions: Santa Marta 1898-1899

In 1897 Herbert Smith, a collector at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburgh, wrote a letter to Joel Asaph Allen, the curator of birds and mammals at the AMNH, telling him about an expedition he was planning to the “Santa Marta mountains” in Colombia. “It seems to me that this will be an exceptionally favorable chance for the American Museum to secure collections of South American mammalia and birds, from a very interesting and almost unknown region.”<sup>17</sup> The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, the proper name for

16. Marcelo Bucheli, *Bananas and Business: The United Fruit Company in Colombia, 1899-2000* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Catherine LeGrand, “Living in Macondo: Economy and Culture in a United Fruit Company Banana Enclave in Colombia,” in *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations*, ed. Gilbert Joseph, Catherine LeGrand, and Ricardo Donato Salvatore (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); Alejandro Sandoval Mendoza and José del Carmen Gómez S., *El imperio de la Standard Oil en Colombia y tierras aledañas* (Bogotá: Editorial Colombia Nueva, 1963). The literature on the Standard Oil Company is not long and it is still a topic open to research, especially in the Colombian case.

17. Herbert Smith to J. A. Allen, 6 November 1897, Folder Santa Marta Expedition 1898-99: Correspondence, Box Santa Marta Expedition 1898-1899, Archives, Department of Ornithology, AMNH.

the mountain that Smith talked about in his letter, was in fact a region that promised interesting results for ornithologists. Close to the city of Santa Marta, in Colombia's Caribbean coast, the Sierra Nevada is the world's highest coastal peak, situated just 42 kilometers from the coast and reaching an altitude of 5,775 meters above sea level. Because of its isolation from other mountain chains, including the Andes that run through an important part of Colombia's territory, the Sierra Nevada was seen by naturalists as an oasis where many new species could probably be found. Furthermore, because the environment at the Sierra Nevada changed from tropical to alpine in a relatively small area, scientists saw a good opportunity to study faunal changes according to altitude.

A few days after Allen received the letter from Smith, he wrote to Morris K. Jesup, the then president of the AMNH, telling him how the expedition to Colombia would be a wonderful opportunity for the Museum to expand its collections on South American animals—of which it had few—and how the resulting collections “would furnish desirable matter for publication in our Bulletin and contribute generally to the reputation of this institution.”<sup>18</sup>

Although the American Museum was founded in 1869, it was under Morris Jesup's leadership as president, beginning in 1881, that the institution adopted a more international character. Jesup emphasized the need to pursue scientific expeditions that would bring international recognition to the Museum. By the turn of the twentieth century, the Museum saw South America, along with Asia and Africa, as a region rich in species upon which scientific careers and institutional prestige could be built. Allen's proposal to pursue an expedition to Colombia was one of the first proposals to collect in this continent.

Although none of the museum's wealthy patrons had yet established business ventures in South America, the growing economic relations between the United States and Latin America certainly made the organization of the expedition to Santa Marta easier. More ships sailed every day to South America, bearing passengers and cargo, and facilitated the transport of scientific equipment and supplies without problems.

Smith was very confident of the work that could be achieved in Santa Marta. He told Allen in January of 1898 that he expected to “bring back such a set of Mammalia as was never gathered in Tropical America.”<sup>19</sup> Note that the purpose of the expedition since the start was to collect as many animals as possible. Birds were a part of it, but collecting mammals was seen as a very important aim.

18. J. A. Allen to Morris K. Jesup, 16 November 1897, Folder Santa Marta Expedition 1898-99: Correspondence, Box Santa Marta Expedition 1898-1899, Archives, Department of Ornithology, AMNH.

19. Herbert Smith to J. A. Allen, 20 January 1898, Folder Santa Marta Expedition 1898-99: Correspondence, Box Santa Marta Expedition 1898-1899, Archives, Department of Ornithology, AMNH.

Smith, however, ran into several difficulties and obstacles while trying to pursue his objective of making a thorough study of the fauna of the region. First, he already had competition in the field when he got there in 1898. W. W. Brown, a well-known collector had been sent by Outram Bangs and the Museum of Comparative Zoology (MCZ) to collect in the exact same region. The overlapping of American scientific expeditions was not very common throughout the twentieth century. In general, museums of natural history tried not to step into each other's footsteps and, if possible, co-organized expeditions to avoid severe competition and share costs.

But, in 1898, this was not the case. There had not been any communication between the AMNH and the MCZ, so when Allen realized that Brown was already in Santa Marta, he sent a letter to Smith telling him about it, hoping to avert disappointment. Smith, still full of confidence, replied immediately telling Allen that there was no need to worry. Since Brown took only a few trips himself, and generally relied on local hunters to do the collecting for him, Smith believed that Allen's work would be far superior, since he would have first-hand knowledge of the specimens collected in the field.<sup>20</sup>

While collecting throughout much of the nineteenth century was organized largely around the discovery of new species, Smith went to Colombia with broader aims in mind. Although discovering animals that were previously unknown to science was still an important—and much desired—task for ornithologists, herpetologists, etc., understanding the habitat in which the collected animals lived was fundamental. Writing down data regarding place of collection, and altitude, for example, was key to establish distributions. In this way, Smith's comment, more than discrediting the work of locals, was meant to harm the reputation of Brown's collecting practices.

Yet Smith saw himself as both a naturalist and a commercial collector; birds were both scientific objects and economic commodities. In a letter to Allen, written a few months after arriving in the field, Smith reminded him that the Museum agreed to pay 50 cents for small birds and one dollar for birds larger than a parrot. In today's currency that would be roughly equivalent to \$11 and \$22 for a small bird and a large bird, respectively. By January of 1899 Smith had collected around 1,500 birds which were valued at \$1,000 or approximately \$22,000 today. The AMNH had agreed to pay up to \$3,000 for Smith's collecting services.<sup>21</sup>

20. Herbert Smith to J. A. Allen, 4 April 1899, Folder Santa Marta Expedition 1898-99: Correspondence, Box Santa Marta Expedition 1898-1899, Archives, Department of Ornithology, AMNH.

21. Herbert Smith to J. A. Allen, 27 January 1899, Folder Santa Marta Expedition 1898-99: Correspondence, Box Santa Marta Expedition 1898-1899, Archives, Department of Ornithology, AMNH; "Contract", Folder Santa Marta Expedition: Contract Proposal, Box Santa Marta Expedition 1898-1899, Archives, Department of Ornithology, AMNH.

Encountering Brown in the field was only one obstacle that Smith had to confront; Colombian civil wars were another. Colombia had experienced political instability since its independence in 1819, as conflict between the different provinces and the newly established national state, based in Bogotá, gave way to a thread of recurring civil wars over how the new nation was to be shaped. Between 1899 and 1902, the last yet most massive and brutal of these wars, the Guerra de los Mil Días or Thousand Days War, left over 100,000 dead.<sup>22</sup> In 1900, George Clapp, a trustee of the Carnegie Institution, wrote to Allen that the revolution in Colombia had created difficulties for Smith's collecting expedition, since all firearms were prohibited in the country. Firearms were probably the most important tool of a collector in the field and without them Smith could pursue little work.<sup>23</sup>

Besides the internal violence in the country, Smith got very sick doing fieldwork in Colombia and this finally put an end to his ambitious goals for the region of Santa Marta. Although by April of 1899 he had collected approximately 325 mammals and 2,100 birds, it all went down hill from there.<sup>24</sup> There is no clear record of when Smith had to abandon fieldwork due to his illness. Somewhere between April and June, Allen sent a letter to Smith in Colombia complaining about the quality of the collections. On July 16, Smith's wife replied with a letter that tried to explain the situation. In it, Mrs. Smith told Allen that her husband should not be held responsible for the quality of the collections that had been sent recently. When Smith got ill, she tried to take over the collecting and hired some locals to help. However, she never realized that these collections were not as good as those that Smith had been sending earlier and she apologized for it. She told Allen that if possible, she did not want this episode to harm her husband's reputation.<sup>25</sup>

22. For the civil wars of the nineteenth century see: *Las guerras civiles desde 1830 y su proyección en el siglo XX: memorias de la II Cátedra Anual de Historia "Ernesto Restrepo Tirado."* (Bogotá: Museo Nacional de Colombia, Ministerio de Cultura, 1998); James E. Sanders, *Contentious Republicans: Popular Politics, Race, and Class in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004). For the Thousand Days War see: Alvaro Ponce M., *De clérigos y generales: crónicas sobre la Guerra de los Mil Días* (Santa Fe de Bogotá: Panamericana Editorial, 2000); Gonzalo Sánchez G. and Mario Aguilera Peña, *Memoria de un país en guerra: los mil días, 1899-1902* (Bogotá: Instituto de Estudios Políticos y Relaciones Internacionales, Unidad de Investigaciones Jurídico-Sociales Gerardo Molina, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Planeta, 2001).

23. George Clapp to J. A. Allen, 31 March 1900, Folder Santa Marta Expedition 1898-99: Correspondence, Box Santa Marta Expedition 1898-1899, Archives, Department of Ornithology, AMNH.

24. Herbert Smith to J. A. Allen, 4 April 1899, Folder Santa Marta Expedition 1898-99: Correspondence, Box Santa Marta Expedition 1898-1899, Archives, Department of Ornithology, AMNH.

25. Mrs. Herbert Smith to J. A. Allen, 16 July 1899, Folder Santa Marta Expedition 1898-99: Correspondence, Box Santa Marta Expedition 1898-1899, Archives, Department of Ornithology, AMNH.

Transformations in the nature of collecting practices were clearly underway. The collecting done by locals, who probably had been trained by early commercial collectors, was no longer sufficient for naturalists back in the United States. The lack of proper preparation for further scientific study, as well as the lack of collecting data, were the probable cause of Allen's dissatisfaction. Likewise, this episode tells much about the role of women in North American expeditions. On many occasions women traveled with their husbands and had active roles in the field. Although they were not part of the hunting and the collecting itself, they often took charge of the field stations and organized the logistics to maximize the collecting practices.<sup>26</sup>

By early 1900, Smith's illness had got worse and by the middle of that year he had to abandon the expedition. He returned to the United States in September of that year "nearly dead and quite unable to attend business," as he later explained to Allen. Smith was not able to complete the task he and the museum expected from the expedition. He was never able to go above the subtropical level on his trip up the Sierra Nevada, which in the end meant that the plan of collecting a good sample of the fauna of the region was never accomplished. Smith's collection, in terms of birds, finally yielded a result of close to 3,000 skins. The report of these collections was later published by Allen in the *Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History*.<sup>27</sup> Brown's expedition collected 2,500 bird specimens, which were analyzed and reported by Outram Bangs in the *Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington* and *The Auk*, the official journal of the American Ornithologists' Union.<sup>28</sup>

### Changing Questions, Changing Styles in the Field

The study of ornithology underwent important changes in the last decades of the nineteenth century. For most of the nineteenth century, taxonomic research, oriented toward the discovery of previously unknown species, occupied ornithologists both in Europe and the United States. By the mid-century, what

26. A good study on the role of gender in field expeditions is: Alex Soojung-Kim Pang, "Gender, Culture, and Astrophysical Fieldwork: Elizabeth Campbell and the Lick Observatory-Crocker Eclipse Expeditions," in *Science in the Field*, ed. Henrika Kuklick and Robert E. Kohler (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). Kuklick and Kohler's book is still an obligatory reference for anybody researching on scientific practices in expeditions: Henrika Kuklick and Robert E. Kohler, eds., *Science in the Field* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

27. Joel Asaph Allen, "List of Birds Collected in the District of Santa Marta, Colombia, by Herbert H. Smith," *Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History* 13 (1900).

28. Outram Bangs, "The Hummingbirds of the Santa Marta Region of Colombia," *The Auk* 16, no. 2 (1899); Outram Bangs, "On Some Birds from Santa Marta, Colombia," *Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington* 12 (1898).

specimens revealed about geographic variation and regularities in geographic distribution became as important to naturalists, including Charles Darwin, Alfred Russell Wallace, Philip Lutley Sclater, and Louis Agassiz, as adding to the list of new species names. At the end of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century, studying the habitats and distributions of birds in the regions in which they were collected became a central task in the discipline. Guided by questions of evolution, the habitats, life histories, and behaviors of birds took on new significance for the field of ornithology and promised to shed light on more general biological processes.

These new trends required a new kind of fieldwork. The development of an effective taxidermy through the use of arsenical soaps in the early nineteenth century had revolutionized ornithology. The proper preparation of skins, especially if done in the field, meant that large collections of birds could be gathered without worrying about losing the specimens to damage caused by insects.<sup>29</sup> However, by the early twentieth century the proper preparation of skins was necessary but not sufficient to carry out good analysis on avifaunal distributions. Data regarding the location and altitude above sea level in which each bird was collected became important to draw new and useful conclusions.

In the early twentieth century Frank Chapman, the curator of ornithology at the American Museum of Natural History, was one of the naturalists that promoted the importance of adding new and more specific data to the already large collections of birds gathered by museums of natural history. Chapman (1864-1945), an American self-taught naturalist known for his ornithological studies as well as his efforts to promote bird conservation, worked at the AMNH between 1888 and 1942, becoming curator of birds in 1908. His vast work on bird distribution, intercontinental relationships, the variation of faunal zones and the origin of bird life in Panama and northwestern South America (particularly in Colombia and Ecuador) laid the foundation for future work on these regions.<sup>30</sup> More important, perhaps, Chapman was part of an institutional context in which museums of natural history gained a great deal of importance in the United States. As Robert Kohler has argued, the appearance of the dioramas at

29. Paul Lawrence Farber, "The Development of Taxidermy and the History of Ornithology," *Isis* 68 (1977).

30. For biographical references on Chapman see: Chapman, *Autobiography of a Bird-Lover*; Robert Cushman Murphy, "Frank Michler Chapman, 1864-1945," *The Auk* 67, no. 3 (1950); John T. Zimmer, "Obituary: Frank Michler Chapman," *The American Naturalist* 80, no. 793 (1946). To gain a better understanding of Chapman's contribution to ornithology, including his views on vertical zonation of South American fauna, as well as the connections he found between birds from temperate zones from the southern parts of the American continent with birds from the temperate altitudes in the Andes see: Ernst Mayr, "Chapman, Frank Michler," in *Complete Dictionary of Scientific Biography* (Detroit: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2008).

the turn of the twentieth century turned museums into popular places where wealthy patrons were happy to sponsor collecting expeditions.<sup>31</sup>

Chapman decided to put all his efforts in pursuing a complete survey of the birds of South America. For Chapman, much work remained to be done in order to complement the existing knowledge about the avifauna of this region. The early commercial trade, as well as the collections gathered by exploring naturalists in the nineteenth century, made scientists aware of the immense variety of birds on this continent. Chapman himself thought that further exploration would not yield any discoveries of unknown species. But many new and interesting problems remained. As he explained it,

We have now reached that stage in our study of the South American ornis, when, the search for species over, we may attempt to learn something of the *habits, racial variations and geographic distribution* of the between four and five thousand birds known to inhabit that country.<sup>32</sup>

The ultimate goal was to understand the geographic origin of South American life, a task that required bigger and more comprehensive collections than the ones already present in museums of natural history.

With this in mind, the AMNH launched in 1910 a project to extensively survey South America's avifauna. Colombia was chosen as the first region where the museum's naturalists would focus their interest. Chapman soon realized that he had an enormous task in front of him and a particularly challenging project. Besides a few formal collecting trips carried out by Europeans and North Americans to scattered places during the nineteenth century—of which Brown's and Smith's were probably the most important—, data regarding Colombia's avifauna was far from meeting the new standards in ornithology.

Chapman explained that lack of data did not mean that Colombia was not well represented in museum collections. On the contrary, most scientific institutions in the United States and Europe had large collections of Colombia's

31. In particular see Robert Kohler's latest and very thorough study: *All Creatures: Naturalists, Collectors, and Biodiversity, 1850-1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

32. Frank M. Chapman, "The Distribution of Bird-Life in Colombia: A Contribution to a Biological Survey of South America," *Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History* 36 (1917): 3. It is not clear if Chapman's reference to South America as a country was a mistake he failed to edit. Nevertheless, this was precisely how Chapman approached his studies. He, as most North American naturalists of the time, thought of South America as a coherent unit. As we will see in subsequent chapters, this contrasted with the more nationalistic approach that Latin Americans would bring to ornithology, where political boundaries in their respective countries shaped their studies of birds.

birds. The country had been an important actor in the commercial trade of birds that flourished in the second half of the nineteenth century. Thousands of birds were shipped to supply the demand of private collections of natural history as well as the millinery business that started using birds as decorations on women's hats. The Bogotá-skins—as they were known in the market—became an important part of ornithology collections in the United States and Europe. In fact, precisely because of the commercial trade of birds, naturalists began to recognize the immense variety of birds that inhabited Colombia.

Nevertheless, since the Bogotá-skins were locally made and destined for a commercial market, they rarely carried information about the place of collection. Although many naturalists in the nineteenth century assumed that most of the skins were collected near Bogotá—hence the name Bogotá-skins—, Chapman soon realized that this was not the case. The collections included birds that seemed to come from warmer climates than the region around Bogotá. According to Chapman,

The differences between the bird-life of the Tropical and Temperate Zones, for example, are equally important whether occasioned by latitude or altitude. No one would think of removing the labels from specimens collected on the Amazon and in Argentina and then writing of them as having all been taken at one locality. But it would be no more improper to do this than to write of the distribution of bird-life in the Eastern Andes of Colombia on the basis of a collection of native-made 'Bogotá' skins.<sup>33</sup>

Colombia has a complex geography that has marveled naturalists up to this day. Contrary to other countries where topographies tend to change over long distances, Colombia's landscape can change in just a few miles. The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta is the extreme case in which the climate can go from tropical to frigid in just a few miles. But the same is true of the Andes that split into three different mountain ranges in Colombian territory, each with endemic faunas throughout the different faunal zones. Furthermore, it is one of the few countries that has coasts over the Pacific as well as the Caribbean, a share of Amazonian rainforests, and enormous plains in the east, leading to the Orinoco River.<sup>34</sup> This geographical diversity translated into great animal diversity, which attracted the AMNH to a thorough exploration of the region.

33. Chapman, "The Distribution of Bird-Life in Colombia: A Contribution to a Biological Survey of South America," 5.

34. Fabio Zambrano Pantoja, *Colombia, país de regiones*, 4 vols. (Bogotá, Colombia: Cinep; Colciencias, 1998).

Chapman also saw in Colombia another great potential. Besides having diverse climatic and physiographic conditions, Colombia was situated at the base of the Isthmus of Panama. This meant that a study of Colombia's avifauna could produce important conclusions about intercontinental relationships. Many American scientists had begun to ask questions about the faunal relations between different continents, and posited explanations of how animals migrated between them and why the fauna on the two continents seems to have followed different evolutionary paths. The AMNH, in particular, was an important center in the development of this line of inquiry. W. D. Matthew, the most important paleontologist at the Museum in the early twentieth century, claimed that the major focus of vertebrate evolution had taken place in the northern continents. In a clear Darwinian account, he also argued that less fit forms were forced to migrate into the south. As Matthew explained,

It has long been recognized that the present distribution of mammals is due chiefly to migration from the great northern land mass... At any given period the most advanced and progressive species of the race will be those inhabiting that region; the most primitive and unprogressive species will be those remote from this center.<sup>35</sup>

Matthew's perspective on biogeography seemed to reflect and support the expansionist interests of the United States over South America at the time. If northern civilizations were naturally more fit than those in the south, they had the natural right to control them.

It is possible that Chapman's desire to understand intercontinental relationships was influenced by the kind of questions that Matthew and other scientists were putting forward at the time. In any case, Chapman saw Colombia as a natural laboratory for answering important questions about the faunal relations between continents. What evolutionary differences could be found between South, Central and North America? If there were differences, how many connections could be established?

There was also one final reason why Chapman preferred museum-led scientific expeditions over the use of commercial collectors. He argued that the presence of the naturalist in the field allowed him to get a better sense not only of the presence and abundance of specimens, but also of the absence of particular species. As he explained it, "while specimens show where a species *does* occur, they fail to show where it does *not* occur, and the latter fact is quite

35. W. D. Matthew, "Climate and Evolution," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 24 (1915): 178, 201.

as important as the former.”<sup>36</sup> Since Chapman was interested in studying the variation of faunal zones, the lack of occurrence seemed an important aspect to take into account.

Fieldwork undertaken on scientific expeditions thus furnished far more than stuffed animals in the early decades of the twentieth century. It provided detailed and important information on the geography, distribution, and life histories of individual species. Between 1910 and 1915 a total of eight expeditions were carried out by the AMNH in Colombia. The expeditions, like many of Chapman’s expeditions, were funded by John L. Cadwalader, a wealthy lawyer and New York socialite, whose interest in nature led him to support not only the American Museum activities but also other institutions like the New York Zoological Society.<sup>37</sup> The first expedition took place between November 1910 and June 1911. Frank Chapman was the head of the expedition, accompanied by Louis Agassiz Fuertes, William B. Richardson, and Leo E. Miller. The expedition touched Colombian territory in the Pacific port of Buenaventura. It then traveled inland to Cali, in the southwest, and made a reconnaissance of the Quindío, one of the coffee producing regions in the country. The second, third, fourth, and fifth expeditions were lead by Leo E. Miller, accompanied by William B. Richardson and Arthur A. Allen between May 1911 and September 1912, and surveyed the region around the city of Popayán in the southwest of Colombia, the Cauca Valley, and a vast region around San Agustín—a famous archaeological site. The sixth expedition was led by William Richardson between July and October of 1912, in the Pacific region of Colombia, near Tumaco, another port in the Pacific.

In 1913 Chapman returned to Colombia to carry out what would be the most ambitious of all the eight expeditions. Accompanied by George K. Cherrie—a famous collector that would later accompany Theodore Roosevelt in his famous trip to South America—, Louis A. Fuertes, Paul G. Howes, Geoffrey O’Connell, and Thomas M. Ring, the expedition arrived at a Caribbean port near the city of Barranquilla. The party then descended along the Magdalena River—Colombia’s most important waterway—and traversed the Eastern Andes towards Bogotá, to later descend to the Llanos, the enormous plains region in the east of the country. The eighth and final expedition was led again by Leo E. Miller in the Antioquia region, in the Northwest side of the country, between November 1914 and March 1915.

36. Chapman, “The Distribution of Bird-Life in Colombia: A Contribution to a Biological Survey of South America,” 6.

37. See Kohler, *All Creatures: Naturalists, Collectors, and Biodiversity, 1850-1950*, 115. See also “John L. Cadwalader Estate,” *The New York Times*, August 6, 1915.

These expeditions were possible thanks to the then close relationship between the United States and the Colombian government. Despite the bitterness Colombia felt toward the United States for its support of Panama's secession, and the rough negotiations to settle the indemnification by the United States in the first decades of the twentieth century, the conservatives in the government had a very close, friendly, and open door relation with America. If they wanted their dream of modernization to come true, it was imperative for them to cultivate a relationship with Americans. With this goal in mind, they gave significant encouragement to foreign investment through subsidies, tax exemptions and easy granting of leases for natural resource extraction. Foreign investment was growing rapidly, and Colombian doors were held open, not only for big corporations that exploited products like bananas and oil, but U.S. scientific expeditions as well. If raw materials were flowing from Colombia to the United States, manufactured products were flowing in the opposite direction. Scientists, birds, fabrics, sewing machines, bananas, and oil, flowed through the same connections. When talking about his experience at the Canal Zone, Chapman remarked,

The very pier on which we land gives us an object-lesson in the fascinating history of the exchange of raw materials for finished products. Northbound copper from Peru and Chile; cacao and ivory nuts from Ecuador; hides from Colombia, here meet and pass automobiles and sewing-machines, shoes, and dress goods on their way south.<sup>38</sup>

What Chapman did not note was that the AMNH party, and the scientific objects they later carried back to the United States, were part of the same connections.

At the end of the five year period the AMNH had greatly enlarged its collection of South American specimens. Fifteen thousand seven hundred and seventy five birds and almost 1,600 mammals were collected. However, in the final report of the expeditions Chapman was careful to explain that even if the number could seem alarming to bird conservationists around the United States, its impact on Colombia's avifauna was almost negligible. "One unfamiliar with the problems involved might imagine that we have accumulated an unnecessarily large number of specimens," Chapman wrote. However, "from the standpoint of bird protection, the number of specimens taken has produced about as much effect on Colombian bird-life as would the collecting of the same

38. Frank M. Chapman, "Over the Andes to Bogotá," *National Geographic* magazine 40, no. 4 (1921): 357.

number of plants have on the Colombian flora.”<sup>39</sup> He explained that it was only when the hunting was focused on one particular bird that the species could be in danger of extinction. He used the example of a milliner’s agent who had killed around 16,000 condors in Argentina and sent them to Paris. The species after this had become rare in the region. The AMNH collected an average of twelve specimens per species, which certainly would not have any effect on the avifauna of the region. If anything, the expeditions had confirmed the rich bird-life of this country. The seventh expedition alone collected around 500 species of birds in only two months.

There was a strong reason why Chapman had to justify the number of birds he had collected in Colombia. In the public’s eye he was more a conservationist than a famous ornithologist. Chapman became very involved in the fight against the millinery trade at the turn of the twentieth century and in bird conservation in general. In 1899 he began publishing *Bird-lore*, a journal devoted to the protection of birds, which would later turn into the official journal of the National Association of Audubon Societies. The journal has been published continuously since then and is now known as the *Audubon Magazine*. Through *Bird-lore* Chapman had also begun the famous Christmas Bird Count. In the nineteenth century many people participated in a holiday tradition commonly known as the Christmas Side Hunt. On Christmas day people would go outside and hunt as many birds as possible. Whoever brought home the most was the winner. In 1900 Chapman started the Christmas Bird Count as an alternative to this practice, as well as a way to support the growing conservation movement in the country. In that year twenty-five bird counts were taken; 18,500 birds from ninety species were counted. The Bird Christmas Count has also survived until today.<sup>40</sup>

### Perceiving Colombia Through the Landscape

North American imperial attitudes were also reflected in the way the AMNH naturalists perceived the people and the landscape of the places where they carried out their expeditions. Chapman and his colleagues brought with them the idea that locals and natives were part of a less civilized society that should learn from the North American experience to overcome this underdeveloped stage. This lack of development was attributed to issues like environment and race. According to them, the unhealthy climates of countries in the tropics

39. Chapman, “The Distribution of Bird-Life in Colombia: A Contribution to a Biological Survey of South America,” 4.

40. Frank M. Chapman, “A Christmas Bird-Census,” *Bird-lore* 2 (1900).

influenced the lack of skills of the blacks, Indians and creoles that inhabited them, which explained the inability of Latin Americans to become a civilized society. These perceptions on the relation between nature and the environment were reflected in the way these scientists constructed the natural history of Colombia's avifauna.<sup>41</sup>

Chapman's first impression of Colombia was not a good one. Soon after he arrived at the Pacific port of Buenaventura, in May of 1911, he wrote to C. Hart Merriam, the recognized biologist and ethnologist:

Buenaventura is—with the entire tropical portion of the west coast—a rotten hole, inhabited only by negroes, and with rainfall of some 400 inches. One night's stay here may mean the contraction of a nasty form of malaria fever, which, sooner or later, surely attacks everyone.<sup>42</sup>

Chapman, however, thought that any adversity in the field was worth it in terms of the scientific value that Colombia promised. Nobody had carried proper work on altitudinal distribution and no other country in Latin America seemed to have the complex geographic conditions that Colombia had.

Other expedition members shared at some point or another Chapman's impression of Colombia as an uninhabitable place. In September of 1911, Arthur A. Allen, one of Leo Miller's assistants in the second expedition, wrote to Chapman in New York that Miller was not sure if he was going to leave Colombia soon. Allen expressed hope that this would not be the case since "this is no land for a white man to live."<sup>43</sup> In 1913, George Cherrie, a well known collector and naturalist, expressed a similar feeling after the AMNH expedition arrived in Colombia through a Caribbean port and started to sail down the Magdalena River. The constant references to mosquitoes and the unbearable heat during the day made Cherrie almost wonder how people could inhabit some of the places down the river.<sup>44</sup>

41. I build on the efforts of Warwick Anderson who has looked at the relation between environment and race in the Philippines. See: Warwick Anderson, "The Natures of Culture: Environment and Race in the Colonial Tropics," in *Nature in the Global South: Environmental Projects in South and Southeast Asia*, ed. Paul R. Greenough and Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

42. Frank M. Chapman to C. Hart Merriam, 28 May 1911, General Correspondence, Archives, Department of Ornithology, AMNH.

43. Arthur A. Allen to Frank M. Chapman, 29 September 1911, Folder Colombian Expeditions 1910-1915: Misc. Correspondence, Box Colombian Expeditions 1910-1915, Archives, Department of Ornithology, AMNH.

44. George K. Cherrie, "Field Journal," Folder: Cherrie, George K. Colombia 1913, Box: Cherrie, George Field, Archives, Department of Ornithology, AMNH.

Chapman's initial attitude towards all the people in Colombia can be labeled as imperialist and reflected the growing expansionist interests of the United States over Latin America at the time. Although he admired the landscapes that he encountered in his travels and enjoyed the joviality of many Colombians along his journey, he thought of Colombia as a backward civilization with much to learn from civilized American culture. In 1911, soon after stepping on Colombian land, he wrote to Merriam:

We have encountered some strange customs but always much courtesy—though we are of the hated nation of "Yanquis"—and have gained, we believe, some little insight into native character—which, primarily, is childish, lacking in balance and values, impressionable and excitable. I see very little prospect for the real development of this country.<sup>45</sup>

In part, Chapman attributed this lack of civilization to the climate. In 1921, when he wrote a popular account of an ideal trip to Colombia for the *National Geographic* magazine, he made much emphasis on weather changes down in Colombia and the implications this had for the people:

With the cumulative energy of generations of Temperate Zone born ancestors in our veins, we may maintain our standards of push and speed in the tropics for a time, but that is no reason why we should expect people who have been reared under less favorable climatic conditions to live up to them.<sup>46</sup>

He continued to explain that a piece of good advice was to leave any preconceptions behind. The weather had affected Latin Americans bodily and mentally and the unwarned traveler might be shocked by the difference in cultures.

In his perceptions, Chapman was feeding from the racial theories that were very popular at the time. Eugenics was in vogue among many scholars in the United States. At the AMNH in particular, ideas of race became prominent with Henry Fairfield Osborn, the head of the department of vertebrate paleontology. Osborn became a strong advocate against immigration at the turn of the twentieth century and used the exhibits on Neanderthals, Cro-Magnon, and Neolithic peoples to convey the idea that some races were superior to others and racial mixing was undesirable. For Osborn, the ability of a black person

45. Frank M. Chapman to C. Hart Merriam, 28 May 1911, General Correspondence, Archives, Department of Ornithology, AMNH.

46. Chapman, "Over the Andes to Bogotá," 357.

coming from the sub-Saharan Africa, or even an Italian coming from the more tropical Mediterranean, compared unfavorably to the intellectual superiority of white peoples of northern Europe or the United States.<sup>47</sup>

The image that the expedition members had of Colombia as a purely tropical place soon changed. Precisely because Colombia had a complex geography the weather would vary drastically after just a few hours of journey, especially if they were traversing the mountainous regions. From the more tropical and humid environments near the coasts or along the Magdalena River, after a couple of days traveling by horse, the expedition members would find temperate climates. In Chapman's case, this sudden change of environments had an important influence not only on his views about the development and grade of civilization of the country in general, but also on the scientific conclusions he would draw on the distribution of birds in Colombia.

Chapman's first accomplishment while studying the avifauna of Colombia was to give a first analysis of the different life-zones in the Andes. He concluded that there were four of them: a tropical zone that ranged from sea level to 5,000 ft, a sub-tropical one from 5,000 ft to 9,000 ft, a temperate zone from 9,000 ft to 12,000 ft and the *páramo* zone from 12,000 ft to 15,000 ft. Each zone had a substantially different avifauna and birds in each zone rarely lived in one of the other zones.

However, Chapman wanted to do more than establish the limits of each life-zone. He also wanted to answer the question of how bird life had originated in each one of them. He soon concluded that birds had populated the Andes from the bottom to the top. In other words, the ancestors of the birds found in the subtropical zone were found in the tropical zone, and the birds of the *paramo* zone were descendants of those in the temperate one. But Chapman took his argument one step further. He argued that the birds of temperate forests in Colombia were not necessarily descendants of birds in Colombia's subtropical region. The Andes had to be studied as a whole throughout its length. Many birds of the *paramo* zone in Colombia probably had their origins in Patagonia.<sup>48</sup>

This last idea has important implications for understanding American expeditions in Latin America. First, the scientific interest that the AMNH initially developed in Colombia had little value unless compared within a larger South American context. American naturalists paid little attention to the national boundaries of the countries in which they carried their activities. Colombia, therefore, was just a starting point for a much broader study of the

47. Ronald Rainger, *An Agenda for Antiquity: Henry Fairfield Osborn & Vertebrate Paleontology at the American Museum of Natural History, 1890-1935, History of American Science and Technology Series* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1991), 149-77.

48. Chapman, *Autobiography of a Bird-Lover*, 211.

continent. The AMNH was not interested in Colombia as a nation, nor was it interested in the study of Colombia's avifauna in itself. AMNH scientists were interested in the study of South America's birds—or Andean birds to be more specific. "Satisfactory determination of our Colombian specimens," Chapman wrote in his final report, "and a true conception of the limits of those faunal areas lying only partly in Colombia required fieldwork in contiguous regions."<sup>49</sup> At the same time that Chapman was organizing the eight expeditions to Colombia, he also sent collectors to Ecuador and Panama, who brought close to 5,800 birds for comparison.

As we will see in later chapters, this vision would contrast highly with the perspective that naturalists in Colombia would bring to ornithology, focusing their attention on the birds enclosed within Colombia's frontiers and rarely on the birds of neighboring countries.

An anecdote that Chapman included in his autobiography illustrates this point a little further. Once the expeditions were over, and Chapman finished the report with a complete analysis of the avifauna collected in Colombia, he decided it would be a nice gesture to present it to the Colombian embassy in the United States as a token of appreciation and gratefulness to the Colombian people. "A volume, therefore, was handsomely bound, suitably inscribed, and placed in a satin-lined box, and an appointment having been made, I proceeded to Washington with our offering," he wrote.<sup>50</sup> According to Chapman, the only comment he received back from Colombia's minister was that in the map he included in the report he had given too much territory to Venezuela. "Thereafter I omitted international boundaries from our maps of South American countries."<sup>51</sup>

This lack of international boundaries would characterize Americans' approach to nature beyond their borders in the first half of the twentieth century. While most of American ornithology during the nineteenth century had been focused on the understanding of birds within the borders of the United States,<sup>52</sup> the new more international approach of the early twentieth century was tightly tied with the growing expansionist interests of the United States.

Besides the national borderless approach implied in Chapman's study of the Andes, his comment on the origin of faunas according to altitude has another important implication. The idea that a bird from Colombia's *páramo* zone had originated in Patagonia implied a direct correlation between altitude and latitude, a factor that would greatly influence not only his scientific conclusions

49. Chapman, "The Distribution of Bird-Life in Colombia: A Contribution to a Biological Survey of South America," 6.

50. Chapman, *Autobiography of a Bird-Lover*, 213.

51. Chapman, *Autobiography of a Bird-Lover*.

52. Barrow, *A Passion for Birds: American Ornithology after Audubon*; especially chapter 2.

about the region, but also his views about the people inhabiting the Colombian territory. For Chapman, each faunal zone had an invisible barrier which not only explained their different evolutionary histories, but also marked an important environmental boundary. As he explained it himself, “The birds that have extended their range from the Tropical to the Temperate zone have experienced as pronounced a change in environment as though, let us say, they had gone from Ecuador to Ontario, and their differentiations are correspondingly pronounced.”<sup>53</sup> In this way, if a bird species had come from Patagonia to Colombia’s *páramo* zone, the species had simply changed from a temperate zone determined by latitude to a temperate zone determined by altitude. This implied that the species had less adaptation problems in its path and there would be little or no differentiation with the original ancestor from Patagonia.

Chapman’s studies in the Andes had an important scientific conclusion. The differentiation between species in different faunal zones, then, did not respond so much to time elapsed or to the distance from the place where a species had originated. Instead it depended strongly on environmental change.

Chapman acknowledged that his idea of a correlation between altitude and latitude had its origins in Alexander von Humboldt.

It was Humboldt who, in determining the relations between altitudinal and latitudinal climates, showed that, as we proceed from the Equator toward the poles, the mean temperature decreases one degree Fahrenheit with each degree of latitude. But as we ascend a mountain, the mean temperature decreases one degree with each 300 feet of altitude. That is, approximately 300,000 feet of latitude equal 300 feet of altitude. Climatically, therefore, we travel about one thousand times faster vertically than we do horizontally.<sup>54</sup>

Humboldt was in fact one of the first naturalists to suggest that the changing climates of a mountain in the tropics paralleled in many ways the change of climate when traveling north or south of the equator. His climbing of mount Chimborazo in Ecuador in 1802 remains up to this day an important landmark in our changing views of environment and nature.<sup>55</sup>

In Chapman’s case, this perception of the landscape greatly influenced his travels in Colombia. On many occasions, while ascending the Andes, he and

53. Chapman, *Autobiography of a Bird-Lover*, 212.

54. Chapman, *Autobiography of a Bird-Lover*, 207.

55. Alexander von Humboldt, *Aspects of Nature, in Different Lands and Different Climates; with Scientific Elucidations*, trans. Elizabeth Juliana Sabine (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1850); Alexander von Humboldt, *Personal Narrative of Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of America, During the Years 1799-1804*, 3 vols. (London: H.G. Bohn, 1852).

his expedition companions felt that the weather was suddenly much more appropriate for white men. Furthermore, going from tropical to sub-tropical to temperate climates meant that the degree of civilization itself changed. The farther up you could go, the more civilized people seemed to be. In fact, at a higher altitude, both the environment and the people seemed to be more alike those he knew at the higher latitude where his own civilization was located. Bogotá in particular, situated at approximately 8,660 ft above sea level, seemed to call Chapman's attention. As he recalled later in his autobiography,

An exploring naturalist usually has neither time nor inclination for the study of city life. Always I have considered the time passed in towns as lost time. But Bogotá was my first South American city in the Temperate Zone and, as faunal naturalist, I noted with interest the almost entire absence of the Negroid element that forms so large a part of the population of the lower zones where it is climatically at home.<sup>56</sup>

Instead, according to Chapman, the city was populated by the descendants of the Chibchas, a native indigenous tribe from a temperate climate, "who have unconsciously obeyed the laws of distribution by remaining in it."<sup>57</sup>

In Chapman's eyes it was clear that indigenous peoples were environmentally more advanced than the black population he encountered in Buenaventura on his first trip. However, Colombia overall remained a tropical place for him. Americans were, in Chapman's view, clearly superior to the indigenous peoples of Colombia, even if some parts of the Andes, like Bogotá, seemed to have a more appropriate weather for civilization to develop.

During the 1910-1915 expeditions, American naturalists had an openly condescending view of the locals they encountered during fieldwork. In 1915, Howarth Boyle, the adventurous teenager that accompanied Leo Miller in the expedition to the Antioquia region, wrote to his aunt: "The most interesting objects to me were the Indians... They are very amusing and simple people."<sup>58</sup> Boyle made this remark soon after he had finished describing the many birds and mammals he had been able to see throughout the journey. For Boyle, Indians were just a part of the landscape in Colombia, next to all the other natural history specimens he had been able to collect. This view of the Indian was of course not new and reflected the way naturalists focused their work at the time, especially in museums of natural history. Walking the many halls

56. Chapman, *Autobiography of a Bird-Lover*, 245.

57. Chapman, *Autobiography of a Bird-Lover*.

58. Howarth Boyle to Aunt Belle, 4 March 1915, Folder Boyle Howarth: Letters to Family, Box: Bolivia Expeditions, Archives, Department of Ornithology, AMNH.

of the AMNH is still a wonderful lesson for historians on the way scientists approached their studies of nature. The dioramas of exotic birds and mammals are standing close to those of indigenous peoples from around the world, including the natives of South America. They all seemed to make part of the same natural world that appeared so rare to the Americans that walked the corridors and marveled at their strangeness.

Boyle was not alone in this naturalization of the locals. In one of Chapman's descriptions of life in the field while trying to describe Fuertes' great talent in collecting birds, he wrote:

But in spite of Fuertes' skill, enthusiasm, desire and persistence, Roso, a native boy, was our most successful collector. He was born hunter and as keen on the trail as a bird dog. He was not familiar with birds but he was in his own country and undiverted by novel experiences that so frequently claimed our eyes and ears, he went about his business with a single-mindedness that brought its reward.<sup>59</sup>

For Chapman the body of a white person like Fuertes would never match that of a local boy in his territory. Furthermore, the comparison of the boy with a dog indicates how Chapman saw this local assistant as closer to nature than either he or Fuertes could ever be. This local boy was a part of the landscape.

For Fuertes the locals had a way of looking at the world that would never allow them to appreciate the importance of science. In 1911 he wrote in a letter to his wife: "We are generally considered doctors, collecting birds for certain rare medicinal purposes: extract of hummingbird being a cure for rheumatism, etc., etc.... the entire idea of science or interest in the things we collect [is] entirely beyond their comprehension. So we sit tight, and let 'em think we'll sell the juice of the birds to cure man's ills for much fine gold, and thus retain their respect."<sup>60</sup> Fuertes believed local rural inhabitants looked at the world in a practical way where birds were collected to fulfill a functional purpose. The idea that birds could be hunted with no other agenda than the understanding of the natural world seemed, in Fuertes' eyes, unreachable for them.

Of course, expedition members also relied on their sense of humor to describe the population that seemed interested in their activities in the field. Boyle once wrote to his aunt: "The people here are interesting. Every day a horde

59. Chapman, *Autobiography of a Bird-Lover*, 232.

60. Louis Agassiz Fuertes to Mary Fuertes, 24 April 1911, quoted in: Louis Agassiz Fuertes and Mary Boynton, *Louis Agassiz Fuertes: His Life Briefly Told and His Correspondence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 148.

of girls come and watch us embalm birds. Some are pretty and some are not. Those that are not usually stay the longest.”<sup>61</sup>

These racialized perspectives were not only held by Americans like Chapman and his companions but had also been appropriated by Colombian “white” elites since the nineteenth century. Troubled by their countries’ continuing backwardness, they quickly turned to Indians and black populations in their search for an explanation. These populations were associated with values contrary to those related to progress, such as commerce, comfort and hygiene. In Colombia, nineteenth century writings about the social component of the nation like those of Jose María Samper, Agustín Codazzi, Manuel Ancízar, and Felipe Pérez described Indians and blacks as lazy, anti-market, and content with poverty and filthiness. These traits of the populations were understood as the cause of the country’s backwardness. These racial ideas prevailed in Colombia well into the first decades of the twentieth century.<sup>62</sup>

### Everyday Cultures and Field Styles of North American Expeditions

The AMNH trips to Colombia, especially the very ambitious 1913 expedition directed by Chapman, give us a first insight into the cultures and everyday experiences of North American fieldwork in the early twentieth century. The many letters exchanged by naturalists and professional collectors between the United States and Colombia, as well as some of the journals kept by the expedition members, are a wonderful source to understand the daily practices and worries of the expeditions. They also offer insight into changing transnational United States-Colombia relations.

Not all the expeditions were carried out under the most arduous conditions. Many American travel accounts to remote places like Africa and Asia tended

61. Howarth Boyle to Aunt Belle, 22 November 1914, Folder Boyle Howarth: Letters to Family, Box: Bolivia Expeditions, Archives, Department of Ornithology, AMNH.

62. For recent debates on the place of race and nation in Latin America see: Nancy P. Appelbaum, Anne S. Macpherson, and Karin Alejandra Rosemblatt, eds., *Race & Nation in Modern Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Brooke Larson, *Trials of Nation Making: Liberalism, Race, and Ethnicity in the Andes, 1810-1910* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Peter Wade, *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America* (London: Pluto Press, 1997). For a case study on eugenics in Latin America see: Nancy Stepan, “The Hour of Eugenics”: *Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991). For recent accounts on race relations in Colombia see: Alfonso Múnica, “Panamá: ¿La última frontera?,” in *Fronteras Imaginadas: la construcción de las razas y de la geografía colombiana en el siglo XIX colombiano* (Bogotá: Editorial Planeta, 2005); Peter Wade, *Blackness and Race Mixture: The Dynamics of Racial Identity in Colombia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), introduction.

to portray the travel experience as a ritual where expedition members could prove their true masculinity enduring rough conditions in the field. The image of Theodore Roosevelt hunting in Africa or sailing the River of Doubt in South America are some of the classic examples of the masculine image attached to American natural history expeditions.<sup>63</sup> However, the AMNH surveys in Colombia present a different perspective. The expeditions often took place in a mixture of the most comfortable conditions available and slightly rougher circumstances. A combination of first class tickets in boats along the Colombian rivers, expensive hotels in cities like Bogotá or Cali, and lodging in large *haciendas* while hunting in the field were not uncommon. Likewise, expedition parties also rode on mule backs and stayed in small and poor *posadas* on the road. In this way, I agree with recent perspectives that present survey collecting in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century as a combination of scientific work and leisure travel that was often embedded in complex commercial and scientific networks, and constantly relied on existing infrastructures to facilitate the journeys.<sup>64</sup>

When Howarth Boyle, a teenager that accompanied Miller in the expedition to Antioquia in 1914 reached Colombia, he seemed to be surprised by the comforts of the expedition. He wrote to his aunt Belle back in the United States that the trip from the Caribbean coast to the interior along the Magdalena River was done in first class; and both he and Miller stayed in the nicest hotels of Cartagena and Medellín.<sup>65</sup> Staying in nice hotels was not an exclusive perk for Miller and Boyle. All the expeditions followed the same path. George Cherrie's journal of expedition in 1913 mentioned nice hotels along their trip to Bogotá, as well as the Hotel Europa in Bogotá, one of the most exclusive at the time.<sup>66</sup>

The AMNH expeditions also used the growing commercial expansion of the United States to support their work. For example, the scientists traveled

63. For Roosevelt's account of his travel experiences to Africa and South America see: Theodore Roosevelt, *African Game Trails, an Account of the African Wanderings of an American Hunter-Naturalist* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1910); Theodore Roosevelt, *Through the Brazilian Wilderness* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1914). For a brief analysis of the way Roosevelt and other American travelers associated wilderness with manliness see: William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1995), 77-78.

64. Kohler, *All Creatures: Naturalists, Collectors, and Biodiversity, 1850-1950*. See also: Mark V. Barrow, "The Specimen Dealer: Entrepreneurial Natural History in America's Gilded Age," *Journal of the History of Biology* 33, no. 3 (2000). For a general approach to the problem of scientific practices in the field see: Kuklick and Kohler, eds., *Science in the Field*.

65. Howarth Boyle to Aunt Belle, 2 November 1914, Folder Boyle Howarth: Letters to Family, Box: Bolivia Expeditions, Archives, Department of Ornithology, AMNH.

66. George K. Cherrie, "Field Journal," Folder: Cherrie, George K. Colombia 1913, Box: Cherrie, George Field, Archives, Department of Ornithology, AMNH.

to Colombia and then back to New York in boats owned by the United Fruit Company. This big corporation established enclaves in several Latin American countries including Colombia. The “Fruit Boats”, as they came to be known by the expedition members, not only carried bananas back to the United States, they also carried naturalists and all the unprocessed birds that were going to become the raw materials of scientific theories in the United States.<sup>67</sup>

In Colombia, while on the road far from cities with proper accommodations, the lodging was usually facilitated by *posadas*, common lodges along the paths that were popular when most traveling was done by horse or mule. The AMNH expeditions also relied heavily on the network that other Americans had already established in Colombia at the turn of the twentieth century, especially in the *haciendas* or estates that many of them had been able to purchase. For example, the expedition to the Cali region in 1911 benefited a great deal from the help of the Eder brothers, two Americans who had purchased a large *hacienda* in the Cauca Valley and established one of the largest sugar refineries of the country. The expedition did some of its most important collecting while located on the Eder’s estate.<sup>68</sup> Likewise, the 1913 expedition party stayed in the *hacienda* El Triunfo, a large ranch owned by an American with 3,000 acres and about 1,400 heads of cattle near the town of Honda, before starting their journey up the Andes on their way to Bogotá.<sup>69</sup>

The conditions in which the expeditions were carried out are particularly important because they show that the collecting of specimens was carried out in those regions of the country with a more developed infrastructure. The expeditions rarely traveled to remote places that were far away from roads, small towns, etc. They often followed the paths that had already been established in the country, depended on the hotels and *posadas* that were common along the heavily traveled trails, and relied on the supplies of the larger towns of the regions they were studying. Collecting birds and nature, in most occasions, was attached to the degree of “civilization” of the region.

*Haciendas* were good examples of the type of location in which fieldwork was pursued. Besides the fact that they could provide excellent base camps for expedition members in terms of housing, closeness to supplies, and facilities to work on the skinning of birds, *haciendas* also presented an appropriate landscape to hunt birds. Contrary to common belief, the hunting for birds was not usually carried in the middle of dense forests or jungles, in the same

67. George K. Cherrie, “Field Journal,” Folder: Cherrie, George K. Colombia 1913, Box: Cherrie, George Field, Archives, Department of Ornithology, AMNH.

68. Chapman, “The Distribution of Bird-Life in Colombia: A Contribution to a Biological Survey of South America,” 22.

69. George K. Cherrie, “Field Journal,” Folder: Cherrie, George K. Colombia 1913, Box: Cherrie, George Field, Archives, Department of Ornithology, AMNH.

way that birds were usually not collected in the middle of urban locations. The reason for this was the logistics of the hunt. If you are in a heavily foliaged jungle or forest, as soon as you hunt a bird it would not be easy to see where it falls in order to collect it. Likewise, if you are in the middle of an urban landscape, while you avoid the problem of the dense forest obstructing your capture of the hunted birds, the diversity of species would be greatly reduced. Ornithologists tended to find a proper balance between a landscape of civilization and wilderness in order to carry out their daily collecting trips.

Louis Agassiz Fuertes,<sup>70</sup> one of the most famous bird illustrators in twentieth century America and a personal friend of Chapman, explained to his wife Mary Fuertes the problems of collecting in heavily-foliaged sites, in a letter written during his first expedition to Colombia in 1911: "Trogons and toucans are quite common, though not easy to get. The difficulty lies in finding what we have shot after it is down, as unless you mark it exactly as it falls there is no hope, the undergrowth is so thick... Hummers are lost four to one."<sup>71</sup> Of course, this did not mean that expedition members did not see the value of collecting in dense forests. On the contrary, dense forests had the potential of having the greatest number of species in relation to surveyed areas. However, the hunting was much more difficult and although it was sometimes pursued, in many other instances it was put aside. In 1913, when the expedition party was traveling by train to Fusagasugá, a town near Bogotá, George Cherrie wrote in his journal that along the journey he saw "one of the most wonderful tropical forests I have ever seen."<sup>72</sup> But as soon as they got to the town of Fusagasugá, Cherrie realized that the area was too open and would not be as conducive to collecting as that of the heavy forest. Nevertheless, the expedition had no choice and had to settle for collecting near the coffee estates of the region. Once again, even if better collecting could be found in specific regions of

70. Fuertes, born in 1874, received his name because of his father's admiration for Louis Agassiz, the Swiss-born American naturalist who became famous for his role in the founding of the Museum of Comparative Zoology as a professor at Harvard University. From an early age, Fuertes developed an interest in bird illustration, an activity that later on he was able to pursue as a professional career. Fuertes also became a member of Cornell University, where he continued to teach until his early death in 1927. See: Frank M. Chapman, "In Memoriam: Louis Agassiz Fuertes 1874-1927," *The Auk* 45, no. 1 (1928). For a good history of the role that Louis Agassiz played in the foundation of the Museum of Comparative Zoology see: Mary P. Winsor, *Reading the Shape of Nature: Comparative Zoology at the Agassiz Museum* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

71. Louis Agassiz Fuertes to Mary Fuertes, 31 March 1911, quoted in: Fuertes and Boynton, *Louis Agassiz Fuertes: His Life Briefly Told and His Correspondence*, 142.

72. George K. Cherrie, "Field Journal," Folder: Cherrie, George K. Colombia 1913, Box: Cherrie, George Field, Archives, Department of Ornithology, AMNH.

Colombia, the expeditions had to limit their collecting to those areas where basic infrastructure had already been developed.

Although the most important part of the expedition was to collect as many birds as possible in the greatest variety of regions, Louis Agassiz Fuertes also had a different task that was of great importance for Chapman: drawing the general landscape in which birds were collected. By the time Chapman headed south to Colombia in 1911 to lead his first expedition, Fuertes was already a close friend and he seemed like the perfect choice, not only as a companion, but as an illustrator. The two of them had already been in different expeditions both inside and outside of North American soil. In 1911, soon after the party touched Colombian soil and had made one of the first trips to survey the Cauca Valley region, Fuertes wrote to his wife:

[We] leave tomorrow for a return over our yesterday's trail, and will be  
haciendados of 'La Henriquita' for a while, where I can get a good view  
of the cordillera central, with the Cauca valley for middle ground, and  
the near forest for local foreground. There I will paint such moments as  
are propitious, and hunt and collect and help with the group materials  
and accessories the rest of the time.<sup>73</sup>

About a week later he wrote again to his wife happy with the results of his paintings: "I'm now about through with my part of the group work: I have painted and checked up the study for the background, and made notes of forest-colors for Horsfall to use, and done a lot of flowers, etc."<sup>74</sup> The Horsfall that Fuertes mentioned made reference to Robert Bruce Horsfall (1868-1948), an important illustrator at the AMNH. Horsfall was hired by Chapman to draw many of the backgrounds that are still visible today in the Hall of North American birds.

In 1913, Chapman invited Fuertes again to join the party of the AMNH in the ambitious expedition to collect birds cross the Eastern Andes in Colombia. Once again Fuertes' main task was to get a close look at the landscape and make the proper illustrations for further study back in the United States. In February of that year, after the party had finished the trip up the Magdalena River, Chapman decided to stay in the region around the city of Honda for a few days to collect some birds before starting the land journey to Bogotá. At the time Fuertes cheerfully wrote to his wife:

73. Louis Agassiz Fuertes to Mary Fuertes, 28 March 1911, quoted in: Fuertes and Boynton, *Louis Agassiz Fuertes: His Life Briefly Told and His Correspondence*, 141.

74. Louis Agassiz Fuertes to Mary Fuertes, 5 April 1911, quoted in: Fuertes and Boynton, *Louis Agassiz Fuertes: His Life Briefly Told and His Correspondence*, 144.

We had marvelous weather and I painted three big panels showing the whole panorama—a perfect whiz of a view. The painting hours were from 6 am to 7 am and from 8 to 10, varying with the day. We only had three mornings so we did well. [Chapman] is very happy with the pictures and thinks 'em the best I've done and quite sufficient, so I am also relieved... We feel we have done mighty well, for we have got the great thing we came for—the painting. I feel I have justified my coming, and we have got together 600 birds as a by product, and are just starting in.<sup>75</sup>

The presence of Fuertes in the 1911 and 1913 AMNH expeditions to Colombia has important relevance for our analysis. The drawings that Fuertes did were not destined exclusively for the creation of artistic diorama backgrounds that would eventually be designed for exhibits composed of select collected specimens. Fuertes' drawings also had scientific value in helping Chapman discern important geographic and climatic features in the landscape that could explain the distribution and abundance of the birds of Colombia. Understanding the influence of weather and the topography of the region in relation to bird evolution was one of Chapman's main goals, and the landscape—the same landscape that had influenced the distribution of black and indigenous people along the Colombian territory—in which nature evolved was a central factor.

Chapman finished writing his report on the eight expeditions to Colombia in 1917. It was published in the *Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History* with the title "The Distribution of Bird-life in Colombia: A Contribution to a Biological Survey of South America." Its 729 pages took up the entire 36<sup>th</sup> volume of the journal that year.<sup>76</sup>

After 1917, however, the Museum shifted its attention away from Colombia. After all, Chapman's original purpose was to survey South America as a whole. Chapman then occupied his attention in other countries, especially Ecuador, Perú and Panama. In 1921 he published "The distribution of bird life in the Urubamba valley of Perú," a report on expeditions carried in that country.<sup>77</sup> In 1926 he finished his report on the collecting expeditions to Ecuador, which Chapman saw as one of his most important achievements in his quest to

75. Louis Agassiz Fuertes to Mary Fuertes, 9 February 1913, quoted in: Fuertes and Boynton, *Louis Agassiz Fuertes: His Life Briefly Told and His Correspondence*, 172.

76. Chapman, "The Distribution of Bird-Life in Colombia: A Contribution to a Biological Survey of South America."

77. Frank M. Chapman, "The Distribution of Bird-Life in the Urubamba Valley of Perú," *Bulletin of the United States National Museum* 117 (1921).

understand the origin of bird-life in South America.<sup>78</sup> In the last decade of his life Chapman devoted much effort and attention to the study of the avifauna in Barro Colorado, in the Panama Canal.

The AMNH expeditions to Colombia in the first decades of the twentieth century are a good entry point to pursue a study of United States-Colombia scientific relations. By looking at the context of the United States' growing influence over Latin America, it is possible to see the imperialist perspectives that American scientists brought to Colombia. The way they perceived the landscape, the natural world, as well as the people that inhabited the country, reflected a context in which many Americans saw themselves as big brothers of all Latin American countries, whose mission was not only to police the region, but also to pursue a civilizing mission throughout the continent.

However, United States-Colombia scientific relations were much more intricate than the simple extraction of natural specimens by North Americans from Colombian territory. We have not yet looked at the complexities that the Colombian context brought to these relations. This was particularly the case in the first decades of the twentieth century, when a community of naturalists emerged in Colombia. The first connections between AMNH ornithologists and naturalists in Colombia also reflected strong and complex power relations.

### The La Salle Brothers and the AMNH Connection

The interest in the study of birds by naturalists based in Colombia can be traced back to the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when amateur naturalists gathered some of the first collections of birds.<sup>79</sup> However, it was not until the early twentieth century that naturalists in Colombia decided to pursue a systematic study of Colombia's avifauna. One name in particular is associated with the origins of Colombian ornithology: Nicholas Seiler, more commonly known among Colombia's scientific community as Brother Apolinar María. Apolinar was born in Alsace-Lorraine, France, in 1867. He became a member of the community of the La Salle Brothers and devoted an important part of his education in Europe to the study of natural history. In 1904 he

78. Frank M. Chapman, "The Distribution of Bird-Life in Ecuador," *Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History* 55 (1926).

79. F. Gary Stiles, "Buffon: Su época, su obra y el desarrollo de la ornitología en Colombia," in *Aves de Colombia: Grabados iluminados del siglo XVIII, realizados por Martinet para la obra Historia Natural de las Aves de Georges-Louis Leclerc, Conde de Buffon* (Bogotá: Villegas Editores, 1993).

was commissioned to travel to Colombia to back up the work of the La Salle community.<sup>80</sup>

As soon as Apolinar arrived in Colombia he initiated what were to become fifty years of almost relentless work collecting plants and animals from all over the country. While traveling up the Magdalena River on his journey to Bogotá, he gathered the first specimens of what later became the natural history collection of the La Salle Brothers, the biggest collection of its kind in the country in the first half of the twentieth century. In 1910 Apolinar became director of the Instituto de La Salle, a position he used to promote the study of natural history in the country. The Instituto was at the time one of the most important educational institutes in Bogotá responsible for the primary and secondary education of many prominent members of elite society in Bogotá. This meant that Apolinar became acquainted with some of the most powerful families in the country, certainly a valuable position for somebody that intended to advance the study of nature, a topic that until then had received little attention in Colombia.

In July 20, 1910, soon after his appointment as director, Apolinar founded the Museo de La Salle. The La Salle Museum became the most important museum of natural history in the country and the only institution at the time devoted entirely to the study of nature. Likewise, in 1912 Apolinar established the Sociedad de Ciencias Naturales del Instituto de La Salle (Society of Natural Sciences of the La Salle Institute). The Society, headed by Apolinar, was made up of important personalities and intellectuals of Bogotá's elite society and some of Apolinar's students at the Instituto.<sup>81</sup> In February of 1913 the official bulletin of the Society came into existence: the *Boletín de la Sociedad de Ciencias Naturales del Instituto de la Salle*.

The resident foreign naturalist, such as Apolinar, was a common figure in Latin America at this time. The Swiss naturalist Henri Pittier and the German naturalist Teodor Wolff carried out some of the most important scientific studies in Venezuela and Ecuador, respectively. In the case of Colombia this apparent contradiction—the fact that the study of “national” nature seemed to be pursued chiefly by foreigners—becomes less pronounced once we understand a little bit about the country’s educational system at the time. In the 1880s, with the

80. Héctor López López, *Contribuciones de los lasallistas a las ciencias naturales en Colombia* (Bogotá: FEN Colombia, 1989).

81. In fact many of Colombia’s ministers at the time were part of the Sociedad according to Apolinar, Apolinar María, “Catálogo de los señores socios,” *Boletín de la Sociedad de Ciencias Naturales del Instituto de la Salle* 3, no. 10 (1915). For a good study of the privileged position of the La Salle community in Colombian society and as one of the first scientific communities in Colombia see: Diana Obregón Torres, *Sociedades científicas en Colombia: la invención de una tradición 1859-1936* (Bogotá: Banco de la República, 1992).

arrival of a series of strong conservative governments that lasted until the 1920s, Colombia opted to cede the education of the populace to the Catholic Church. Catholic schools became the backbone of this enterprise, and many foreign priests, particularly Europeans, arrived in Colombia to help carry out this plan. At the same time, these conservative governments reduced direct funding for natural history enterprises to a minimum. In this context, it is no surprise that foreign priests, such as the French priests of the La Salle community, would undertake the task of studying Colombia's natural world. As we will see, it was not until the 1930s, when the government resumed funding for education and scientific enterprises, that a community of professional Colombian naturalists could consolidate.<sup>82</sup>

With a newly founded museum, a recently established society, and Colombia's first journal dedicated to the study of nature, Apolinar felt prepared to tackle the enormous task of collecting and studying the many known and unknown animals and plants of Colombia. For more than twenty years he directed and published almost the entirety of his work in the *Bulletin*. It is, therefore, a useful source for the historian to study the evolution of Apolinar's society, his views of science, and the way he tried to approach the study of birds in Colombia.

In terms of ornithology the journal in its initial years had four different goals. First of all it described the collection of birds that the society started to form little by little. At the end of 1914, for example, Apolinar published a small piece reporting 3,477 bird specimens at the Museum. Second, it tried to describe those species collected by the Society that were apparently new to science. This task, however, as we will see below, proved harder than Apolinar initially suspected. The lack of books and other ornithological collections in Colombia at the time made it difficult to know if a specific bird skin corresponded to a new species or not.<sup>83</sup> Third, it announced any new research carried out by foreign naturalists regarding Colombia's avifauna. In July of 1914, for example, Apolinar published a piece explaining some newly discovered birds of Colombia by Frank Chapman, the curator of ornithology at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City.<sup>84</sup> Finally, the journal tried from the beginning to serve as a channel to educate young generations on how to become good naturalists. One

82. A good study to understand the role of conservative education in the first decades of the twentieth century and the transition to a more liberal education in the 1930s and 1940s is: Aline Helg, *La educación en Colombia, 1918-1957* (Bogotá: Plaza & Janes Editores, 2001).

83. A good example of the ornithological studies carried out by Apolinar is: Apolinar María, "Observaciones ornitológicas," *Boletín de la Sociedad de Ciencias Naturales del Instituto de la Salle* 5, no. 36 (1917).

84. Apolinar María, "Aves descubiertas y descritas por el señor doctor don Frank Chapman," *Boletín de la Sociedad de Ciencias Naturales del Instituto de la Salle* 2, no. 6 (1914).

of Apolinar's articles in 1914, titled "*Indicaciones para los jóvenes naturalistas*" or "Indications for the young naturalists," explained how to prepare bird skins after they had been shot.<sup>85</sup>

These four characteristics give us a general perspective of the way Apolinar tried to approach the study of science in Colombia in the early 1910s. His purpose was to combine his desire to contribute to international science by collecting and trying to identify birds previously unknown to science, with the need to educate younger generations and other naturalists in the nation by divulging the latest research that foreign naturalists were putting forward, as well as explaining the proper practices of a naturalist. Apolinar tried to adapt to the historical context of Colombia, where a professional interest in the natural sciences, especially ornithology, was only beginning to grow.

However, Apolinar's task of finding and describing new bird species proved more difficult than he initially expected. Identifying a bird is a meticulous process that takes days or even months. After the bird is collected and properly skinned, it has to be compared with similar birds to determine if it can be classified as a new species or not. Sometimes this work can be done using books that include good and extensive illustrations of specific families of birds. But in most circumstances the situation requires further study. In general, large collections of bird skins are needed to determine the newness of a bird specimen. Usually dozens of comparable bird skins are needed to get the proper identification for a new bird species. Furthermore, once a naturalist concludes that a specific bird might be considered new to science, he or she needs to check in all the latest journals in case someone unexpectedly described the same bird in another publication. As a general rule, the first scientist to describe in print a new species gets all the credit for it. He or she is considered the discoverer and the person that properly identified it.

In the early twentieth century only a handful of institutions in the world had the necessary facilities to allow this process, most notably the British Museum in London, the Jardin des Plantes in Paris, and the growing museums of natural history in the United States, including the American Museum in New York and the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. Colombia was far from having the necessary infrastructure. Luckily for Apolinar a solution presented itself.

In February of 1913, when Frank Chapman reached Bogotá, as part of the schedule of the seventh expedition of the AMNH he met with Brother Apolinar hoping to obtain from him important information about the trade

85. Apolinar María, "Indicaciones para los jóvenes naturalistas," *Boletín de la Sociedad de Ciencias Naturales del Instituto de la Salle* 2, no. 10 (1914).

of Bogotá skins.<sup>86</sup> The encounter between both naturalists proved to be very successful. Later in his life, Chapman wrote about the encounter in his autobiography:

For his long and devoted service to science, Colombia is more deeply indebted to this modest, retiring priest than she will ever realize. From him I learned many facts concerning the feather trade... Brother Apolinar was familiar with its story, knew where the collectors had worked and was acquainted with those who were still active.<sup>87</sup>

Thanks in part to Apolinar's information, Chapman was able to conclude that most of the "Bogotá birds" had not been collected in the region around Bogotá. Although most of them had been shipped from this city—where many collectors had based their operations—the birds had been collected by locals in other regions of Colombia.

This first encounter marked the beginning of a fruitful relationship between both naturalists. A few months after Chapman returned to New York from the expedition, Apolinar wrote him a letter to check if Chapman's address was correct in order to send him some birds for identification.<sup>88</sup> If there were no resources in Colombia to identify the birds that Apolinar was constantly collecting for his Museum, he figured he could use the help of Americans. Chapman replied about a month later telling him that he was glad to hear from him and welcomed the opportunity to identify yet unknown birds. He also added, "We have all reached home safely together with our collections... The birds represent no less than 505 species."<sup>89</sup> The fact that one collecting trip had yielded specimens from 505 different species was for Chapman a clear indication of the great variety of birds that could be found within Colombia's borders. It also offered enough material for a published report describing many new species previously unknown to science. If Apolinar was going to send even

86. For Chapman the Bogotá region had particular importance in his quest to understand the bird life of the country. For many decades in the late nineteenth century, commercial collectors based in Colombia sold thousands and thousands of birds to dealers in Europe and North America to supply not only the private natural history collections of the wealthy, but also the demand for birds and feathers to decorate women's hats, a business that became very lucrative. The many birds that left Colombia as commodities in the late nineteenth century became known to ornithologists worldwide as the "Bogotá skins." For a more thorough study of the place of the birds of Colombia in this story see chapter 1 of this book.

87. Chapman, *Autobiography of a Bird-Lover*, 246.

88. Brother Apolinar María to Frank Chapman, 29 April 1913, General Correspondence, Archives, Department of Ornithology, AMNH.

89. Frank M. Chapman to Brother Apolinar María, 22 May 1913, General Correspondence, Archives, Department of Ornithology, AMNH.

more unidentified birds that could complement the final report on the birds of Colombia, Chapman was certainly happy to help.

In the next two years, Apolinar sent Chapman several specimens that he had not been able to identify in Colombia. Apolinar would send the bird skins to New York in boxes shipped via regular mail. Once in New York, Chapman would try to identify them and then he would send the birds back to Colombia.<sup>90</sup> This, of course, was a beneficial situation for both naturalists. Apolinar was happy to receive the help of a foreign scientist, especially in a task that otherwise he would not have been able to pursue. Furthermore, he was also able to keep the original birds he collected. In Chapman's case, although he was often not able to retain the birds for the AMNH collection, he kept something more important: the right to be the first naturalist to identify and publish a description of a bird previously unknown in the ornithological community.<sup>91</sup>

The balance of power in the relationship between both naturalists leaned heavily toward the American side, especially since Chapman received scientific recognition in an international realm when he published the results of the birds sent by Apolinar. However, the relationship also shows that naturalists in Colombia learned to use U.S.-Colombian scientific relations to pursue their own interests and were far from being mere puppets of American imperialism.

Chapman never saw Apolinar as a colleague, nor did he establish the same scientific relationship with him as with other naturalists in the United States or Europe. A comparison between the way in which he handled the trade of bird specimens with Apolinar in Colombia and with other ornithologists in the United States offers a telling example of this asymmetry in scientific exchange. In early 1914, Chapman wrote a letter to Outram Bangs at the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard University (MCZ). While Chapman was working on the identification of the many birds collected in Colombia, he realized that the collections at the AMNH were not going to be enough to identify some of the specimens. He decided to write a letter to Outram Bangs requesting some of the bird skins in the collection of the MCZ to complement his studies. Cooperation between North American ornithologists was not

90. Brother Apolinar María to Frank M. Chapman, 10 October 1914; Frank M. Chapman to Brother Apolinar María, 10 November 1914, General Correspondence, Archives, Department of Ornithology, AMNH.

91. The trade of birds among them, however, sometimes took more complicated turns. On many occasions Apolinar sent birds as gifts to the AMNH. He also sent birds expecting other skins in return to complement the collection at the La Salle Museum in Bogotá. In this way, birds also became commodities that enhanced the scientific relation between both countries. For a more detailed study of birds as commodities in U.S.-Colombia scientific relations see chapter 3.

uncommon. Most scientists realized that no museum of natural history held complete enough collections to classify every bird collected and learned that cooperation between institutions was necessary to achieve their goals. Around April of 1914 Bangs sent to the AMNH the box with the specimens. Chapman immediately replied: "We are very grateful to you for responding so generously to our request for specimens, and the lot you have sent places us deeply in debt."<sup>92</sup> Bangs was a contemporary of Chapman and had already done some work on the birds of Colombia, especially the birds of the Santa Marta region. Chapman also wrote in his letter,

Many thanks to you for sending me your series of *Dysithamus* and *Elainopsis* for Western Colombia. I shall be glad to compare them with ours, but should either or both prove to be new I should much prefer to have you describe them, since they were in your collection before we received them.<sup>93</sup>

This quote reveals several important conclusions. Chapman clearly saw Bangs and Apolinar and their place in science quite differently. If Bangs sent Chapman birds that turned out to be species unknown to ornithology from the MCZ collections, Chapman did not think it was appropriate to take advantage of the situation and claim the right to describe them in print. On the contrary, he thought that the birds belonged to the Cambridge Museum, and it was the ornithologists in that institution who should have the privilege of identifying them as new. This, of course, contrasted drastically with the relationship that Chapman established with Apolinar and the museum of the La Salle Brothers. If the specimens that Apolinar sent to Chapman turned out to be unknown species, he never assumed that Apolinar was entitled to describe them for the first time. In Chapman's eyes he had scientific and intellectual rights over the birds sent from Colombia, a position he would never undertake with birds that were already in the United States and belonged to another American institution.

This episode also says much about the relation between nation and naturalists. Even if Apolinar was French by birth, his location in Colombia made him more of a Colombian naturalist in Chapman's perception. It is probable that if a naturalist in Paris had asked Chapman to identify some birds collected in Colombia, he would have never assumed that Chapman had the right to

92. Frank M. Chapman to Outram Bangs, 17 April 1914, General Correspondence, Archives, Department of Ornithology, AMNH.

93. Frank M. Chapman to Outram Bangs, 17 April 1914, General Correspondence, Archives, Department of Ornithology, AMNH.

publish the results and just send the birds back to Paris. Nevertheless, Apolinar was based in Bogotá, something that changed his position in the international scientific arena. In the eyes of Chapman, Colombia was part of a larger region that still needed to learn much from the United States.

Theodore Roosevelt's corollary to the Monroe Doctrine of 1904 was still active in the United States' approach to the region, and the perspective of scientists in the United States towards scientists based in Latin American countries followed the same lines. When Chapman wrote his autobiography he recalled the time when Roosevelt, a close friend, was about to sail on his famous trip along the Amazon River in South America in the following way:

Some time during the summer of 1913, preceding the October in which the expedition sailed, I said to Colonel Roosevelt: 'I hope, Colonel, that while you are in South America, you will not talk about the Monroe Doctrine.' That,' he replied, 'is exactly what I am going to talk about, and I believe that I can present it in a manner acceptable to those countries.'<sup>94</sup>

In other passages of Chapman's autobiography it becomes clear that Chapman was well aware of Roosevelt's approach to Latin America and he shared the idea that Latin Americans still needed to learn much from the United States.<sup>95</sup>

Besides Brother Apolinar, there was another member of the La Salle community that became central to the establishment of a naturalist tradition in Colombia: Antoine Rouhaire Siauzada, more commonly known as Brother Nicéforo María. Brother Nicéforo was born in 1888 in Pradal, France. Like Apolinar, he carried out all his studies in religion and nature in Europe before traveling to Colombia in 1908, where he remained until his death in 1980. Once in Colombia, Nicéforo also became passionate about the study of Colombia's animals, especially birds.<sup>96</sup>

Nevertheless, unlike Apolinar, who traveled directly to Bogotá, Nicéforo arrived in Medellín, the second largest city in Colombia after Bogotá, where he stayed for more than a decade teaching at the Colegio de San José,

94. Chapman, *Autobiography of a Bird-Lover*, 216.

95. For studies on Roosevelt's life and North American expansion see: Richard H. Collin, *Theodore Roosevelt, Culture, Diplomacy, and Expansion: A New View of American Imperialism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985); John Milton Cooper, *The Warrior and the Priest: Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1983); Kathleen Dalton, *Theodore Roosevelt: A Strenuous Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002).

96. López López, *Contribuciones de los lasallistas a las ciencias naturales en Colombia*.

an institution ran by the La Salle Brothers. Like Apolinar, Nicéforo established a relationship with Chapman and in a letter of November 1914, Nicéforo explained that he corresponded constantly with Apolinar and that whenever he needed to classify the birds he collected around Medellín, he had to send them to Apolinar in order to verify the correct classification.<sup>97</sup> Nicéforo's situation in his first years in Colombia illuminates the complexities that scholars need to consider when studying the rise of scientific communities in Latin American countries. Although Medellín was a very prominent Colombian city at the time, the scientific resources to study and classify birds were even more reduced than the ones Apolinar had in Bogotá. Colombia was a highly centralized country and elites from Bogotá had tried to convert their city into the center of political, economic, social and cultural activity since colonial times. Apolinar's presence in Bogotá, and his closeness to some of the most influential families in the country, gave him a better position in scientific terms over Nicéforo, who did not have the same resources in Medellín. This meant that power structures among scientists were also present within Colombian borders, especially during the emergence of a community of naturalists. In the same way that the balance of power in the relationship between Chapman and Apolinar leaned towards the North American side, the balance of power between Apolinar and Nicéforo in the study of nature leaned towards Bogotá.

In the same letter to Chapman, Nicéforo also stated his interest in sending bird specimens to New York to be identified. Chapman immediately replied, telling him that he would gladly do it. "In return for a similar service," Chapman wrote,

Brother Apolinar permits us to keep specimens of which he has duplicates, and in cases of this kind, he places a number on each label. When we return the specimen, we send him the name in connection with the number, thus permitting him to place the proper name with duplicate specimens which he has retained. When no duplicate specimens are available, he sends to us his specimens, and we return the species named.<sup>98</sup>

Chapman hoped to get specimens unknown to science that he could then describe. Of course, he ran the risk that most of the birds that the La Salle

97. Brother Nicéforo María to Frank M. Chapman, 13 November 1914, General Correspondence, Archives, Department of Ornithology, AMNH.

98. Frank M. Chapman to Brother Nicéforo María, 11 December 1914, General Correspondence, Archives, Department of Ornithology, AMNH.

Brothers sent were already known species. He also hoped to keep some of the specimens to enlarge the collection of birds at the AMNH. For the La Salle Brothers the exchange meant that they could deepen their studies on Colombian birds. Furthermore, it meant that they could engage in contact with a foreign scientist, something that would increase their status inside Colombia's intellectual milieu.

It is clear that the Sociedad de Ciencias Naturales established by Apolinar saw the relation with foreign naturalists not only as positive, but also desirable. For example, in the Sociedad's session of September 6, 1915, a letter that Chapman sent to Apolinar was read out loud as a great honor for the society. The Act of the session read, "A letter by honorary member Chapman was read, in which he requested data regarding the birds of [Bogotá's] Savannah for an ornithology publication he is elaborating."<sup>99</sup> Chapman's appointment as an honorary member of the Sociedad just because he visited the Museum in 1913 and helped Apolinar with identifications every now and then, made little difference in Chapman's career path. But to Apolinar and the Society, it made an important difference to have a foreign naturalist in their midst. Although U.S. imperialism lent confidence to Chapman's belief that he was superior in many respects to Colombian scientists, Colombians also contributed to this asymmetrical power relationship. The glorification of North American science began in the early twentieth century and was still present in the 1940s. Scholars have recently made the important argument that the cultural imperial relations between the United States and Latin America, although unbalanced, served interest on both sides.<sup>100</sup> In science this imperialistic relation was also fueled by the view that Colombian naturalists had developed about North American science. Colombian scientists in many cases invited North American imperialism into their studies.

By 1916 it became clear that Apolinar's desire to use the bulletin of the Sociedad de Ciencias Naturales as a channel to publish his own research on the new species he discovered was waning little by little, precisely because he did not have the necessary resources to identify new species from old ones. He constantly published references to rare specimens that needed further study, but he could not give the Bulletin the international status he had originally hoped when it was first published in 1913. Instead, Apolinar started to rely on North American publications that analyzed the new research being carried out on Colombia's avifauna. He translated and published articles by Chapman,

99. S. Mutis Dávila, "Acta de la sesión del 6 de septiembre de 1915," *Boletín de la Sociedad de Ciencias Naturales del Instituto de la Salle* 3, no. 9 (1915).

100. Joseph, LeGrand, and Salvatore, eds., *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations*.

J. A. Allen, and W. E. Clyde Todd, among others. In this way the Bulletin became more a channel to divulge than to present new data.

In *A Passion for Birds*, historian of science Mark Barrow convincingly argued that amateurs played an important role in the development of North American ornithology throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>101</sup> Professional ornithologists did not have the manpower to collect and classify all the birds present within North America's political boundaries. Consequently, they had to establish a sometimes problematic but fruitful relationship with amateur naturalists. Amateurs collected birds and sent them to ornithologists to be classified. An important part of North America's avifauna came to be known in scientific terms through this process.<sup>102</sup>

The relationship between American ornithologists and Colombian naturalists bears similar comparisons. Perhaps because American ornithologists understood the importance of amateurs and their role in the creation of bird collections, Colombian scientists like Apolinar and Nicéforo were able to make an important connection with people like Chapman and Allen. But in the eyes of Chapman, the La Salle Brothers were little more than amateurs who supplied professional ornithologists in the United States with the raw material to advance his scientific studies. Chapman never intended to see Apolinar or Nicéforo as colleagues that could contribute directly to the study of nature. This was a perspective that characterized relationships between American and Colombian naturalists throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

The La Salle Brothers had different motivations for entering into this trade. They considered themselves naturalists who were capable of contributing to international science, but were hampered by the lack of resources in the country. Furthermore, many of the members of the Sociedad were amateurs that never intended to pursue the study of nature in a professional way. They enjoyed collecting rare specimens and bringing them to the meetings every

101. Barrow, *A Passion for Birds: American Ornithology after Audubon*.

102. The difference between professionals and amateurs is not easy to establish in American science. Nathan Reingold has appropriately argued that during the nineteenth century more than professionals, academics that studied the natural world should be grouped into cultivators, practitioners, and researchers. Nevertheless, during the twentieth century, with the establishment of professional societies and the strengthening of graduate programs, the professionalization of science acquired a new status within American academia. In this book a professional in science from the American perspective is regarded as a person that holds a Ph.D., works for a living, and is recognized by professional associations as a contributor to the advancement of scientific knowledge. See: Nathan Reingold, "Definitions and Speculations: The Professionalization of Science in America in the Nineteenth Century," in *The Pursuit of Knowledge in the Early American Republic: American Scientific and Learned Societies from Colonial Times to the Civil War*, ed. Sanborn Conner Brown and Alexandra Oleson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

now and then. In every issue of the Sociedad's bulletin, the last page included annotations on the many birds, butterflies, snakes, among other animals, collected by one or more members, which were brought to Bogotá to be studied by the Sociedad, especially by Apolinar. Although Apolinar and Nicéforo were probably seen as advanced and helpful amateurs in the eyes of North Americans, inside the naturalist community in Colombia they were true professionals and savants.

The Sociedad's main purpose was not to mimic the work of North Americans. As historians of science and imperialism have argued in the past decades, the science carried out in colonial settings was also molded to local necessities.<sup>103</sup> The study of nature in Colombia was not intended solely to gain international recognition. As explained in the official statutes, "The end of the Sociedad de Ciencias Naturales is to promote the study of the natural richness of the nation's soil and apply such study to industry, agriculture and commerce."<sup>104</sup> This meant that science, besides having a theoretical appeal for Apolinar, was also seen as contributing practical knowledge that could be beneficial for the country. In 1917, for example, Apolinar wrote a small article on the economic importance that the birds around Bogotá had for agriculture. After collecting dozens of specimens, Apolinar proceeded to analyze the content of their stomachs to understand the feeding regimens in each species. "In this way," he wrote, "we intend to interest the enthusiasts in Colombian ornithology and serve agriculture by making known the useful and harmful species, so the farmer can destroy the latter in the plantations."<sup>105</sup>

This practical approach to science was less indebted to international interactions between scientists and has been common to the development of scientific knowledge in the so-called less developed countries. It does not require knowledge of the latest publications, nor does it involve the use of the grand collections of natural history available in Europe or the United States. Furthermore, since it brings a direct benefit for the country, the scientist

103. Some of the most important studies are: Lafuente, Elena, and Ortega, eds., *Mundialización de la ciencia y cultura nacional: actas del Congreso Internacional "Ciencia, Descubrimiento y Mundo Colonial"*; MacLeod, ed., *Nature and Empire: Science and the Colonial Enterprise*; Petitjean, Jami, and Moulin, eds., *Science and Empires: Historical Studies about Scientific Development and European Expansion*.

104. The original reads: "El fin de la Sociedad de Ciencias Naturales es fomentar el estudio de la riqueza natural del suelo patrio y aplicar dicho estudio a la industria, agricultura y comercio." Apolinar María, "Estatutos de la Sociedad de Ciencias Naturales," *Boletín de la Sociedad de Ciencias Naturales del Instituto de la Salle* 4, no. 27 (1916): Backcover.

105. The original reads: "De este modo pensamos interesar a los aficionados a la ornitología colombiana y prestar servicio a la agricultura, ya haciendo conocer las especies útiles, ya las nocivas, para que el agricultor destruya estas últimas en sus cultivos." Apolinar María, "Observaciones ornitológicas."

carrying them out would most likely obtain the recognition of his or her countrymen. Apolinar was aware of the positive aspects of having this practical approach in a place like Colombia and did not hesitate to follow this path as well.

Nevertheless, the desire to collect and discover new species with the hope of gaining recognition in the international arena of science continued to be Apolinar's and Nicéforo's main focus in their studies. This meant that a connection with foreign naturalists was necessary, especially with the North Americans who had developed an interest in Colombia. The fruitful connection that the La Salle Brothers had started with the AMNH in 1913 seemed to be the best path to follow.

Unfortunately, North Americans had other plans and by 1917 the relationship started to fade. Up until then the Brothers had sent many skins to Chapman and Allen for identification. The specimens were rapidly identified in New York and the information sent back to Colombia. Throughout 1917, the Brothers continued to send specimens but the AMNH did not respond as quickly. In a letter dated November 5, 1917, Apolinar wrote to Allen asking about the many specimens he had sent with no information.<sup>106</sup> Six months later, Allen replied explaining that "in many instances it is not an easy matter to determine single specimens of which we have had previously no representatives, and consequently no identified material for comparison. It is not the work of an hour, but sometimes of days to identify such specimens."<sup>107</sup> Although this was true, there were also other motives. Allen had moved away from South America as his main field of interest. Chapman, on the other hand, continued to be very interested in South America but had moved to other countries to complete his study on bird origin and distribution in the continent. After the publication of "The Distribution of bird-life in Colombia" in 1917, Chapman decided to pay more attention to the cases of Perú and Ecuador.<sup>108</sup>

The interest of U.S. naturalists in Colombia's avifauna faded after Chapman finished his study. During the 1920s and early 1930s Apolinar continued his work expanding the bird collections at the La Salle museum, but had less help from U.S. museums of natural history. Alexander Wetmore at the Smithsonian, whose interest in the birds of Panama led him to develop an interest in Colombia,

106. Brother Apolinar María to J. A. Allen, 5 November 1917, General Correspondence, Archives, Department of Ornithology, AMNH.

107. J. A. Allen to Brother Apolinar María, 11 July 1918, General Correspondence, Archives, Department of Ornithology, AMNH.

108. Chapman, "The Distribution of Bird-Life in Colombia: A Contribution to a Biological Survey of South America."; Chapman, "The Distribution of Bird-Life in Ecuador."; Chapman, "The Distribution of Bird-Life in the Urubamba Valley of Perú."

corresponded every now and then with Apolinar.<sup>109</sup> Nevertheless, this relation was never as productive.

It was only in the late 1930s and 1940s that another connection between U.S. and Colombian naturalists emerged again to complement Chapman's work. By then, however, the relations between the United States and Latin America had changed, with important effects on the scientific relations between both regions.

109. Alexander Wetmore carried out extensive work exploring the avifauna of Panama. See: Alexander Wetmore, *The Birds of the Republic of Panama* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1965). For more information on Wetmore and his work in Latin America see chapter 4 of this book.



## 3

# Nation, Nature, and Naturalists

BETWEEN 1947 AND 1948 Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee, the curator of birds at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, and Armando Dugand, the head of the Instituto de Ciencias Naturales—Natural Sciences Institute—in Bogotá, Colombia, began a lively correspondence. Meyer de Schauensee was working at the time on a large publication that listed all the species and subspecies of birds in Colombia. Dugand got involved in the project and both men developed an active professional partnership. In 1948, when Meyer de Schauensee finally published the list, Dugand wrote an enthusiastic preface.<sup>1</sup> He explained the admirable work that his North American colleague had carried out. More important, however, Dugand seemed more interested in explaining to his readers the remarkable number of birds found in Colombia. With evident excitement he explained that the country had 1,473 species of birds and 2,326 subspecies. This was roughly a sixth of the total world count of 8,616 species reported by Ernst Mayr in 1946.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, Dugand was very pleased to inform many of his colleagues that Colombia had more bird forms than its neighboring countries. According to Dugand, Venezuela had only 821 species and subspecies, while Brazil, the country that was thought to be the more bird-diverse nation in the world, had 2,299 bird species and subspecies, less than Colombia.<sup>3</sup> For Dugand, Colombia had become the country with the highest bird diversity in the world.

Dugand's perception of nature raises important questions for a historian of science. Why was he eager to assign his home country the number one position in

1. Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee, "The Birds of the Republic of Colombia," *Caldasia* 5, no. 22-26 (1948-1952). For Dugand's preface see Armando Dugand, "Notas sobre el Catálogo General de las Aves de Colombia," *Caldasia* 5, No. 22: 247-249.

2. Ernst Mayr, *Systematics and the Origin of Species from the Viewpoint of a Zoologist* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942).

3. Meyer de Schauensee, "The Birds of the Republic of Colombia," 251, 253. See also Armando Dugand to Alexander Wetmore, 11 December 1947, Archivo General, Instituto de Ciencias Naturales, Bogotá.

bird species? Moreover, if birds seem to have no knowledge of national frontiers, and Colombia, Brazil and Venezuela share political boundaries, why did he, as well as other ornithologists of the time, insist on placing nationalities upon them?

As explained earlier in the introduction, historians have given much attention to the relation between nation formation and cultural politics in Latin American countries during the first decades of the twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, recent literature has started to analyze the place of nature in Latin American nation-building processes.<sup>5</sup> This chapter builds on this literature by studying the way in which naturalists constructed Colombia as the most bird diverse country in the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>6</sup> During these decades a strong nationalist feeling arose among political leaders and academics in Colombia, who turned their attention to the study of indigenous populations, folklore practices, and pre-Columbian objects, among other subjects, as a way to bring forth a new meaning to the Colombian identity. Nature was also an important part of this effort to define a new nation. The study of plants and animals also helped define what being Colombian implied, especially because by the 1940s it became abundantly clear that the country had an enormous variety of life forms. For many naturalists in Colombia it was a privilege to be part of a nation that had one of the most diverse faunas and floras in the world.

4. For some examples of recent literature on the topic see: Catalina Muñoz, "To Colombianize Colombia: Cultural Politics, Modernization and Nationalism in Colombia, 1930-1946" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2009); Renán Silva, *República liberal, intelectuales y cultura popular* (Medellín: La Carreta Editores, 2005); Mary K. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930-1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997); Mary K. Vaughan and Stephen E. Lewis, eds., *The Eagle and the Virgin: Nation and Cultural Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Daryle Williams, *Culture Wars in Brazil: The First Vargas Regime, 1930-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).

5. One important example can be found in Stuart McCook, who studied plants and the way in which scientists tried to include them as important actors in the consolidation of Latin American nations. McCook's work was pioneer in our understanding of the way in which some Latin American countries gave plants a civil status in their societies. See: Stuart George McCook, *States of Nature: Science, Agriculture, and Environment in the Spanish Caribbean, 1760-1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002). Other important examples include: Seth Garfield, "A Nationalist Environment: Indians, Nature, and the Construction of the Xingu National Park in Brazil," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 41, no. 1 (2004); Regina Horta Duarte, "Pássaros e cientistas no Brasil: Em busca de proteção, 1894-1938," *Latin American Research Review* 41, no. 1 (2006); Vanderlei Sebastião de Souza, "Arthur Neiva e a 'questão nacional' nos anos 1910 e 1920," *Hist. cienc. saude-Manguinhos* 16 (2009); Matthew Vitz, "Revolutionary Environments: The Politics of Nature and Space in the Valley of Mexico, 1890-1940s" (Ph. D. diss., New York University, 2010).

6. I also build on the work of Fa-ti Fan, who looked at the relationship between nature and nation in China in the first years of the twentieth century. Fa-ti Fan, "Nature and Nation in Chinese Political Thought: The National Essence Circle in Early Twentieth-Century China," in *The Moral Authority of Nature*, ed. Lorraine Daston and Fernando Vidal (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

The study of Colombian bird diversity, however, was far from being just a Colombian project. Although naturalists in Colombia expected a big place in the arena of international science, they had small libraries at hand, limited collections of specimens, and very few economic resources. The great collections of Colombian birds were not housed in Colombia but in the large museums of natural history in the United States. Colombian naturalists happily and willingly relied on the help that their North American counterparts had to offer. After all, it was through the collections of U.S. natural history institutions that Colombia came to be recognized as the nation with the highest number of bird species. Thanks to Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee's work in Philadelphia, Dugand could feel patriotic about the total of bird species found within Colombia's national frontiers. This chapter, then, also helps to complement one of the main postulates of the last chapter, namely that the encounter between naturalists in Colombia and the United States was permeated by strong power relations that paralleled U.S. imperial practices over Latin America in the first decades of the twentieth century. The interactions between U.S. and Colombian naturalists in the 1930s and 1940s—particularly between the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia and the Instituto de Ciencias Naturales in Bogotá—once again show that, although the encounter between Latin Americans and North Americans was complex and served interests on both sides, it was also asymmetrical and the benefits often leaned towards the American side.<sup>7</sup>

This chapter, however, intends to go one step further and present what I believe is perhaps the strongest argument in the book: in the study of the natural world, the nationalist sentiments and goals of ornithologists in Colombia were complemented rather than overshadowed by the imperial efforts of naturalists in the United States. It is common in different historiographies to think of nationalist movements in the twentieth century as an opposition to imperial practices from foreign powers. I claim that the study of nature can bring new perspectives on the interactions between nationalism and imperialism. The

7. Once again I owe a big debt to scholars who have brought new and innovative perspectives to the study of U.S. imperialism and U.S.-Latin American relations. Some important examples include: Gilbert Joseph, Catherine LeGrand, and Ricardo Donato Salvatore, eds., *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease, eds., *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993); Ricardo Donato Salvatore, ed., *Culturas imperiales: experiencia y representación en América, Asia y África* (Rosario, Argentina: Beatriz Viterbo, 2005); Ann Laura Stoler, ed., *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). For a better explanation of U.S. imperialism and the importance of science in the American imperial enterprise, please see the introduction.

efforts to survey and analyze birds in Colombia, an enterprise that went hand in hand with the United States' strong position in Latin America in the first half of the twentieth century, supplemented—rather than undermined—and was supplemented by the nationalist goals of Colombian naturalists. If we continue to see Colombian nationalism and U.S. imperialism as conflicting processes we will be ignoring key historical dynamics.

### Collecting Colombia's Avifauna

About twenty years after Chapman and the AMNH turned their attention away from Colombia as the favored ground to pursue ornithological research, another American began to realize the enormous potential that this country still had for the study of bird diversity. Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee, the curator of birds at the Academy in Philadelphia for more than fifty years, is responsible for identifying Colombia as the country with the greatest diversity of bird-life in the world. Because of the collection of Colombian birds the Academy gathered during the 1940s, Meyer de Schauensee ascended to a prominent position in the history of ornithology by creating and describing the largest list of birds from a nation.

Meyer de Schauensee was born in Rome in 1901, and in the 1920s traveled to Philadelphia. In the early 1930s he joined the staff of the Academy of Natural Sciences to become the curator of birds at this institution, a position he held until his death in 1984. During Meyer de Schauensee's curatorship, the Academy increased its bird collection from about 80,000 to 170,000 bird skins. In the beginning of his career, he developed a strong interest in Asia's avifauna, and undertook several expeditions to Thailand. In the late 1930s and during the 1940s, however, he developed a strong interest in South America, particularly in Colombia, perhaps the country that brought the most satisfaction to him as an ornithologist.<sup>8</sup>

In 1948, when he began publishing his monumental "The Birds of the Republic of Colombia," he wrote:

Probably no single country in the world is inhabited by so many different kinds of birds as Colombia... An effective demonstration of the unbelievable richness of the Colombian avifauna is to compare it with that of all North America north of Mexico: In the 439,000 square miles of Colombian territory there live 1,556 species of birds as against

8. For a biographical description of Meyer de Schauensee see: S. Dillon Ripley, "In Memoriam: Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee," *The Auk* 103 (1986): 6.

the 691 species in the 7,200,000 square miles of the North American continent from the Rio Grande to the Arctic Circle.<sup>9</sup>

Meyer de Schauensee based most of his knowledge of Colombian birds on the remarkable collection that the Academy gathered in the 1940s. Contrary, however, to the experiences of Chapman who sent numerous expeditions to collect bird specimens in Colombia, Meyer de Schauensee never organized an Academy expedition to Colombia. How was he able to pursue a complete study of the bird life of this country without ever setting foot on Colombian territory?

Meyer de Schauensee relied on the unexpected revival of commercial collecting. Ever since the trade of birds and feathers for millinery purposes had been banned in the United States in the early twentieth century, the commercial traffic of birds between Latin America and the United States had declined drastically. Even the trade of birds for scientific purposes, which remained the only legal way to import specimens to North America, decreased substantially. Scientific expeditions became the most important way in which American naturalists brought birds from Latin America to the United States.

In the late 1930s this changed drastically, at least in Colombia's case, with the arrival of Kjell von Sneidern, a Swede taxidermist who established a successful business in the 1940s collecting animal specimens in Colombia. Von Sneidern was born in the early twentieth century in Sweden, where he received training in ornithology and taxidermy. In 1930, he travelled to Colombia where he remained for the rest of his life. He became an avid collector and sold birds, reptiles, and insects to museums around the world. He developed strong commercial relations with institutions such as the Field Museum in Chicago, the American Museum of Natural History, and the Museum of Comparative Zoology in Boston. However, his relation with the Academy of Natural Sciences was the most productive and profitable. Between 1938 and 1950, von Sneidern collected more than 12,000 birds from Colombia and sold them to the Academy. It is not an exaggeration to argue that von Sneidern, almost single-handedly, collected the necessary number of birds to justify Colombia's ranking as one of the countries with the most biologically diverse avifauna in the world.<sup>10</sup>

Von Sneidern appeared in the life of Meyer de Schauensee at the right time. In 1938, von Sneidern sent the Academy a sample box of birds he had collected from Colombia. At the time Meyer de Schauensee's work focused primarily on Asia and particularly Southeast Asia. Although he had done some work on

9. Meyer de Schauensee, "The Birds of the Republic of Colombia."

10. Von Sneidern did not publish accounts of his experience as a collector in Colombia. For a general study of his view on Colombia's avifauna see: Kjell Von Sneidern, *Aves maravillosas de Colombia* (Cali: Editorial Colina, 1995).



Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee. "The Birds of the Republic of Colombia." *Caldasia* 5, no. 23-26 (1948-1952): 251-1214, plate 1

Latin America, most of his time had been devoted to understanding birds in Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, Meyer de Schauensee became intrigued by the small sample of birds that von Sneidern sent. Finding collectors that prepared bird specimens with the right techniques was not an easy task, as Meyer de Schauensee had already discovered in his relation with collectors in Asia. Von Sneidern's birds demonstrated proper knowledge of taxidermy, and he decided to order more birds from him. By September 1939 the relation between Meyer de Schauensee and von Sneidern had turned into a productive one: more than a thousand birds from Colombia had been purchased by the Academy.<sup>11</sup>

The onset of World War II helped strengthen the relation between both naturalists, as well as awaken Meyer de Schauensee's undivided attention to Colombia's avifauna. The war made it difficult for natural history institutions in the United States to continue their work in Asia and Africa. Commercial relations between the United States and Asia had become strained, especially because many countries of the region allied with Japan. As imports of rice from Asian countries into the United States declined, so too did the trade of bird skins between Asia and the Allied powers. Relations with Latin America, on the other hand, seemed to be less affected by the war. Most Latin American countries declared themselves part of the effort to fight the Axis powers. During the war, countries like Colombia continued to supply Europe and the United States with raw materials and food.<sup>12</sup> This meant that the commercial relation that von Sneidern established with the Academy during the war years was not significantly curtailed.

But there were other reasons for Meyer de Schauensee's interest in Colombia, besides geopolitics and von Sneidern's taxidermic skills. The study of Colombia's avifauna presented interesting questions for science. In a memorandum written in 1940 to Charles Cadwalader, the then director of the Academy, Meyer de Schauensee, explained that Colombia seemed particularly interesting because of the three mountain ranges that traversed the country from North to South and the apparent fact that each range had different fauna. "For instance, the Cock of the Rock on the Western Andes is more different from the one on the central

11. Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee to Kjell von Sneidern, September 1939, Folder September 1939, Box 2, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

12. Jorge Luis Bernetti, *Latinoamérica: Del New Deal a la Revolución Cubana, 1935-1961*, 1. ed. (La Plata: De La Campana, 2003); Leslie Bethell and Ian Roxborough, eds., *Latin America Between the Second World War and the Cold War, 1944-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Thomas M. Leonard and John F. Bratzel, *Latin America During World War II* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007); Thomas F. O'Brien, *The Revolutionary Mission: American Enterprise in Latin America, 1900-1945* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

An important exception was Argentina. See: Gary Frank, *Struggle for Hegemony in South America: Argentina, Brazil and the United States during the Second World War* (Miami: University of Miami Press, 1979).

Andes, and the latter differs from Bolivian birds. Yet one can stand on the slope of the western Andes and look across the valley to the central Andes... Each range forms a definite faunal entity exactly as if each were divided from the other by a high wire fence and birds could not fly.”<sup>13</sup> Questions about speciation had taken on increasing importance during the interwar years. During the late 1930s and early 1940s, Ernst Mayr pursued the research that led to the 1942 publication of his *Systematics and the Origin of Species*, a landmark in the development of the modern synthesis of evolution based on studies of speciation in birds.<sup>14</sup> Geographic variation offered key insights into the processes of speciation, and the variety of bird life found in Colombia’s different mountain ranges, as well as the apparent lack of connection between bird life in contiguous regions, seemed like an ideal natural laboratory for pursuing questions of systematics and evolution.<sup>15</sup>

In 1940, the Academy’s collection of birds from Colombia continued to expand. Early in the year Meyer de Schauensee planned a series of collecting trips for von Sneider, particularly in the western region of Colombia near the coast of the Pacific Ocean, deep inside the thick and inhospitable jungle. On March of that year, Meyer de Schauensee wrote to Chapman telling him about his plans and asking him for advice on the route. Chapman replied telling him that the route he had chosen covered the least known region of Colombia and one he had always wanted to explore. “Ever since working in Colombia,” he added, “I have wanted to send a man into the Baudós and adjoining region but to tell the truth I have never found the man whose chances of life I was willing to sacrifice.” Chapman explained that when Arthur Allen and Leo Miller descended to the San Juan Valley, in one of the AMNH expeditions in the early twentieth century, they got the fever and Allen nearly died. “So I have been waiting for a hard-boiled native to do this job and I have never found one.”<sup>16</sup>

The hard-boiled native turned out to be a tall Swede with no Colombian native blood in his veins but an unprecedented will to explore one of the most inhospitable regions of the world. Von Sneider spent around six months in the region and collected more than 1,500 birds for the Academy. By the end of 1940 the Academy had 2,851 birds from Colombia, which were now being studied by Meyer de Schauensee, as well as James Bond, a renowned Philadelphian

13. Memorandum by Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee, January 1940, Folder January 1940, Box 2, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

14. Mayr, *Systematics and the Origin of Species from the Viewpoint of a Zoologist*.

15. For a detailed study of the most important questions studied by ornithologists in the twentieth century see: Mark V. Barrow, *A Passion for Birds: American Ornithology after Audubon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

16. Frank M. Chapman to Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee, 15 March 1940, Folder March 1940, Box 2, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

ornithologist who studied the Caribbean and who inspired Ian Fleming in the naming of his famous fictional spy.<sup>17</sup>

The relationship between Meyer de Schauensee and von Sneidern underscores the importance of scientific objects as economic commodities in the natural history enterprise well into the twentieth century. Birds from Colombia had a price, and anyone could acquire them if they were willing to pay. Birds were part of the larger trade in commodities that had significantly expanded between Colombia and the United States during World War II.<sup>18</sup>

So, how expensive was nature and how was this value assigned? In March 1939, when von Sneidern sent the first samples of his work to the Academy, the value of 100 birds varied between \$55 and \$60, or an average of 55 to 60 cents per skin. Today, those same 100 birds would cost between \$760 and \$830, or an average of \$7.60 and \$8.30 per skin. Not all birds had the same value. Large birds, such as hawks, for example, could garner as much as \$1 per skin, while small pigeons, in comparison, were valued at 50 cents.<sup>19</sup>

The value of nature, then, was assigned according to the amount of labor involved in bird hunting and preparation. If birds were harder to prepare because of their size, this meant more work and therefore a higher price. Likewise, von Sneidern had to pay for various expenses during his trip and this also factored into the final prices he charged the Academy. Interestingly, the value of nature was never attached to the rarity of a specific bird. There are no traces of Meyer de Schauensee asking his Colombian collector for a specific or rare bird species at a higher price. Von Sneidern on his part never charged the Academy extra for rare species or hard to find specimens.

17. In 1936 James Bond, the ornithologist, wrote his *Birds of the West Indies*, a well-known study of the avifauna of this region. In 1947 Bond converted the book into an illustrated field guide. Ian Fleming, who had a home in Jamaica and was a regular bird watcher, took Bond's field guide and used the author's name to create his fictional character. James Bond, *Field Guide to Birds of the West Indies: A guide to All the Species of Birds Known from the Greater Antilles, Lesser Antilles and Bahama Islands* (New York: Macmillan, 1947); Mary Wickham Bond, *How 007 Got His Name* (London: Collins, 1966); Kenneth C. Parkes, "In Memoriam: James Bond," *The Auk* 106 (1989).

18. Commodities have had an important place in Latin American history. However, much remains to be done on the study of nature, especially wildlife, as a commodity. Some examples include: Arnold J. Bauer, *Goods, Power, History: Latin America's Material Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Paul Gootenberg, ed., *Cocaine: Global Histories* (New York: Routledge, 1999); McCook, *States of Nature: Science, Agriculture, and Environment in the Spanish Caribbean, 1760-1940*; Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986).

19. Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee to Kjell von Sneidern, March 1939, Folder March 1939, Box 2, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia; Kjell von Sneidern to Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee, September 1939, Folder September 1939, Box 2, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

By late 1940 Meyer de Schauensee was convinced that a significant portion of the money the Academy had available for expanding its ornithology collections should be spent on Colombian birds. In a memo he sent to Cadwalader in October, Meyer de Schauensee explained that by the end of the year the Academy would have an unrivaled collection of birds from western Colombia. He thought it appropriate to continue collecting in other regions of the country, and wanted von Sneider to collect for six months in Caquetá, a region in the southwest of the country. This collecting trip, argued Meyer de Schauensee, could produce around 2,000 skins, a little less than \$1 per skin. He also had plans for von Sneider to collect birds for another six months in other sectors of the southwest as well as the northwest region.<sup>20</sup>

Two years later, collections from Colombia at the Academy had grown significantly. While writing his yearly report in 1942, Meyer de Schauensee commented on the scientific potential of von Sneider's collection. He wrote, "[Von Sneider] has sent us during the year, three thousand birds and still has a thousand to send us from the latter locality. To date Mr. von Sneider has sent us a total of six thousand skins and there are over seven hundred species and sub-species represented in the collection." He then concluded,

I have gone over the Academy's Collection of Colombia birds which have been received from all sources and find we have one thousand, two hundred and fifty species and sub-species actually taken in the country. When Chapman wrote his very comprehensive book on the birds of Colombia he listed one thousand, one hundred and thirty four species and sub-species as represented in the American Museum collection.<sup>21</sup>

Chapman was considered at the time the most important authority in the study of Colombian avifauna. In 1917 he became the first naturalist to publish a comprehensive study of the birds of Colombia. In 1942, however, Meyer de Schauensee realized he had just expanded the number of known bird species from Colombia. This, of course, gave more purpose to his enterprise. Thanks to the collecting efforts of von Sneider, he could establish himself as the renowned expert on a specific region of the world, a highly desirable objective for any naturalist at the time.

Meyer de Schauensee saw these collecting efforts as just the beginning. He hoped to send von Sneider to collect birds in the Amazon, which would

20. Memorandum by Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee, October 1940, Folder October 1940, Box 2, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

21. Annual Report by Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee, 1942, Folder January-April 1942, Box 3, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

expand the number of known species by two hundred. Further collections in Cauca and Magdalena, the two large holes in the Academy's collection, would expand the number of known species even more.<sup>22</sup>

The efforts of the Academy to support Meyer de Schauensee's work can be compared to the economic enterprises of many American corporations at the time, whose investments in particular regions, with valuable natural resources, resulted in significant profits once these raw materials were exported back to the United States. Just as the Standard Oil Company invested large amounts of money in Colombia and later reaped financial rewards when this oil was sold in the U.S. market, the Academy invested a large amount of money to purchase Colombian birds, an enterprise that resulted in scientific benefits when Meyer de Schauensee discovered the great diversity of the bird collection.<sup>23</sup>

Von Sneidern continued to devote his commercial collecting to the Academy in 1943 and 1944. By the end of 1944 Meyer de Schauensee reported approximately 10,000 specimens collected in Colombia since 1937. The collection now represented most areas of the country. Meyer de Schauensee also emphasized the importance of this vast endeavor in two other ways: first, new birds unknown to science were discovered. Second, the collection allowed ornithologists at the Academy to "rediscover" new species. The range and data of many species that were known only as "Bogotá skins" from the nineteenth century, were now formally established. As Meyer de Schauensee explained, "The distribution of many birds in Colombia appears remarkably local as proved by the fact that many still remain known only from "Bogotá collections" made between 1840 and 1890, when the city flourished as the center for trade in bird skins secured for the millinery trade."<sup>24</sup> Von Sneidern's collections allowed Meyer de Schauensee to fill this gap with great success.

By 1948 Von Sneidern had collected more than 12,000 birds, at a cost for the Academy of \$7,500, or approximately the equivalent of \$100,000 today. The Academy now had the largest collection of birds from Colombia in the

22. Memorandum by Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee, 16 February 1942, Folder January-April 1942, Box 3, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

23. For studies on the history and characteristics of U.S. enclaves in Colombia, see: Marcelo Bucheli, *Bananas and Business: The United Fruit Company in Colombia, 1899-2000* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Catherine LeGrand, "Living in Macondo: Economy and Culture in a United Fruit Company Banana Enclave in Colombia," in *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations*, ed. Gilbert Joseph, Catherine LeGrand, and Ricardo Donato Salvatore (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); Alejandro Sandoval Mendoza and José del Carmen Gómez S., *El imperio de la Standard Oil en Colombia y tierras aledañas* (Bogotá: Editorial Colombia Nueva, 1963); Jorge Villegas Arango, *Petróleo colombiano; ganancia gringa* (Bogotá: Ediciones El Tigre de Papel, 1971).

24. Annual Report by Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee, 1944, Folder September-December 1944, Box 3, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

world. Among these thousands of birds, Meyer de Schauensee found priceless elements for the development of his professional life. He not only discovered new species, he was also able to “rediscover” many birds and made them useful for science. And little by little he was getting close to the unexpected find that Colombia could be the country with the highest bird diversity in the world. Of course, von Sneedern’s collections were necessary but not sufficient to reach this conclusion. A connection with Colombia’s emerging academic community proved to be crucial in Meyer de Schauensee’s enterprise. In the next section, I explore how the emergence of the Colombian scientific community during a period of strong nationalism contributed to this positioning of Colombia as the most diverse country in terms of birds.

### Nation and Nature

In 1940 Colombia witnessed the creation of the Instituto de Ciencias Naturales (ICN). This was the first natural sciences institute in the country funded entirely by the Colombian government, devoted exclusively to the study of nature, and with enough resources to support a few naturalists that could pursue their studies as a profession.

The ICN began as an initiative inside Colombia’s largest and most important university at the time, the Universidad Nacional (UN). Enrique Pérez Arbeláez, one of the most recognized botanists in Colombia, created a department of botany in 1936 at this public institution. In 1939 the department was converted into a botanical institute. Finally, in 1940, the University agreed that a larger institute devoted to the study of nature in general was needed inside the university and founded the ICN. Besides the existing department of botany, an ornithology and an entomology departments were created and staffed with naturalists. Armando Dugand, a botanist trained in the United States, was named its first director. Dugand believed that the ICN should open its research to all the natural sciences, while maintaining the strong botanical tradition associated with Colombia since the establishment of the Royal Botanical Expedition in the late eighteenth century.<sup>25</sup> His main goal as director was to catalogue, name, and discover as many species of plants and animals as he could. With this in mind, he created *Caldasia*, the official journal of the ICN, as a channel for publishing original research on Colombian nature. Many other

25. The Royal Botanical Expedition directed by José Celestino Mutis between 1783 and 1808 is usually associated with the origin of a scientific tradition in Colombia. For a critical study of both Mutis and the Expedition see: Mauricio Nieto Olarte, *Remedios para el Imperio: Historia Natural y la Apropiación del Nuevo Mundo* (Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia, 2000).

Colombian naturalists joined him in this project, including Federico Carlos Lehmann and José Ignacio Borrero.

The creation of the ICN should be understood as a facet of Colombian culture during the 1930s and 1940s. For most of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, government and elite members of Colombian society cherished their European connections as evidence of their country's link to modernity and progress. European music, literature and art were seen as the most advanced form of culture, which all Colombians might hopefully emulate. Culture signified European, from manners at the dinner table to the kind of performances one attended. But this embrace of Europe as the pinnacle of culture and civilization changed after 1930, when, after more than four decades of conservative rule in the government, the liberal party began to win presidential elections. A new generation of liberals who came to occupy important government positions embraced a new nationalism that sought to redefine national culture in terms of what they called "popular cultures." For them, the autochthonous was the bedrock of the nation and, therefore, what should be valued and preserved. Thus, they gave a new definition to national treasures.<sup>26</sup>

Popular culture gained attention as worth studying. Folksongs and native languages, among others, began to receive scholarly attention and new institutions were funded by the Ministry of Education with the purpose of promoting their study and appreciation. Likewise, the Indian past, one that had received almost no attention during the conservative governments, began to be valued. It is no coincidence that during this time anthropology emerged in Colombia as a profession and the Museo del Oro—Gold Museum—the most important institution devoted to the preservation of Pre-Hispanic Indian objects, was formed in 1939.<sup>27</sup> Likewise, the Instituto Etnológico Nacional (National Ethnologic Institute) was founded in 1941 to support and promote anthropological research in the country. Another institution worth mentioning was the Folklore Commission, formed in 1943 to organize the information gathered by the Ministry of Education's National Folklore Survey of 1942, which tried to define the profile of the "national soul" through a survey distributed to school teachers all over the country.<sup>28</sup> Through the funding of academic institutes, the government hoped to preserve and protect the country's national treasures.

26. Silva, *República liberal, intelectuales y cultura popular*; Renán Silva, *Sociedades campesinas, transición social y cambio cultural en Colombia: la Encuesta Folclórica Nacional de 1942: aproximaciones analíticas y empíricas* (Medellín: La Carreta Editores, 2006).

27. Efraín Sánchez Cabra, "El Museo del Oro," *Boletín Cultural y Bibliográfico* 40, no. 64 (2003).

28. For an in depth study of the National Folklore Survey see: Silva, *Sociedades campesinas, transición social y cambio cultural en Colombia: la Encuesta Folclórica Nacional de 1942: aproximaciones analíticas y empíricas*.

This nationalistic approach to culture was also present in other Latin American countries at the time. In Brazil, the Vargas regime of 1930-1945 and 1951-1954, also struggled to define the nation through a very strong cultural campaign. Its nationalistic rhetoric exalted Brazilian miscegenation, changing the interpretation of popular cultural forms, such as samba, from a form of music commonly associated with Afro-Brazilian masses in the early twentieth century, to one of Brazil's most important contributions to world culture.<sup>29</sup> Of course, deciding what forms of culture constituted national culture became contested ground.<sup>30</sup> Mexico also followed a similar process in the period between 1920 and 1940, when the nationalist government sponsored a movement celebrating Mexico's mestizo and indigenous cultures.<sup>31</sup>

Part of the process of forming a new national identity involved the study of nature. Nationalism did not only include an increased appreciation for local cultural forms and themes, but also embraced local nature as well. Countries like Mexico, Brazil, and Colombia introduced policies to protect nature as a national treasure. Mexico created a law in 1934 for the Protection and Conservation of Archaeological and Historic Monuments, Typical Villages and Places of Natural Beauty. In Brazil, Vargas' modernizing regime fully endorsed the protection of nature and indigenous populations as part of his nation building project.<sup>32</sup> In Colombia, the decree 1060 of 1936 was created to regulate the work of foreign scientific expeditions in Colombia. The decree established that no archaeological, natural or historical object could be exported without permission from the government. If natural history specimens were taken outside of the country, the expedition had to deposit a duplicate in the Ministry of Education.

Like folksongs or indigenous pre-Columbian artefacts, plants and animals gained status as important parts of Colombian tradition and helped to forge an idea of what it meant to be Colombian. Questions such as what kind of animals lived in Colombia or which were endemic to the Colombian territory seemed particularly telling. Furthermore, Colombia's remarkable biodiversity became an element of national pride that called for further collecting and research. It is no surprise then that in 1940 the government, through the Universidad Nacional, decided to sponsor the creation of the ICN, a new institute devoted entirely to the study of nature within Colombia's political boundaries.

29. Bryan McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil: Popular Music in the Making of Modern Brazil* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

30. Williams, *Culture Wars in Brazil: The First Vargas Regime, 1930-1945*.

31. Vaughan and Lewis, eds., *The Eagle and the Virgin: Nation and Cultural Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940*.

32. Garfield, "A Nationalist Environment: Indians, Nature, and the Construction of the Xingu National Park in Brazil."

Colombian scientists, however, soon found out that pursuing top of the line research—at least the kind of research they had in mind—was harder than they initially imagined. Dugand and his team were aware that the study of nature in Colombia was still in its infancy. Naming a new bird species or properly placing a plant within a worldwide list of plants required many more resources than the ICN had in its initial years. Better libraries with the latest publications on biological studies were a must but were too expensive to acquire; collecting trips were sparse because of the costs involved in carrying out field expeditions; most important, however, the ICN was only beginning to create its collection of specimens and lacked the necessary material to compare recently acquired specimens with older and already classified ones.

Just like the La Salle Brothers studied in the last chapter, the ICN staff also turned their eyes to the United States to complement and improve their research. Starting around 1941 they began to build contacts in the United States with naturalists, especially those attached to museums of natural history. The Smithsonian Institution in Washington, the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, and particularly the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia became the main scientific partners of Colombia's struggling scientific community.

Turning to the United States for help in the development of what seemed a nationalistic project to study Colombia's nature was not entirely contradictory. For the government, valuing national culture did not mean that European and North American influence was to be discarded. On the contrary, it was seen as complementary. For example, at the same time that Colombia's music began to be valued as an important part of Colombian identity, the government also sponsored classical music concerts throughout the nation to educate the masses about other forms of culture. In this way, using American help to strengthen Colombia's effort to know and identify its own nature seemed like the appropriate thing to do. In the eyes of Colombian scientists, the United States had one of the most advanced scientific cultures in the world and their help could prove invaluable in their projects. For example, the nationalistic decree mentioned above, that sought to regulate foreign expeditions and force them to leave duplicates of collected specimens in the country, was seen as an obstacle by some Colombian scientists who believed in the benefits of foreign naturalists studying the country. Furthermore, the fact that this decree existed did not mean that the control over the export of natural specimens was strictly enforced. In a letter to the Ministry of Education, Dugand explained that precisely because it was impossible to determine new or rare species of birds in Colombia, the task of leaving duplicates at the Ministry before they could be identified in the United States was absurd.<sup>33</sup>

33. Armando Dugand to the National Education Minister, 27 November 1945, vol. 9 (1) 1945, ICN Archivo, Instituto de Ciencias Naturales, Bogotá, Colombia.

This ambivalence between wanting to foment national enterprises and turning to North America for help and guidance was an issue that characterized Latin America's relation with the United States for most of the twentieth century. The idea that the United States was an imperial power harmful to the region contrasted with another view that looked at this country as a model that Latin America should follow. After all, the United States had been a European colony like all Latin American countries and had turned in the early twentieth century into an undisputed world power. This somewhat contradictory relationship was present not only in politics, economy, and culture, but also in the scientific relations between both regions. Creating a scientific community in Colombia involved the help of scientists outside the country, especially scientists in the United States.

Ideas of nation became involved in the constructions of nature that scientists—in this case ornithologists—from each country brought to the table. American ornithologists always looked at the birds of Colombia in a more general context that included a relation with other Latin American countries or with the continent as a whole. For them, Colombian birds were important only if analyzed in comparison to the avifauna of other nations. This perspective paralleled the United States' view of Latin America at the time. Instead of focusing on one particular country, Americans approached the region as a whole, finding commonalities between all countries, and overlooking their differences. Colombian ornithologists, on the other hand, looked at birds within Colombian boundaries as a national treasure. Following the prevalent nationalistic trend of the time, they tended to be interested only in Colombian avifauna and rarely looked outside their own borders to understand bird populations in neighboring countries.

Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee's case in Philadelphia illustrates how Americans approached the study of birds outside the United States with a regional focus. Although in the 1940s he focused most of his attention on the study of Colombian avifauna, Colombia was only a first step in his project to analyze Latin America as a whole. Earlier in the 1930s the Academy had carried out some expeditions and sponsored some collecting trips to other parts of Latin America, especially to Bolivia and the Caribbean. Collecting in Colombia seemed relevant to complement the Academy's collection and increase its strength for future comparative studies that would give an overall picture of Latin American avifauna.

Meyer de Schauensee found in Armando Dugand the perfect partner in Colombia that could help him with the local knowledge needed to write and correct the list of Colombian birds he was working on. Dugand, in fact, assisted with many details and even offered *Caldasia*, the ICN's journal, to publish the final report on the birds of Colombia. Dugand, however, had a different

approach to the study of birds in Colombia, one more centered on Colombia as a nation and less as a part of a larger region. Comparing the birds of Colombia with the birds of other neighboring countries did not seem as important to him as it did to Meyer de Schauensee. For Dugand, the birds of Colombia had value as national treasures, and they deserved to be studied as such.

The way in which both ornithologists perceived the importance of San Andrés and Providencia, two Colombian islands in the Caribbean, is particularly telling of the way in which both naturalists approached specific constructions of nature. Located 80 miles from the coast of Nicaragua and 480 miles from the coast of Colombia, the sovereignty of these two islands has been disputed between Colombia and Nicaragua for a very long time. Although they are officially recognized as Colombian territory and have been for most of the twentieth century, precisely because of their geographical location Nicaragua still claims rights over them.<sup>34</sup>

In 1941, the fifth George Vanderbilt expedition visited San Andrés and Providencia as part of their zoological collecting in the Bahamas and the Caribbean undertaken by the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia.<sup>35</sup> Six years later, when Meyer de Schauensee was finishing the edition of "The Birds of the Republic of Colombia," Dugand wrote to Meyer de Schauensee asking him about the inclusion of birds from San Andrés and Providencia in the list. Thanks to the expedition, the Academy had good material on the subject and Dugand assumed they should be incorporated. "The islands belong to Colombia and records from them should be included in the Check List," Dugand argued. Meyer de Schauensee disagreed completely with Dugand's position. For him, birds from San Andrés and Providencia were not entirely Colombian. He explained, "With regard to the islands of San Andrés and Providencia, I have not included these in the checklist for I felt that the fauna was more a Central-American-Caribbean fauna than a continental South American."<sup>36</sup>

For Meyer de Schauensee, region rather than nation served as the classificatory criterion in identifying and studying the birds of Latin America. The fact that San Andrés and Providencia were politically under Colombian jurisdiction did not mean that the birds inhabiting the islands were Colombian. Colombia for

34. Ernesto Guhl and Isabel Clemente, *San Andrés y Providencia: tradiciones culturales y coyuntura política* (Bogotá: Ediciones Uniandes, 1989).

35. James Bond et al., *Results of the Fifth George Vanderbilt Expedition (1941) (Bahamas, Caribbean Sea, Panama, Galápagos archipelago and Mexican Pacific islands)* (Philadelphia: Wickersham Printing Company, 1944).

36. Armando Dugand to Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee, March 1947, Folder January-June 1947, Box 4, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia; Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee to Armando Dugand, 19 March 1947, Folder January-June 1947, Box 4, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

him was part of a different faunal environment, namely a South American one. These islands were 480 miles away from Colombia, and 80 miles away from Central America, in the Caribbean Sea. It was obvious that scientifically they did not belong to South America. This was not, however, Dugand's point of view. For him, the nationality of birds was directly related to political control. If Colombia's government had authority over the islands, the animals confined in them should also be reported as Colombian.

Dugand's thoughts on San Andrés and Providencia were not the only instance in which he constructed ideas of nature in relation to nation. In 1946, Dugand and José Ignacio Borrero published an article in *Caldasia* on the birds of the Amazon in Colombia. The authors reported on collections made by Federico Carlos Lehmann and José Ignacio Borrero for the ICN in 1939, as well as birds collected by John Hauxwell around 1867, when he established himself in Loretoyacu, in the Colombian Amazon. "Regarding Loretoyacu," they wrote, "it is necessary to clarify that this locality figures as Peruvian in the ornithological literature concerning the high Amazon, but it is located in Colombian territory in virtue of the border-treaty held in 1922 between this country and Perú."<sup>37</sup> The authors then proceeded to explain that this region had been in dispute between these two countries since their independence from Spanish rule, but the dispute was finally settled with the treaty. Therefore, they argued, all the birds from Loretoyacu that were previously reported as from Perú should now be considered from Colombia.

A few months later Dugand once again co-authored an article with the same purpose, that is, to "Colombianize" birds that were previously assigned to another country. The co-author was William H. Phelps (1875-1965), a successful North American businessman-turned-ornithologist who lived in Venezuela. Phelps was at the time one of the leading scholars in neotropical birds and the creator of an ornithological museum, the Museo Ornitológico Phelps, in Caracas, which housed the largest collection of Venezuelan birds in the world. After becoming a successful business man in Venezuela in the 1920s and 1930s, representing several North American companies, Phelps turned his whole attention to ornithology in 1938. In the 1940s he funded many expeditions to collect birds in Venezuela and began working on a list of the known species of birds of this country.

In their article on the disputed status of birds in Venezuela, Dugand and Phelps offered a political reason for why the birds needed to be re-classified:

37. The original in Spanish reads, "En cuanto a Loretoyacu es menester aclarar que esta localidad figura como peruana en la literatura ornitológica referente al Alto Amazonas, pero se halla ahora en territorio de Colombia en virtud del tratado de límites celebrado en 1922 entre este país y el Perú." Armando Dugand and José Ignacio Borrero, "Aves de la ribera colombiana del Amazonas," *Caldasia* 4, no. 17 (1946): 131.

In the ornithological literature concerning the northern parts of South America, the bird specimens collected in Maipures by George K. Cherrie and his wife Stella M. Cherrie, in December of 1898 and January of 1899, and by Leo E. Miller and F. X. Iglseder in early 1913, are erroneously ascribed to Venezuela. It is necessary to correct this since Maipures is located in Colombia's territory.<sup>38</sup>

The introduction explained, in a similar way to the Lorettoyacu case, that after independence from the Spanish crown this territory remained in dispute between Venezuela and Colombia. Only in 1922 was the dispute settled and the territory assigned to Colombia. Even if birds seemed ignorant of geopolitical boundaries, the scientists who studied them were not. Consequently, Phelps and Dugand transformed what were once Venezuelan birds into Colombian birds.

Phelps was perhaps one of the few American ornithologists based in Latin America who had the monetary resources to maintain an active status in the United States. Unlike other Colombian or Venezuelan ornithologists who had little resources to pursue research and were dependent on knowledge imported from the United States, Phelps had money, and his constant visits to American collections earned him respect and a place in the American scientific community. This is important because like his American colleagues, Phelps was interested in a more regional or transnational approach to ornithology. Although he focused his attention mostly on birds from Venezuela, he was also interested in the birds of neighboring countries such as Colombia. On several occasions he instructed his collectors to gather specimens from Colombia if they were near the Colombia-Venezuela border, specimens that were later reported in *Caldasia*.<sup>39</sup>

Dugand, in contrast, had a more nationalistic view of nature in his homeland, at least in comparison with his American colleagues studying Latin American birds. He saw no problem in adding the birds from San Andrés and Providencia to Meyer de Schauensee's list of Colombian birds, and also sought to add as many bird species to Colombia as he could, even if it meant the reclassification of already catalogued birds in accordance with more recent political and geographic treaties. This national, as opposed to transnational approach, was also encouraged by the Universidad Nacional, the main institution to which

38. The original in Spanish reads, "En la literatura ornitológica referente a la parte septentrional de Suramérica, se adscriben erróneamente a Venezuela los ejemplares de aves coleccionados en Maipures por George K. Cherrie y su esposa, Stella M. Cherrie, en diciembre de 1898 y enero de 1899 y por Leo E. Miller y F. X. Iglseder a principios de 1913. Es necesario corregir esto por cuanto Maipures se halla en territorio de Colombia," Armando Dugand and William H. Phelps, "El status geográfico de la aves de Maipures (Colombia)," *Caldasia* 4, no. 18 (1946): 243.

39. See for example, Armando Dugand and William Phelps, "Aves de la ribera colombiana del Río Negro (Frontera de Colombia y Venezuela)," *Caldasia* 5, no. 22 (1948).

the ICN was attached. Any funds provided by the University, which were also considered government and public funds, to the study of nature or science had to be centered on Colombia. For example, in 1947, when Dugand began organizing with Kjell von Sneidern (the same commercial collector that gathered most of the specimens Meyer de Schauensee bought for the Academy) a collecting trip to Leticia in the Colombian Amazon, Dugand explained to von Sneidern that because the money for the trip was to be approved by the University, "all the collections have to be done in Colombia's territory."<sup>40</sup>

A similar exchange occurred in 1947, when Christina Buechner, from the Committee on Inter American Scientific Publication, wrote to Dugand telling him about a new program to promote scientific publishing by North American scientists in Latin American journals. Buechner explained that although she was aware of the many friends that the ICN had in the United States, she hoped Dugand would take advantage of this program to encourage North American naturalists to publish in *Caldasia*. Dugand replied saying that he was very interested in the program. However, he added, the articles submitted have to be exclusively on Colombia. "This exclusivism is by no means due to excessive 'nationalism' but to budget appropriation and to time for editing, both of which are short."<sup>41</sup>

Although Dugand confined birds to national borders, and saw this as a basic component in the study of ornithology, American ornithologists, despite their emphasis on regional and transnational approaches, were not immune from considerations of political boundaries. Meyer de Schauensee offers a compelling example. In 1950, while still working on his list of birds from Colombia, he made contact with Teodomiro Mena, a bird collector in Ecuador based in Quito, through F. A. Colwell, an intermediary. Meyer de Schauensee wanted a collection of specimens from south-western Colombia, specifically from an area east of Ipiales, a city right on the border between Colombia and Ecuador. Mena was a well-known collector and taxidermist in Ecuador and Meyer de Schauensee agreed to sponsor a collecting trip with his services. However, right from the beginning Meyer de Schauensee sent very specific instructions as to where Mena was to collect the birds. As he explained to Colwell, "I will be quite willing for him to go to near places as long as they are within Colombian territory."<sup>42</sup> After Mena's first collecting trip around August of 1950, Meyer de

40. Armando Dugand to Kjell von Sneidern, 12 February 1947, vol. 11(1) 1947, ICN Archivo, Instituto de Ciencias Naturales, Bogotá, Colombia.

41. Armando Dugand to Christina Buechner, 12 February 1947, vol. 11(1) 1947, ICN Archivo, Instituto de Ciencias Naturales, Bogotá, Colombia.

42. Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee to F. A. Colwell, 5 July 1950, Folder Correspondence C, Box 1 A-D, Schauensee Correspondence 1941-1977, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

Schauensee asked Mena for another trip in October of that year to the same region. "Of course", he wrote, "you understand clearly that the collection must be made in Colombian territory."<sup>43</sup>

Just like Dugand, Meyer de Schauensee also instructed his collectors to avoid birds found in other countries and focus exclusively on birds found within Colombian boundaries. There is, however, a crucial difference in the attitude between these two ornithologists. While Dugand never in his life moved beyond birds from Colombia, Meyer de Schauensee, like many of his North American colleagues, saw Colombia as only one step in the understanding of Latin America's avifauna. In fact, in the 1960s he moved to the study of the birds of South America as a whole, and in 1970 published his *Guide to the Birds of South America*, the most comprehensive list of this kind for the continent up to that time. In the 1970s he also moved to the study of birds from Venezuela, publishing a complete list with William Phelps, Jr., in 1978.<sup>44</sup> The fact that Dugand instructed Mena to collect exclusively in Colombian territory was probably due to the specific circumstances surrounding his work at the time. He was working on the list of birds from Colombia, and the more he worked on it the more he realized Colombia was probably the country with most bird species in the world. His orders to Mena responded more to a desire to increase the number of bird species for Colombia, something that would add value to his acclaim and recognition as an ornithologist, rather than bring fame to the country, as was the case with Dugand. In the end, political boundaries influenced Dugand's perception of nature, while natural concepts influenced Meyer de Schauensee's perception [of nature].

Meyer de Schauensee was not the only ornithologist in North America interested in a regional approach. Alexander Wetmore (1886-1978), director of the U.S. National Museum and sixth secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, also included a similar perspective in his studies. Throughout his career Wetmore became an expert in birds from Latin America. He was particularly interested in the birds of Panama and devoted much of his career to their study. Between the 1940s and 1960s he visited Panama almost every year, including the now famous Barro Colorado Island, and in 1965 began publishing his *Birds of the Republic of Panama*.<sup>45</sup>

43. Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee to Teodomiro Mena, 31 October 1950, Folder Correspondence Unsorted 1941-1950, Box 4 U-Z, Schauensee Correspondence 1941-1977, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

44. Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee, *A Guide to the Birds of South America* (Wynnewood: Livingston Pub. Co., 1970); Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee and William H. Phelps, Jr., *A Guide to the Birds of Venezuela* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

45. Alexander Wetmore, *The Birds of the Republic of Panama* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1965).

In 1959 Wetmore wrote to José Ignacio Borrero, the former assistant of ornithology at the ICN,

I secured many specimens of value for my Panamanian studies and also was able to develop better understanding of the work of some of the earlier travelers, particularly the expedition of Anthony and Richardson. When they worked there in 1915, the Panamanian-Colombian boundary had not been carefully surveyed so that Anthony collected at one time within Colombia while believing he was still in Panama. They can now clear up these records by allocating the specimens to the country to which they properly belong.<sup>46</sup>

Wetmore was also interested in establishing clear geographic boundaries for the birds of Latin America. He found it useful that Colombia and Panama had properly set their frontier, as it was necessary to determine which birds belonged to each country.

But like the rest of the ornithologists in the United States, Wetmore pursued his studies of Panamanian avifauna in relation to the continental biogeography of South America. Wetmore visited Colombia in 1941 accompanied by Melbourne Carriker, and collected birds in the Guajira peninsula in northern Colombia. After returning to the United States from this collecting trip, he decided to hire Carriker to stay in Colombia and pursue collecting trips to other regions in Colombia. Throughout the 1940s Carriker collected continuously for the Smithsonian. In 1951, when Wetmore organized one of Carrikers' last collecting trips in Colombia, he made it clear that the study of Colombia's avifauna was not the main objective of these expeditions. He had a much bigger goal in mind. "I am interested to find that you wish to continue for one more season of six months. This I am able to arrange and agree to your proposal for work in the Huila area that you describe. My interest in having this work done has been to get a complete survey across northern Colombia for comparison with the avifauna of Panama."<sup>47</sup>

Wetmore's case shows, once again, how for ornithologists in the United States a broad approach to nature and nation was necessary. Comparison between different avifaunas was important in order to get a clear view of the distribution of birds in Latin America. Even if they had a specific interest in one country, their overall goal was to discern distributional patterns on a

46. Alexander Wetmore to José Ignacio Borrero, 1 August 1959, Folder 4, Box 7, Collection Division 1: General Correspondence, Alexander Wetmore Papers Record Unit 7006, SIA.

47. Alexander Wetmore to Melbourne Carriker, 4 December 1951, Folder 9, Box 10, Collection Division 1: General Correspondence, Alexander Wetmore Papers Record Unit 7006, SIA.

continental scale. A study of the birds of Colombia, Panama or Perú was just a first step to understand the avifauna of the Caribbean, Central America or South America. For ornithologists in Colombia it was different. They saw no problem in studying nature found only in Colombia's territory. And even if funding limited them from studying wildlife on a more transnational scale, Colombian naturalists made few or no attempts to move beyond their borders. For them, birds belonged to the country in which they were found, and if a species of bird was found on the Colombian side of the Amazon and not on the Peruvian side, Colombia had the privilege of recording it as its own. Of course, these birds could fly and cross borders, but as long as the bird was collected in Colombia and not Perú, naturalists who studied Perú could not claim it as part of Perú's avifauna. In the same way that Colombians were trying to appropriate indigenous objects or folklore songs as national treasures, naturalists were appropriating birds as part of the nation.

### Political Economy and the Interactions of U.S. and Colombian Naturalists

The strong nationalism of the 1930s and 1940s described in the previous section was in part a result of Latin America's efforts at the time to change the agro-export model that had dominated the economy of the region since the nineteenth century, making it dependent on the economies of the United States and Europe. The so-called "underdeveloped regions" that experienced decolonization processes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—Latin America, Africa, Southeast Asia, etc.—were usually integrated into the world economy based on a system in which the production and exportation of raw materials was the main engine of economic growth. In Latin America, national economies up to the early twentieth century concentrated on the production of commodities in high demand in Europe and the United States, such as rubber, coffee, oil, copper, or guano. Large industrialized nations processed these raw materials and turned them into finished products that these less industrialized regions then imported. Labor in these regions, thus, tended to be oriented to an export economy based on the extraction of natural resources, while labor in the metropolis concentrated mostly on manufactured and industrialized products.<sup>48</sup>

48. V. Bulmer-Thomas, *The Economic History of Latin America Since Independence*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); David Bushnell and Neill Macaulay, *The Emergence of Latin America in the Nineteenth Century*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Aldo Olano Alor, ed., *América Latina: herencias y desafíos* (Bogotá: Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2003); Richard J. Salvucci, ed., *Latin America and the World Economy: Dependency and Beyond* (Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1996).

This macroeconomic perspective is useful to understand the interaction between American and Latin American scientists in the early decades of the twentieth century. North American and European scientists, especially in the field sciences, regarded the work of Latin American scientists and natives as important, so long as it remained limited to the extraction of raw materials or raw scientific data. The role of producing a finished product, in this case a scientific theory, was work only deemed appropriate to the scientists of the so-called developed nations. Latin Americans, on the other hand, used this raw data as ways to obtain prestige inside their communities and to gain initial recognition in the international scientific community.<sup>49</sup>

The Great Depression of the 1930s transformed the ways in which many Latin American countries handled their relations with the world. After the 1929 crash, the volume of trade between Latin America and the world was cut in half, causing a generalized and profound economic crisis. The import/export system that had been prevalent since the nineteenth century began to be reevaluated by political actors who had become very nationalistic due to the crisis. Although many countries during the 1930s, especially the smaller ones, maintained a traditional export-led growth, the idea of substituting imports with local industrialization, which originally appeared in the region after World War I, gained wide acceptance and was promoted throughout the continent in this period. By the 1940s the largest countries of the region were involved in import-substituting industrialization.<sup>50</sup>

Colombia also came under the influence of this new movement, although the impulse for industrialization took a little longer than in other countries such as Argentina, Brazil or Mexico. Among the first effects of the Great Depression on the country was the establishment of a system to control imports, as well as the increase of income taxes due to the decline of government revenue from

49. As Stuart McCook has argued for agricultural scientists and botanists in the Spanish Caribbean, "although the relations between the United States and the Spanish Caribbean nations were significantly unequal, scientists often found ways of using the formal and informal bonds of empire to pursue their own ends." McCook, *States of Nature: Science, Agriculture, and Environment in the Spanish Caribbean, 1760-1940*, 5.

50. For general references on the period see: Victor Bulmer-Thomas, "The Latin American Economies, 1929-1939," in *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, ed. Leslie Bethell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 65-115; Tulio Halperin Donghi, *The Contemporary History of Latin America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 208-46; Rosemary Thorp, "The Latin American Economies, 1939-c.1950," in *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, ed. Leslie Bethell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 117-58; Rosemary Thorp, ed., *Latin America in the 1930s: The Role of the Periphery in World Crisis* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984). For a reference to Colombia's path to substitution of imports see: José Antonio Ocampo, *Historia económica de Colombia* (Bogotá: Fedesarrollo: Siglo Veintiuno Editores de Colombia, 1987).

custom duties during the presidency of Enrique Olaya Herrera (1930-1934). Later on, the much more interventionist president Alfonso López Pumarejo (1934-1938) openly expressed his discontent with Colombia's general policy towards foreign investment. In his early presidential years, López criticized the role of U.S. corporations in the country and wanted to protect and enhance the power of Colombian labor. He expressed his desire to create a local refinery to counteract the influence of the Tropical Oil Company, a project that never became a reality, and he continuously expressed his dissatisfaction with the policies of the United Fruit Company, intervening in favor of Colombian workers. However, despite these early tensions with the United States, López's presidency did little to change Colombia's overall attitude towards foreign economic dependence. Although he flirted with economic nationalism, in 1936 he negotiated a new reciprocal trade treaty with the United States that once again reaffirmed an import/export system.<sup>51</sup>

The impulse of industrialization had to wait until 1938, when Eduardo Santos assumed the presidency. Santos was himself more moderate than López and certainly amicable with the United States. However, Santos used the state to promote industrial development in the country. To do this he created in 1941 the Instituto de Fomento Industrial (IFI), or Institute for Industrial Development, to help create factories that would finally reduce the country's dependence on the importation of manufactured products from outside. Many projects were developed including rubber, steel, and chemical factories, as well as the creation of the steel plant Paz de Río, the largest of the state industries. In the end it was hoped that the large amounts of capital that the IFI was investing would form profitable enterprises that would come under private ownership.<sup>52</sup>

Of course, Santos' aim to promote industrialization did not mean that Colombia could now be completely autonomous. A significant portion of Colombia's revenue still relied on the exportation of raw materials, most importantly, coffee. Furthermore, even if some products were now produced in the country and Colombians could buy Colombian-made wheels instead of

51. For specialized studies on United States-Colombia relations at the time see: David Bushnell, *Eduardo Santos and the Good Neighbor, 1938-1942* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1967); Stephen J. Randall, *Colombia and the United States: Hegemony and Interdependence* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1992). For an overview of the Colombian context see: Frank Safford and Marco Palacios, *Colombia: Fragmented Land, Divided Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). For a detailed study on president Alfonso López Pumarejo, radicalism and its limits see: Richard Stoller, "Alfonso López Pumarejo and Liberal Radicalism in 1930s Colombia," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 27, no. 2 (1995).

52. Cristopher Abel and Marco Palacios, "Colombia, 1930-1958," in *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, ed. Leslie Bethell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

North American ones, industrialization brought a different kind of dependence. To industrialize, Colombia had to buy the necessary machinery from other industrialized countries including the United States, as well as any spare parts needed to fix the machines. Likewise, local technicians had to receive training on how to operate the machinery which meant that either they had to travel to the north to receive this training or local industries had to bring experts to instruct Colombians. Overall this meant that even if Colombia could reduce its dependence on manufactured products, it still relied on the technology, knowledge, and expertise of foreigners.

This complex economic and political relation between the United States and Colombia was reflected in the scientific relations of Meyer de Schauensee and his Colombian colleagues, and had an influence on their approaches to nature. The creation of the ICN was derived in part from the idea that local scientists could study Colombia's flora and fauna without resorting to foreign scholars. If the government could create industries to manufacture Colombian products, scientists could manufacture their own theories about Colombian nature. Nevertheless, the initial contact between the ICN and Meyer de Schauensee showed how Colombia, while trying to create a stronger scientific community, still depended on the transfer of specialized knowledge from the United States. In 1944 Meyer de Schauensee sent some of his published papers to Federico Carlos Lehmann, the director of the ornithology department at the ICN, in exchange for some issues of *Caldasia* he had requested. When Lehmann replied to thank him for the kind gesture, he wrote:

From them [the papers], I see now that I have been writing some notes on Colombian birds mentioning new records of species that you have already published. This is due to the fact that our libraries, as these are new institutions, are very poor, and we have no subscriptions to new scientific bulletins.<sup>53</sup>

For Lehmann, up-to-date information was particularly important in the natural sciences if you wanted to make ground-breaking contributions. This was particularly true of ornithology in the 1940s, when new species were constantly being published in specialized journals. Colombian naturalists believed that even if they had a new institution to carry out studies of fauna in Colombia, the lack of resources to receive the latest in biological research

53. Federico Carlos Lehman to Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee, 14 October 1944, Folder September-December 1944, Box 3, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

was a strong obstacle in the path to making what they saw as true international science.<sup>54</sup>

Sending papers was just the beginning of the flow of goods in the relation between Meyer de Schauensee and Colombian naturalists. In November 1944 Dugand wrote him a letter asking for his advice on the identification of a specific bird he had collected. Dugand gave a detailed description of the skin and Meyer de Schauensee soon replied telling him his thoughts on the subject.<sup>55</sup> Of course, a written description was never the same as the actual skin to identify a bird. Dugand soon realized this, and in May of 1945 sent the Academy a first box with fourteen bird specimens. He included a letter telling Meyer de Schauensee he would appreciate his cooperation in identifying these skins and invited him to publish his results in *Caldasia*. Again, lack of resources and lack of information forced Dugand to search for help outside Colombia's borders. Dugand finished the letter asking Meyer de Schauensee to return the birds when done, since they were part of the ICN collection.<sup>56</sup>

Dugand and Lehmann were doing as much as they could with what they had at hand. The ICN had hundreds of birds and most could be identified with old and classic books that varied from Linnaeus' works in the eighteenth century, to Chapman's 1917 study of bird distribution in Colombia. However, when it came to rare bird species, the old literature on the subject was far from enough. Of course, the Academy's collection and library was sometimes not enough either, and Meyer de Schauensee constantly resorted to the loan of specimens from other museum collections to develop his enterprise.

54. This reference to the lack of money and resources in Colombia to develop appropriate scientific research has been a constant throughout history, and can be traced back to Francisco José de Caldas in the early nineteenth century, when the pursuit of natural history in the country was associated with the Royal Botanical Expedition. See: Mauricio Nieto Olarte, *Remedios para el imperio: historia natural y la apropiación del Nuevo Mundo* (Bogotá, Colombia: Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia, 2000), 262.

55. Armando Dugand to Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee, 22 November 1944, Folder September-December 1944, Box 3, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia; Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee to Armando Dugand, 5 December 1944, Folder September-December 1944, Box 3, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

56. Armando Dugand to Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee, 7 May 1945, Folder April-June 1945, Box 4, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia. For other examples of the first interactions between Meyer de Schauensee and Dugand see: Armando Dugand to Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee, 12 June 1945, Folder April-June 1945, Box 4, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia; Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee to Armando Dugand, 19 June 1945, Folder April-June 1945, Box 4, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia. Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee to Armando Dugand, 24 July 1945, Folder July-September 1945, Box 4, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

Dugand was not the only ornithologist in Colombia who asked for Meyer de Schauensee's help. Brother Nicéforo María also approached the Academy with hopes that bigger libraries and bigger collections could help him identify some of the birds the Instituto collected continuously. In July 1945 Nicéforo began a lively correspondence with Meyer de Schauensee by sending a box of twenty-nine rare birds that needed identification.<sup>57</sup>

These first two shipments of birds from Dugand and Nicéforo proved to be the start of many recurring shipments to Meyer de Schauensee for identification purposes. Between 1946 and 1950, hundreds of rare birds collected by the La Salle Institute as well as the ICN were sent to Philadelphia. There was, however, a vital difference between the Meyer de Schauensee-von Sneidern relation and that of Meyer de Schauensee with Dugand and Brother Nicéforo: von Sneidern was interested in monetary gain from the exchange, while Dugand and Nicéforo were not. For von Sneidern, nature had a financial value, while for Dugand and Nicéforo it did not. In fact, when Dugand asked Meyer de Schauensee to return the birds he was sending for identification because they belonged to the ICN, he explained that the following sign should be attached to the box: "Zoological specimens with no commercial value, native of Colombia, returned to the Instituto de Ciencias Naturales after scientific study."<sup>58</sup> To become respected scientists among foreign colleagues, Colombians wanted to show that they had the proper valuation of nature. By demonstrating that they had no monetary interest in the birds they studied, they could distance themselves from local commercial collectors—often regarded as driven only by extraction interests—and gain the proper status among respected naturalists in their quest to become international scientists.

But, if there was no money involved, what exactly was the benefit that Meyer de Schauensee was extracting from these birds? What kind of profit was he expecting from the transaction? First of all, although von Sneidern was in the field collecting for the Academy, the birds sent by Dugand and Brother Nicéforo were free. It is true that in some cases they were not going to become permanent in the Academy's collection, but they helped Meyer de Schauensee in the completion of his list of known species of birds in Colombia. Second,

57. Brother Nicéforo María to Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee, 9 July 1945, Folder July-September 1945, Box 4, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia. Another example of the first interactions between Meyer de Schauensee and Brother Nicéforo include: Brother Nicéforo María to Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee, 25 July 1945, Folder July-September 1945, Box 4, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

58. The original in Spanish reads: "Ejemplares zoológicos sin valor comercial, originarios de Colombia, que se devuelven al Instituto de Ciencias naturales después de estudio científico." Armando Dugand to Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee, 7 May 1945, Folder April-June 1945, Box 4, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

and most important, these were rare birds. Of the thousands of birds that von Sneidern collected, a high percentage were birds already known to science and previously described by other ornithologists. The birds sent by Dugand and Brother Nicéforo were less in number, but had the quality of being rare by definition. Precisely because Colombians were interested in developing stronger scientific traditions, they worked hard with the tools available to them and identified most of the birds collected in their expeditions, using both their libraries and collections. Usually, if they needed help identifying birds it meant that they had an uncommon specimen in their hands.

On more than one occasion Meyer de Schauensee found a new species or subspecies thanks to the specimens that his Colombian colleagues sent. In a letter written around April or May of 1946, Meyer de Schauensee wrote to Brother Nicéforo that the wren in the last shipment he sent to the Academy turned out to be a new species, and he decided to name it after the Brother. Likewise, in September 10, 1945, Meyer de Schauensee wrote to Dugand: "The box of birds which you sent arrived a few days ago, and I was most interested to examine them... With regard to the parrot, this is a new subspecies connecting [two groups]. It is a most interesting species." He concluded the letter saying, "Should you at any time have specimens which you would like studied, or identified, I would only be glad to [help you]."<sup>59</sup>

Meyer de Schauensee had good reasons to help the Colombian naturalists. He was able to identify new species, but he also was able to publish the results in different, and more respected journals than those available to his Colombian colleagues. Even if the ICN or the Instituto de La Salle had actually collected and sent the specimen to Meyer de Schauensee, it was the person who identified and classified it who received the credit. For Meyer de Schauensee this meant immortality among the ornithological community. From that moment on any scholar referencing any species Meyer de Schauensee identified as new, had to reference him as the discoverer; just like any naturalist still has to reference Linnaeus as the discoverer of thousands of plants, even if hundreds of collectors were the ones that actually traveled and gathered the specimens.

Colombian scholars had their own interests, and they handled the liaison with the United States in ways that would help them as well. To be sure, American scientists in many cases assumed that the role of producing a finished product, in this case a scientific theory, was work only deemed appropriate to the scientists of the so-called developed nations. And they always benefited from

59. Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee to Brother Nicéforo María, n.d., Folder April-June 1946, Box 4, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia; Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee to Armando Dugand, 10 September 1945, Folder July-September 1945, Box 4, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

turning raw materials into manufactured ideas. Nevertheless, Latin Americans used this raw data as ways to obtain prestige inside their communities and to gain initial recognition in the international scientific community.

In Dugand's and Brother Nicéforo's case, two benefits accrued from their regular transactions with Meyer de Schauensee. First, they obtained knowledge and information about bird species that were otherwise unavailable to them. Classifying rare birds required large libraries and bird collections, something that scholars in Colombia did not have at the time. Second, and most important of all, Dugand and Brother Nicéforo used their connections with the United States as a way to obtain prestige inside the local scientific community. Having contact with foreign scientists gave their work an international connotation, something that had always been valued within Latin American scientific communities. Furthermore, rare birds without proper identification were as useless to Colombian scholars as they were to North American ones. Once Meyer de Schauensee identified a bird as a new species, Dugand and Brother Nicéforo could emphasize among their colleagues the importance of their work in the development of science. Different birds carry Dugand's and Brother Nicéforo's names in their scientific form, a fact that gave them immortality among naturalists around the world.<sup>60</sup>

So far I have shown the affinity that exists between the economic context of the 1930s and 1940s and the scientific relation between scientists in the United States and Colombia in this period. Colombia's attempts to promote a local industry, in order to overcome the dependence on manufactured products from the more industrialized countries, closely paralleled the attempts to promote a stronger tradition in national science. Colombia still depended on the transfer of specialized technology and knowledge from these industrialized nations to become as modern as the elite desired, a situation that mirrored the dependence of Colombian naturalists on information that American scientists could provide them in order to be more successful in their research.

While the history of Colombia's changing political economy and culture during the 1930s and 1940s offers a useful framework for understanding many aspects of the relationships established between Colombian and American scientists in the trade and study of birds, there are nuances to the culture of science that need to be analyzed, independent of economic relations and commodity flows. As scholars such as Warwick Anderson and Paula Findlen have shown, gift-giving and bartering have been as important to understanding

60. Dugand's Antwren, *Herpsilochmus dugandi*, Nicéforo's Pintail, *Anas georgica nicefori*, and Nicéforo's Wren, *Thryothorus nicefori* are good examples. See: Bo Beolens and Michael Watkins, *Whose Bird? Common Bird Names and the People They Commemorate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

the exchange of scientific objects as political economy.<sup>61</sup> Colombia's case corroborates the idea that although scientific commodities can be extracted and acquired like any other commodity, the trading of scientific things for information, the exchange of natural history items for other items of similar nature, as well as the donation of specimens to scientists or institutions, are all crucial aspects for the success of any natural history enterprise.

In Meyer de Schauensee's case, there is little doubt that he profited immensely from the flow of birds as economic commodities, as we saw from his relation with the commercial collector Kjell von Sneidern. However, Meyer de Schaunsee's success was due to the fact that he realized that his relation with scientists in Colombia was much more complex than a simple economic transaction. He understood that these scientists were not interested in receiving monetary compensation for birds and, contrary to Frank Chapman, who tried to interact with Colombians through financial means, Meyer de Schauensee recognized the importance of other forms of exchange.

Bartering played an important role in their relationship, especially through the trade of information for raw materials. Throughout the 1940s Meyer de Schauensee developed a need for unprocessed birds from Colombia, that is, birds that had not been previously classified or identified. Although he acquired many of these through commercial means, he was also able to get them through the bartering of information. Colombian naturalists, whose professional careers were just starting, were in need of scientific information. Scientific papers, books, or knowledge related to the rare birds they collected were crucial tools in their day-to-day work. In this situation, the exchange of raw materials for information seemed only natural. Most of the rare birds that Dugand, Lehmann, and Brother Nicéforo sent to Meyer de Schauensee were exchanged for scientific knowledge on classification.

Bartering was also reflected in the exchange of birds for other birds, a key factor in the completion of the Academy's bird collection from Colombia. The trade of natural history specimens among institutions was certainly not limited to the trade of specimens between the United States and Colombia. It was a common practice between North American natural history museums in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>62</sup> In Colombia's case, more than

61. Paula Findlen, "The Economy of Scientific Exchange in Early Modern Italy," in *Patronage and Institutions: Science, Technology, and Medicine at the European Court, 500-1750*, ed. Bruce T. Moran (Rochester: The Boydell Press, 1991); Warwick Anderson, "The Possession of Kuru: Medical Science and Biocolonial Exchange," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42, no. 4 (2000).

62. See for example Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee's request to Alexander Wetmore at the United States National Museum: Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee to Alexander Wetmore, 8 October 1946, Folder October-December 1946, Box 4, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

400 birds were bartered between 1946 and 1948, especially between Meyer de Schauensee and Brother Nicéforo. Many of these birds turned out to be rare specimens that helped Meyer de Schauensee complete the list he began to prepare in 1946.<sup>63</sup>

Gift-giving was also an important factor in U.S.-Colombia scientific relations. On more than one occasion Dugand and Brother Nicéforo sent birds as gifts. In March of 1946, for example, just a few months after initiating correspondence, Brother Nicéforo sent Meyer de Schauensee a box with birds for identification, and included some skins as gifts. In many other occasions they sent their scientific papers as gifts for Meyer de Schauensee.<sup>64</sup> Gifts, however, were not limited to a south-north direction and flowed both ways. Meyer de Schauensee sent birds as gifts a couple of times, especially when he wanted to thank his correspondents for sending him some of their publications or material to study. Most important, however, the fact that Meyer de Schauensee named some of the new species he discovered after Brother Nicéforo or Dugand was another form of gift, and definitely a precious one.<sup>65</sup>

So, what can gifts tell us about the relation between North American and Colombian naturalists? In a small piece written in 1991, Paula Findlen explained gift-giving as a central part of scientific practice in early modern Italy, particularly in natural history. Natural history museums and botanical gardens, which emerged in Italy in the late sixteenth century, “were predicated upon the collection of objects. Thus naturalists precipitated exchanges as part of the ordinary course of their activities. Gifts were not simply talismans of patronage relationships, as they were for Galileo and Kepler, but an integral part of the study of nature.” Furthermore, gifts participated in a complex system of prestige and it was through them that many scientists obtained status and authority. In this way, “rather than being a formal code of conduct, gift-giving was a strategy for success.”<sup>66</sup>

63. Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee to Brother Nicéforo María, 18 September 1946, Folder July-September 1946, Box 4, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia. Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee to Brother Nicéforo María, 19 December 1946, Folder October-December 1946, Box 4, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia. Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee to Brother Nicéforo María, 17 June 1947, Folder January-June 1947, Box 4, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

64. Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee to Brother Nicéforo María, 13 March 1946, Folder January-March 1946, Box 4, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia; Armando Dugand to Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee, 13 August 1946, Folder July-September 1946, Box 4, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

65. Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee to Armando Dugand, 30 August 1946, Folder July-September 1946, Box 4, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

66. Findlen, “The Economy of Scientific Exchange in Early Modern Italy.”

The relationship between Meyer de Schauensee and Dugand and Brother Nicéforo suggests that gift-giving by naturalists in the twentieth century shared many of the characteristics described by Findlen. Although not as common as it was among naturalists in the sixteenth century, and certainly not as important to gain a better social position, gifts were certainly important in the completion of collections in museums of natural history and, most important of all, they helped the scientists involved in the exchange gain status in the scientific community. A gift carries a social debt and the person that donated a specimen to an institution was certainly expecting something back.<sup>67</sup> Colombian naturalists clearly expected some form of recognition in return. They were well aware of the power relation involved in their relationship with Meyer de Schauensee and knew that he had the means to make birds from Colombia a respected topic within North American academia. A gift could help their names be referenced in Meyer de Schauensee's publications, a door to international recognition. If the gift was a paper, they hoped it would be mentioned as a part of his research, a sign that they were involved in an international dialogue. Meyer de Schauensee, on the other hand, did not expect any kind of recognition. Instead, his gifts were just a way to perpetuate the very profitable relation he had with Colombia. By sending rare specimens and naming new species after his Colombian colleagues, he made sure that the flow of rare species would continue and could always expect interesting material for his research, which ultimately would lead to recognition in the international community.

In June 1946, Dugand wrote to Meyer de Schauensee telling him he had heard about his plans to work on a list of all the known species of birds from Colombia. Dugand was glad to learn about the project and offered Meyer de Schauensee the pages of *Caldasia*, the official publication of the ICN, to publish the list. About seven months later an unexpected and uncommon thing happened: Meyer de Schauensee accepted Dugand's suggestion. As he explained in a letter,

I am pleased to say that my list on Colombian birds is progressing satisfactorily... I remember your very kind suggestion that it might

67. My work, therefore, is more aligned with and wants to recuperate the work of Marcel Mauss and Warren Hagstrom in that I agree that gifts carry a social debt and certainly have a place in scientific practices. In this way it also moves away from the work of Jacques Derrida, who assumes that gifts cannot carry reciprocity, and the work of Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, who see no place for gifts in scientific traditions. See: Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1954); Warren O. Hagstrom, "Gift Giving as an Organizing Principle in Science," in *Science in Context: Readings in the Sociology of Science*, ed. Barry Barnes and David Edge (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1982), 21-34; Jacques Derrida, *Given Time. I, Counterfeit Money* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 201-205.

be possible to publish this list in Colombia. As this paper will deal exclusively with Colombian birds, it would seem to me the best place to have it published and where it would be of most use would be in Colombia; therefore, I am writing to you in the hopes that you still would like this paper for publication.<sup>68</sup>

At the time it was common for naturalists working on natural history museums to publish in the official publications of their institutions. Frank Chapman usually published his results in the *Bulletin of the American Museum*, Meyer de Schauensee in the *Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences*, just like Dugand published in *Caldasia* and Brother Nicéforo in the *Boletín de la Sociedad de Ciencias Naturales del Instituto de la Salle*. Of course it was not uncommon to publish in other journals, especially if they were recognized inside the community, as was the case of *The Auk*, for example. But it was uncommon for an American naturalist to publish the results of years of research in a Latin American journal, especially if it was a complete list of birds for a specific country. Perhaps due to space limitations in journals at the Academy, Meyer de Schauensee thought otherwise and in 1947, along with Dugand, embarked on the publication of one of the largest ornithological lists in the world.

Dugand was delighted to hear that Meyer de Schauensee wanted to publish his list in *Caldasia*, and immediately sent some suggestions on the publication. Dugand played an important role in the successful completion of the list, especially by bringing to the table something that Meyer de Schauensee lacked: local knowledge. Recall that Meyer de Schauensee never set foot in Colombia, and it was hard for him to include detailed descriptions of the localities and geographies included in the list. After all, part of the reason Meyer de Schauensee got interested in Colombia was the complex geography, in which several chains of mountains, along with Caribbean, Pacific and Amazonian environments, explained the biological diversity of the country. Between 1947 and 1950, Dugand corresponded constantly with Meyer de Schauensee, making corrections in the geographical descriptions, the distributions of birds, and adding many of his own descriptions to clarify many of Meyer de Schauensee's points.<sup>69</sup>

The question of bird names also proved crucial from the start, and reveals the ways in which each scientist saw language in relation to nature. For Dugand it was clear that Spanish and English names would not be as useful, particularly

68. Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee to Armando Dugand, 9 January 1947, Folder January-June 1947, Box 4, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

69. For a couple of examples see, Armando Dugand to Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee, 22 and 27 November 1947, Folder July-December 1947, Box 4, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

those in Spanish, as there was no official record for bird names in this language. Dugand argued that scientific names were the proper way to approach the list.<sup>70</sup> Meyer de Schauensee disagreed with Dugand on this point. On October 30, 1947, he wrote: "With regard to common names, I feel it would be a pity to omit them. I realize that there are no Colombian names in common use throughout the country. Phelps, however, tells me that in his Venezuelan list, he is going to make names up or translate the English names into Spanish. I think this is a very good idea as it would help to standardize vernacular names."<sup>71</sup>

For Phelps and Meyer de Schauensee the possibility of translating the common names from English to Spanish was more than practical. Dugand, however, was troubled by this. On November 12, he wrote to Meyer de Schauensee that the first pages of the manuscript had arrived, and that he was going to add the English names to the list. But, he explained, he was still not sure about the Spanish names, especially if they were going to be translated. His argument was that they would not sound Spanish. For Dugand, a mere translation of names would be an imposition that he was not willing to accept. Even if they could standardize them throughout Latin America, a valuable contribution to ornithology, the price to pay for it would be too high. What Dugand was apparently trying to explain was that the names of some birds seemed to be part of the local customs of the people, and that what Phelps and Meyer de Schauensee proposed ignored these idiosyncrasies completely. Fortunately for Dugand, the published list in *Caldasia* only included the English and the scientific names.<sup>72</sup>

More important than bird names were the number of birds to be included in the list, a topic that both Dugand and Meyer de Schauensee considered key. From the very beginning of the project, Dugand asked for a first estimate of the number of species to be listed, to determine how long the paper was going to be. Meyer de Schauensee replied in early 1947 that at that moment Colombia had approximately 2,000 species and subspecies.<sup>73</sup> By October 30th of that same year, the number had increased dramatically to 2,264. As Meyer de Schauensee explained to Dugand about a chart he had included in the first ten pages of the

70. Armando Dugand to Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee, March 1947, Folder January-June 1947, Box 4, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

71. Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee to Armando Dugand, 30 October 1947, Folder July-December 1947, Box 4, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

72. Armando Dugand to Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee, 12 November 1947, Folder July-December 1947, Box 4, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

73. Armando Dugand to Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee, 10 February 1947, Folder January-June 1947, Box 4, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia; Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee to Armando Dugand, 17 February 1947, Folder January-June 1947, Box 4, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

manuscript, "You will see a table showing the number of species in Colombia as compared to the avifauna of Brazil. I believe this should be included as it gives a very clear picture of the diversity of birds found in a mountainous country as compared to that of lowland." Brazil was at the time the country with the most number of bird species and subspecies in the world, and a comparison with it seemed a good way to show the great diversity in Colombia's avifauna. By November, Brazil had become not only a good reference to show the variety of birds in Colombia, but a number that could be beat. According to Meyer de Schauensee, the bird count for Colombia was 2,271, just thirty-four less than Brazil, which had 2,305.<sup>74</sup>

The number continued to grow, especially as the date for publication came closer. And the excitement that both Dugand and Meyer de Schauensee felt was well reflected in their letters. In January 1948, Meyer de Schauensee wrote a letter to Dugand thanking him for remarking that the number of birds in Venezuela was approximately 821. Meyer de Schauensee added that the number for Colombia was now 2,284. By May the number had increased to 2,302, and by June the number reached 2,320.<sup>75</sup>

The constant increase in bird numbers is explained not only because Meyer de Schauensee continued to find new birds that had not previously been recorded for Colombia in the Academy's collection, but also because of different field trips carried out at the time by the ICN and the Museo Ornitológico Phelps. A trip to Tres Esquinas, in southeastern Colombia, by the ICN in mid-1947, for example, as well as a trip to the border between Venezuela and Colombia in 1948, by Phelps's assistants, yielded new records for Colombia.

The list was finally published in four consecutive numbers of *Caldasia* between 1948 and 1952.<sup>76</sup> In the preface to the list, Dugand explained with pride and satisfaction that Colombia had 2,326 bird species and subspecies, including 1,473 species. This was roughly a sixth of the total world count of 8,616 species reported by Ernst Mayr in 1946.<sup>77</sup>

74. Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee to Armando Dugand, 30 October 1947, Folder July-December 1947, Box 4, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia; Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee to Armando Dugand, 21 November 1947, Folder July-December 1947, Box 4, Schauensee Correspondence 1936-1947, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

75. Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee to Armando Dugand, 21 January 1948, Folder Correspondence D #2, Box 1 A-D, Schauensee Correspondence 1941-1977, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia; Armando Dugand to Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee, 19 May 1948, Folder Correspondence D #2, Box 1 A-D, Schauensee Correspondence 1941-1977, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia; Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee to Armando Dugand, 11 June 1948, Folder Correspondence D #2, Box 1 A-D, Schauensee Correspondence 1941-1977, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

76. Meyer de Schauensee, "The Birds of the Republic of Colombia."

77. Mayr, *Systematics and the Origin of Species from the Viewpoint of a Zoologist*.

In the introduction Meyer de Schauensee explained briefly how he got interested in the topic. In 1938, he recalled, the Academy received a small flycatcher by Kjell von Sneidern as a sample of his work. "As a result a trial lot of one hundred skins was ordered, and then another hundred, and from these small beginnings the Academy established long and very happy relations with Mr. von Sneidern, which resulted, during the following nine years, in the acquisition of 12,500 specimens from various regions in Colombia." Later in the introduction, Meyer de Schauensee, just like Dugand, did not miss a chance to show the overwhelming variety of birds in the country:

The most striking way to point out the tremendous richness of the Colombian avifauna is to compare it with that of Brazil. Although the latter country is nearly seven and a half times larger, Oliveira-Pinto records 2,299 species and subspecies from within its boundaries. This is approximately the same number of bird forms known from Colombia.<sup>78</sup>

Both naturalists gave clear importance to numbers. Establishing Colombia as the country with the most diverse avifauna in the world gave both naturalists an unprecedented position within their scientific communities. The publication of the study made Meyer de Schauensee the expert on Colombia among ornithologists worldwide, and one of the experts on South American avifauna. Meyer de Schauensee republished his study in 1964 as an illustrated field guide.<sup>79</sup> In Dugand's case, although his name was not attached to the publication as one of the authors, the Colombian community recognized his work and reaffirmed him as one of the best ornithologists in the country.

Meyer de Schauensee's and Dugand's study remained the most complete work on the birds of Colombia until 1986, when Steven Hilty and Bill Brown published *A Guide to the Birds of Colombia*, the most common book still used by birders and ornithologists interested in Colombia's avifauna. Numbers of course were very important. A little less than 1,700 species—two hundred more than those described by Meyer de Schauensee—were reported by Hilty and Brown, confirming Colombia as perhaps the country with the highest bird diversity in the world.<sup>80</sup>

78. Meyer de Schauensee, "The Birds of the Republic of Colombia." 251, 253.

79. Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee, *The Birds of Colombia, and Adjacent Areas of South and Central America* (Narberth: Livingston Pub. Co., 1964). Meyer de Schauensee then turned to the study of South American birds as a whole, publishing his final study in 1970. Meyer de Schauensee, *A Guide to the Birds of South America*. His final study with the help of William Phelps was on the birds of Venezuela. Meyer de Schauensee and Phelps, Jr., *A Guide to the Birds of Venezuela*.

80. Steven L. Hilty and Bill Brown, *A Guide to the Birds of Colombia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

### The Importance of Region: Naturalists in Popayán

The power differentials that permeated the relations between U.S. and Colombian scientists described in the last section, had a parallel within Colombia that needs to be studied in order to understand the complexities within Colombia's scientific community. Studies on U.S.-Latin American relations in general tend to homogenize Latin American actors as a single consolidated group facing the North Americans. However, this simplifies matters tremendously, overlooking the complexities of social and cultural relations within Latin American countries. In the case of Colombia, my approach to the relation between nation and nature would not be complete without taking into account the strong regionalism that has historically divided the country and that makes it difficult to speak of a 'Colombian' scientific community.<sup>81</sup>

Despite the importance that nationalism gained in the 1930s and 1940s, the politics and culture of Colombia were still shaped by strong regional hierarchies and differences, a factor that has characterized the country historically. Two of the more renowned historians of Colombia, Marco Palacios and Frank Safford, have described Colombia as a fragmented land with a divided society. Because of its broken geography, contact between different regions has not been easy and strong regional identities have formed. The Caribbean region in the north, for example, has a drastically different set of cultural values than that of the Andean region surrounding Bogotá, which in turn is different from the Antioquia region in the northwest, or the region of the Cauca Valley in the southwest. Likewise, a centralist system of government has characterized the development of Colombia as a country. Bogotá has been the capital, the base of the national government, and the city with the largest population. Although other cities have developed strong regional economies, Bogotá still remains the largest economic pillar in the nation. The centrality of Bogotá in Colombia's historic experience has caused tensions with other regions, especially those that have cities with important political and economic backgrounds such as Medellín, Cali, and Barranquilla.<sup>82</sup>

The Museo de Historia Natural in Popayán—Popayán's Museum of Natural History—illuminates how regional differences within Colombia

81. For many years now, historians have emphasized the importance of regionalisms when studying Colombia's history. See for example: Nancy P. Appelbaum, *Muddled Waters: Race, Region, and Local History in Colombia, 1846-1948* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Orlando Fals-Borda, *Región e historia: elementos sobre ordenamiento y equilibrio regional en Colombia* (Bogotá: IEPRI: TM Editores, 1996); Fabio Zambrano Pantoja, *Colombia, país de regiones*, 4 vols. (Bogotá, Colombia: Cinep; Colciencias, 1998.)

82. Fals-Borda, *Región e historia: elementos sobre ordenamiento y equilibrio regional en Colombia*; Frank Safford and Marco Palacios, *Colombia: país fragmentado, sociedad dividida, su historia* (Bogotá: Editorial Norma, 2002); Zambrano Pantoja, *Colombia, país de regiones*.

shaped scientific pursuits. The city of Popayán, located in the Cauca region in Colombia's southwest, has a peculiar place in Colombian history. The city was an important economic center during colonial times and it controlled the fate of most of Colombia's southern territories, a territory that was almost half of the country's total area. In the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century it continued to occupy an important place in Colombia's political environment. An aristocratic city, it was the cradle of many of Colombia's presidents and ministers. Likewise, among its children were many important thinkers and academics. However, Popayán's colonial glory quickly faded away during the republican period, as Bogotá's power escalated.

In 1936, Federico Carlos Lehmann Valencia (1914-1974), a native of Popayán and a member of one of its most prestigious families, founded the Museum of Natural History in the city. Lehmann was the grandson of Frederich Carl Lehmann Goldchmidt, a German naturalist and adventurer who traveled widely in Latin America in the late nineteenth century and became an important collector of plants for several museums in Europe. His grandson, Federico Carlos, followed in his footsteps. In 1936, with the help of José Lemos Guzmán, president of the Universidad del Cauca, Popayán's most important university, he established the Museum of Natural History and became its first director. He was in this position from 1938 to 1943, when Lehmann left the Museum to join a new team of naturalists at the Universidad Nacional, the same team that later created the Instituto de Ciencias Naturales.<sup>83</sup>

When, in 1943, Lehmann returned to work in the Museum in Popayán, his work concentrated on the collection of birds, insects, plants and mammals. However, it was far from being Lehmann's ideal research institution. The university in Popayán constantly promised funds to support better research at the Museum, but sooner or later other matters became more important and budgets were constantly cut. This lack of resources is perhaps one of the first issues that characterized the life of the Museum in its first decades. If the ICN in Bogotá had a hard time finding resources, finding money to create a research institution outside Bogotá proved a much harder task than Lehmann initially imagined. Throughout his life he constantly complained about the lack of support for science from the government and the state.<sup>84</sup> Colombia's centralism seemed to indirectly influence the amount of research naturalists could carry out in Popayán.

83. Lelvinnova Londoño Díaz, "Federico Carlos Lehmann Valencia, 1914-1974: semblanza biográfica y recuperación del fondo acumulado" (B.A. thesis, Universidad del Valle, 1999).

84. In his correspondence with ornithologist Alexander Wetmore in the late 1950s, Lehmann often complained about the lack of support he received from the University during his directorship of the Museum in the 1940s. See: Federico Carlos Lehmann to Alexander Wetmore, 18 August 1959, Correspondencia 1947-1969, Archivo Museo de Historia Natural, Universidad del Cauca, Popayán, Colombia.

In the 1950s, after Lehmann left the Museum, two naturalists became associated with it: Melbourne A. Carriker and Kjell von Sneidern. Carriker was born in Sullivan, Illinois, in 1879. Early in his life he developed a strong interest in birds and became an avid amateur throughout his teenage years, collecting many bird skins. In the first decades of the twentieth century he worked as a collector for museums in the United States. Between 1911 and 1927 he lived in the region of Santa Marta, in Colombia, where he collected birds for the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh and developed a coffee plantation with his family. Although he returned for a brief period to the United States in the late 1920s and 1930s, he made several collecting trips to South America at the time. In 1941 he returned to Colombia, where he lived the rest of his life. Between 1941 and 1952 he collected extensively in the country for Alexander Wetmore at the Smithsonian Institution. In 1952, he decided to settle in Popayán with the aim of pursuing research in ornithology and bird lice (Mallophaga).<sup>85</sup> Von Sneidern—the avid bird collector for the Academy in Philadelphia—also settled down in Popayán in the 1950s, right at the time that Carriker moved to the city. Both became attached to the Museo de Historia Natural and decided to pursue their research from this institution.<sup>86</sup>

The case of Carriker and Von Sneidern tells us more about the practice of science in Colombia than about science in the United States or Sweden. Even though both had been trained outside Colombia, their research was limited by the available resources in the country at the time. Despite their respective nationalities, both became not only Colombian ornithologists, but Colombian naturalists working in Popayán, a peripheral city in Colombia's centralized system.

It was common for naturalists in Bogotá to ask for help from foreign naturalists when they needed to identify the species of an unknown bird collected in Colombian territory. Nicéforo and Dugand often contacted museums in the United States asking for help in this regard. However, they rarely tried to ask for help within Colombian borders. There are almost no traces of correspondence between naturalists in Bogotá and those in other Colombian cities asking for advice. In Popayán the situation was different. Carriker and Von Sneidern both used the help of the ICN to complement their own research.

For example, in November 1954, Von Sneidern wrote to Dugand telling him that he was working on a new possible subspecies of *Ciccaba virgata*. He recalled that the ICN had some specimens that could help and he asked Dugand to please

85. A biography of Carriker and his family during their time in Colombia was written by his son: Melbourne R. Carriker, *Vista Nieve: The Remarkable, True Adventures of an Early Twentieth-Century Naturalist and his Family in Colombia, South America* (Rio Hondo: Blue Mantle Press, 2000).

86. Von Sneidern, *Aves maravillosas de Colombia*.

send them to Popayán. Dugand immediately replied telling Sneidern that he would be more than happy to send the bird skins. The strange thing, Dugand remarked, was that the specimens had been actually collected by Von Sneidern himself.<sup>87</sup> This example is telling in that it shows the power structures that were present in Colombia. In the same way that North Americans bought bird skins from Colombians to complete their own collections, and naturalists from Bogotá asked North Americans for help, Bogotá had the resources to purchase bird skins from Popayán, and naturalists in Popayán had to turn to Bogotá to complement their research.

Carriker and Von Sneidern, however, also developed direct relations with scientists in the United States as well. In mid-1954, Carriker wrote to Alexander Wetmore at the Smithsonian asking him if he could identify a bird collected by Von Sneidern but that was puzzling both of them. After a few months of query, Wetmore wrote back to Carriker telling him that he had finally been able to identify the bird as *Cypseloides fumigatus rothschildi*. The bird had been recorded in other countries of South America but this was the first record for Colombia.<sup>88</sup> The fact that the bird had never been recorded in Colombia makes evident why both naturalists had to turn to the United States for help. It was only in one of the large collections of birds in the United States, where birds from all over Latin America could be found, that this particular specimen could be identified and placed as a new record for Colombia. The collections and knowledge of the ICN would have been useless in this case for what Carriker and Von Sneidern were looking for.

Wetmore asked Carriker if it was possible for the Smithsonian to keep the specimen in Washington. He wondered if Von Sneidern and the Smithsonian could "make some arrangements with von Sneidern through exchange or otherwise so that it might remain here in the U.S. National Museum in view of its importance as a first record for the country."<sup>89</sup> Von Sneidern replied that unfortunately the bird had to be returned to Popayán. He explained that had the bird been part of his property, he would gladly give it to the Smithsonian. However, it belonged to the Museum in Popayán and therefore was considered a national treasure that belonged to the state. Even in Popayán, nationalism was present at the time, and birds were part of it.

There is one final way in which Carriker's case can tell us more about the practice of science in Colombia than in his native country. In the late 1940s and

87. Kjell von Sneidern to Armando Dugand, 15 November 1954; Armando Dugand to Kjell von Sneidern, 29 November 1954, Correspondencia 1947-1969, Archivo Museo de Historia Natural, Universidad del Cauca, Popayán, Colombia.

88. Alexander Wetmore to Melbourne Carriker, 20 December 1954, Correspondencia 1947-1969, Archivo Museo de Historia Natural, Universidad del Cauca, Popayán, Colombia.

89. *Ibid.*

1950s Carriker came to realize that many of the birds he had sent to the United States, and which he considered to be new records for Colombia, were never reported as such. Furthermore, many of these bird species were being reported by other naturalists, and other collectors were receiving credit for collecting them. In 1947, when Dugand began working with Meyer de Schauensee in a list of Colombian birds, Carriker wrote the following to Dugand:

I am glad to know that you are planning on the publication of a new checklist of Colombian birds, in collaboration with de Schauensee. It certainly is much needed, but it will be far from complete unless Schauensee can get Mr. Todd of the Carnegie Museum to collaborate and furnish the records of my own collecting, the majority of which have never been published. I particularly noticed in the notes published by de Schauensee on their new collections from western Colombia where he gives certain species as the "first record for Colombia" when I had taken the same things years ago.<sup>90</sup>

In Carriker's eyes, he had collected these birds and he should be the one to receive credit for them. However, since he was now in Popayán, with little influence in the American naturalists' community, he could do nothing to remedy this situation. Carriker, like many of his Colombian colleagues, had sent many species to the United States, along with his local knowledge, and was not receiving what he considered to be the proper recognition for his work. Throughout the 1950s Carriker continued to complain about this issue with naturalists both in Bogotá and the United States, but he was never able to persuade people like Todd, at Carnegie, to publish all the new records from the collections Carriker had carried out for many years.<sup>91</sup>

The Museo de Historia Natural in Popayán continued to work intermittently during the late 1950s and 1960s. In 1954, the first issue of *Novedades Colombianas*, a journal devoted to the study of nature in Colombia, saw light. By 1961 it stopped publication because of monetary problems at the University. In the late 1950s Carriker and Von Sneider decided to step away from their connection with the Museum, given the lack of resources for research.

In Colombia's case, region and nation had a complex and direct relationship with nature and the naturalists that studied it during the first half of the twentieth century. For North American naturalists, Colombia was part of a

90. Melbourne Carriker to Armando Dugand, 15 August 1947, vol. 11(1) 1947, ICN Archivo, Instituto de Ciencias Naturales, Bogotá, Colombia.

91. Melbourne Carriker to W. E. Clyde Todd, 22 February 1948, Folder Todd, W. E. Clyde, Box 4, Melbourne Carriker Papers Record Unit 7297, SIA.

larger region, namely South America. Studying Colombia was valuable as long as it was related to other countries. For Colombian naturalists this was not the case. Immersed in a period of strong nationalism, nature became a treasure worth studying as an end itself. At the same time that Colombians were trying to produce their own manufactured goods, they made an effort to produce their own scientific knowledge in national institutions like the ICN. Inside Colombia, region also became an important issue to understand scientific relations. Due to Colombia's highly centralized system, unbalanced power relations were established between naturalists in Bogotá and other regions, in the same way North American naturalists established a hierarchy between them and Colombian naturalists in general. Also, the fact that naturalists were from different nationalities gives more complexity to the story. The place of birth or the country where scientists received their training did not determine their place in global scientific relations. Instead, monetary resources as well as the context of the place where they carried out their studies established their scientific nationality. Naturalists born in Sweden or the United States turned into Colombian scientists due to the historical and geographical context in which they worked.

In this complex scenario, Colombian and U.S. scientists constructed the idea that Colombia was the nation with the highest bird diversity in the world. An expanding North American science, combined with a specific Colombian context marked by nationalism, allowed for a collaborative work between naturalists that while traversed by a strong power dynamic served interests on all sides.

However, hunted and skinned birds were not the only birds traveling from Colombia to the United States. Thousands of live birds migrated every year between North and South America. Bird migration developed a different relationship between North Americans and Colombians at the time. Around the 1940s, U.S. ornithologists and conservationists realized that birds protected in North American territory had little or no protection once they traveled to South America, and thousands of them were killed each year on their travels. I now turn to the story of how North Americans developed strategies to promote nature conservation in Latin America and the different ways in which Latin Americans adopted conservation as part of their agendas.



*High Over The Borders*, National Film Board of Canada, 1942

## 4

# Environmental Bridges and National Parks

IN 1944 WALT Disney released *The Three Caballeros*, an intriguing film about Donald Duck's close friendship with rare and exotic birds throughout Latin America. In the movie, Donald was able to explore Latin American culture and landscapes with the guidance of Joe Carioca, a Brazilian parrot, Pablo, a southern penguin, Panchito, a Mexican rooster, and a bizarre and hyperactive aracuán, an imaginary Paraguayan bird. *The Three Caballeros* was the result of Walt Disney's trip through Latin America, as part of a larger initiative promoted by the United States to strengthen North America's relationship with Latin America during the 1930s and 1940s. The economic hardships brought by the economic depression made evident the need to have Latin Americans on North America's side as a constant source of cheap raw materials. Likewise, the development of fascism in the late 1930s and during World War II pressed the United States to promote a hemispheric union against the Axis powers.

This initiative—commonly associated with Franklin Delano Roosevelt and known as the Good Neighbor Policy—was an attempt to build stronger bonds with Latin American people. In the early 1930s there was a common anti-imperialist feeling among Latin Americans towards the United States. The overwhelming presence of American corporations and enclaves in the region, combined with the big stick policy developed since the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, and military interventions in places like Nicaragua and Haiti, moved Latin Americans further away from the United States. Franklin D. Roosevelt tried to reverse this with economic policies and political messages of goodwill. In 1936, for example, he traveled to South America on an official trip and addressed the Pan American conference that took place in Buenos

Aires. Like Donald Duck, he wanted to develop friendships throughout Latin America.<sup>1</sup>

Donald Duck was part of the cultural side that was present in the Good Neighbor Policy. In 1940, Roosevelt created the Office for Coordination of Commercial and Cultural Relations between the American Republics, renamed in 1941 as the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA). *The Three Caballeros*, sponsored by the OCIAA, became a good example of the ways in which Roosevelt's office tried to use cultural relations to support United States' ideals of democracy and friendliness among Latin Americans. Through the use of birds—that non-human actor so friendly to humans—, the movie was also intended as a way to present Latin American culture and nature to American audiences. However, through the constant use of dance, music and the image of an extremely excited Donald Duck watching Latin American women sunbathing in Mexico's beaches, the movie tropicalized the region and portrayed it as a place worth visiting only because of its exoticism.

Other films of the time used birds as a way to promote the idea that people throughout the American continent shared values and views of the world. *High Over the Borders*, released in 1942, was a documentary that followed the migration of birds between North America and South America. Sponsored by the New York Zoological Society, the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, and Canada's National Film Board, the film showed audiences how both continents had something precious in common: nature. The movie began with a scene in rural Wisconsin where Richie, a young boy, was sad because some swallows he had watched over the summer were leaving their nests. Soon after, the movie showed Ricardo, an Argentinian boy who was happy to see the same swallows arriving near his countryside home. Both scenes illustrated how nature in the Americas belonged to no one in particular. Better yet, birds belonged to all Americans. They migrated freely over national borders every year and called both North and South America home. The movie then turned to hundreds of captivating images of birds flying over landmarks such as Washington D.C.'s capitol, the Mayan ruins in Central America, and the

1. A very good starting point to understand the implications of the Good Neighbor Policy in Latin America is: Eric Rooda, *The Dictator Next Door: The Good Neighbor Policy and the Trujillo Regime in the Dominican Republic, 1930-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998). See also: Fredrick B. Pike, *FDR's Good Neighbor Policy: Sixty Years of Generally Gentle Chaos*, 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995). Mark T. Gilderhus, "U.S.-Latin American Relations, 1898-1941: A Historiographical Review," in *A Companion to American Foreign Relations*, ed. Robert D. Schulzinger (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2003). For an approach to United States-Colombia relations at the time of the Good Neighbor Policy see: David Bushnell, *Eduardo Santos and the Good Neighbor, 1938-1942* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1967); Stephen J. Randall, *Aliados y distantes: las relaciones entre Colombia y Estados Unidos desde la independencia hasta la guerra contra las drogas* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo, Uniandes, CEI, 1992).

forests and jungles of Colombia and Venezuela. As historian of science, Gregg Mitman, has aptly concluded, “In the midst of Roosevelt’s push for economic internationalism, birds became useful for diffusing nationalist sentiments and promoting the common ownership of natural resources.”<sup>2</sup>

This chapter explores how this idea of the common ownership of nature shaped wildlife protection and, specifically, bird protection in Latin America between the 1940s and 1960s. I will pay close attention to the Colombian case, but hopefully the main conclusions will also help the reader think about wildlife conservation in Latin American as a whole. In the late 1930s many American conservationists began to realize that bird protection in the United States faced a problem: migrating birds received no protection once they traveled to Latin America. Although bird protection had a long history in the United States, and by the late 1930s there was a strict and fairly well-implemented policy governing bird hunting and the protection of certain bird species, bird lovers soon realized that all these efforts were meaningless unless Latin American countries developed similar policies. Between the 1940s and the 1960s, therefore, the United States pressed Latin America to create better wildlife conservation practices.

Recently, environmental historians have turned to diplomatic and legal history to understand how the history of foreign relations has been integral to the history of international wildlife conservation. In *The Dawn of Conservation Diplomacy*, Kurkpatrick Dorsey offers an account of the first international treaties to protect wildlife such as whales, seals, and birds through the historical lens of transnational relationships between the United States and countries such as Canada.<sup>3</sup> But Latin America presents a considerably different case study for historians seeking to understand the rise of conservation on a global scale. While the United States looked upon Canada, Japan, and Europe as roughly equal in political terms in diplomatic negotiations that established international nature conservation policies, Latin America was viewed as an unequal partner, one that had much to learn from its more civilized northern neighbor. Even at the time of the Good Neighbor Policy, the United States acted as an imperial power in its negotiations with Latin America to establish treaties governing international conservation. Because the lives of migratory birds were at stake, U.S. efforts to promote bird conservation in Latin America were part of a “civilizing mission” to enlighten and transform the region’s relationship to nature within its borders.<sup>4</sup>

2. Gregg Mitman, *Reel Nature: America’s Romance with Wildlife on Films* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 182.

3. Kurkpatrick Dorsey, *The Dawn of Conservation Diplomacy: U.S.-Canadian Wildlife Protection Treaties in the Progressive Era* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998).

4. Once again my work owes a big debt to scholars who have given new and balanced perspectives to the study of United States as an empire as well as the complex relations between the United States and Latin America in the twentieth century. The literature is too vast to mention here but

Following the arguments of previous chapters, however, I will also assert that Colombians were active participants in the creation and re-creation of this imperial relation. The movement for conservation advanced by the United States in Colombia was made possible by the attraction of elites to modernist ideals as a way to overcome their nation's economic, political and social problems.<sup>5</sup> They saw the United States as the ultimate modern nation and cultivated their relations with Americans as the proper path to achieve their desire to modernize. In many ways, Colombian naturalists pushed in favor of conservation as a way to follow the modernization trends set by the United States.

Finally, this chapter talks about and owes a debt to recent studies on wildlife and nature conservation in Latin America, a topic which only recently begun to grasp the attention of environmental historians. These studies have brought attention to the complex and varied scenarios in which Latin Americans have tried to protect and manage the environment that surrounds them. From tropical plants in the Spanish Caribbean to Guano resources in the coast of Perú, historians have started to analyze the efforts that governments have put into natural resource management to improve the economic well-being of their nations.<sup>6</sup> Guano birds were protected because their excrement was highly

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some important examples include: Marcos Cueto, ed., *Missionaries of Science: The Rockefeller Foundation and Latin America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); Gilbert Joseph, Catherine LeGrand, and Ricardo Donato Salvatore, eds., *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease, eds., *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993); Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Ann Laura Stoler, ed., *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

5. In the Latin American case it is important not to think of the relation between tradition and modernity as hierarchical or as a historical evolution. As Néstor García Canclini has argued, the modern and the traditional have coexisted in Latin America as states have adopted modernization while at the same time hung on to traditions to create national identities. See: Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995). Many historians of Latin America have also argued that modernity should not be seen as an exclusively western product but one that has also emerged in Latin American contexts. See: Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

6. Gregory Todd Cushman, "The Lords of Guano: Science and the Management of Peru's Marine Environment, 1800-1973" (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas-Austin, 2003); Sterling Evans, *The Green Republic: A Conservation History of Costa Rica* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999); Stuart George McCook, *States of Nature: Science, Agriculture, and Environment in the Spanish Caribbean, 1760-1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002); Shawn Miller, *An Environmental History of Latin America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Lane Simonian, *Defending the Land of the Jaguar: A History of Conservation in Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995).

valued; sugar cane was studied to improve the quantity and quality of crops in the international markets; forests were saved to maintain the flow of rivers so that coffee plantations could be constantly watered. As we will see below, bird protection also had an economic component. For some naturalists, birds were key factors in the well-being of crops and had to be preserved in order to maintain the well-being of Colombia's economy. The chapter, nonetheless, would also like to move one step further and attempt to give some insight on the protection of wildlife in Latin America and try to understand why governments and people in Colombia decided to protect birds that, in principle, were of no economic benefit. This poses a different historical problem and the chapter overall will try to bring some preliminary conclusions on the subject.

### Wildlife Protection Goes Global

In the early twentieth century several institutions and societies were formed in Europe to promote international cooperation in the protection of nature. In 1903, the Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire was created in London, for the purpose of developing appropriate policies for the protection of fauna in the British colonies, especially those in Africa.<sup>7</sup> More importantly, in 1913 the International Office for the Protection of Nature (IOPN), a European organization based in Brussels and probably the first official organization dedicated exclusively to promote international conservation, became a reality focusing its efforts on the protection of fauna mostly in Africa and Asia.

Americans soon followed this European initiative. In 1922, T. Gilbert Pearson, a famous American conservationist and one of the founders of the National Association of Audubon Societies, organized the International Committee for Bird Preservation (ICBP), an organization that in its first years established links between the United States and Europe to protect birds from unregulated hunting and over killing.

Nevertheless, it was the American Committee for International Wild Life Protection (ACIWLP)—formed in 1930 and inspired after its European counterpart, the IOPN—that reflected most clearly the U.S. initiative to get involved in nature protection overseas, especially Africa and Asia. In 1941, W. Reid Blair, the secretary of the Committee, remembered the main reasons that led to the formation of the ACIWLP: in the 1920s, many countries, especially those with extensive colonial possessions, were conscious of their diminishing

7. For a recent history of the origins and main concerns of this society see: David K. Prendergast and William M. Adams, "Colonial Wildlife Conservation and the Origins of the Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire (1903–1914)," *Oryx* 37, no. 2 (2003).

wild life because of the lack of laws governing the preservation of valuable game. This was not only harmful from the standpoint of the good sportsman, but also from an aesthetic point of view and because of the scientific value of the game destroyed.<sup>8</sup>

Strong and vigorous laws were necessary to prevent the total extermination of game throughout the world. The Boone and Crockett Club in New York decided to take an active part in a world-wide effort to try to stop the unnecessary destruction of nature by forming the ACIWLP. Its main goal became the promotion of American sympathy towards international conservation, especially by working closely with its corresponding organizations on European soil.

As we will see below, the aesthetic point of view cited by Blair as one of the main reasons to promote the preservation of nature, an argument commonly used in the history of nature preservation in the United States, would contrast with the position that Latin American governments would first take on the subject.

The original members of the ACIWLP were John C. Phillips, Kermit Roosevelt, George D. Pratt and Harold J. Coolidge. The Committee started functioning in the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard University, and in 1938 was relocated to New York, in the offices of the New York Zoological Park. By 1941 the number of members had increased to thirty one, all of them elite gentlemen in Boston, New York and Washington. Some important members of the advisory board included Fairfield Osborn of the New York Zoological Society, Childs Frick of the AMNH, Thomas Barbour of the MCZ, and Alexander Wetmore of the Smithsonian Institution.

The ACWILP in its first meeting established four principles to help guide its work in the international arena. First, the Committee would cooperate with foreign governments and institutions in the establishment of national parks, natural reserves, game laws, etc. It would not interfere with work that was already in motion, such as the establishment of the Albert National Park in the Congo, or the Kruger National Park in South Africa, but would try to promote efforts along similar lines in other countries and regions. Second, the Committee would cooperate with the British Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire in London, as well as the International Office for the Protection of Nature in Brussels. Third, it would try to promote the interest of wildlife by spreading correct information on matters related to international conservation problems. Finally, it would encourage high standards of sportsmanship among Americans that traveled overseas and had contact

8. Annual report of the American Committee for International Wild Life Protection, 11 December 1941, Folder 4, Box 79, Collection Division 2: Organizational File, Alexander Wetmore Papers Record Unit 7006, Smithsonian Institution Archives (SIA).

with wildlife in foreign countries.<sup>9</sup> By the mid 1930s these first objectives of the ACIWLP had become a reality as it got involved in projects such as the protection of the koala, the study of the Trypanosoma and its effects on wildlife in Africa, the protection of the giant sable antelope, and the establishment of a sanctuary for the mountain zebra.<sup>10</sup>

### Migrating Birds: The ICBP in Latin America

Despite all the attention that European and American conservation organizations showered on Africa and Asia in the 1920s and early 1930s, Latin America garnered little attention. Preserving and defending the life of the rhinoceros or the elephant somehow seemed more attractive than protecting relatively unknown species of wildlife in Latin America. Without large megafauna that attracted big game hunters and conservationists, Latin America had difficulty competing with the allure of African wilderness, which was more engrained in the imaginary of amateur and professional naturalists.<sup>11</sup>

All this started to change in the 1930s. In 1936, T. Gilbert Pearson proudly described in *Bird-lore*, the official journal of the National Audubon Societies, how the ICBP had grown dramatically since its founding in 1922. Twenty-six countries were part of this international effort, and Europe in particular was very active in promoting the international conservation of birds. Pearson, however, argued that regardless of these accomplishments, the work of the ICBP was just starting. It was now time to focus on the countries of the Western hemisphere. The ICBP started planning a project to obtain information about bird-protection, or the lack of it, in the West Indies, Central America, and South America.<sup>12</sup> With this purpose in mind, Pearson created the Pan-American section of the ICBP in 1938.

Bird preservation in Latin America, Pearson explained, was indeed a problem of much interest to the United States. While migratory birds were protected in North America, they had no protection after they journeyed south. In this way, “quite aside from the pleasure that comes from disinterested efforts in seeking to be a good neighbor, North American conservationist have a very vital interest plainly at stake.” Pearson illustrated his point by making reference to the case of the endangered and highly-protected wild-duck:

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*

11. For a good reference on the importance of Africa in North America’s imaginary, especially through the creation of nature films, in the first decades of the twentieth century see: Mitman, *Reel Nature: America’s Romance with Wildlife on Films*.

12. T. Gilbert Pearson, “Report of International Bird-Protection,” *Bird-lore* 38, no. 6 (1936): 453.

Many of the individuals of twenty-one species of our wild ducks in Autumn migrate south of our boundaries, some going even as far away as Chile. These species have been so reduced in recent years that in the United States not one of them is permitted to be shot in any state during a longer period than thirty days, with a daily bag-limit of ten birds... But what happens to these birds when in winter they leave our country?<sup>13</sup>

In the same way that many elite Americans that lived in the north spent their winters in southern states like Florida, in the warmth of expensive resorts, birds also traveled to the south in search of warmer climates.

Pearson's views also invite us to think once again of the relationship between nature and nation presented in the preceding chapter of this book. Pearson's reference to wild ducks as "our wild ducks" means that he saw them as American. They were not ducks that migrated between North and South America. They were North American birds that migrated to South America in the winter. Just like any American, birds for Pearson seemed to have citizenship and it was the duty of the North American people to protect *their* birds while they were away from home overseas. In the same way that Colombian naturalists in the 1930s and 1940s made a connection between birds and Colombian boundaries, naturalists in the United States often perceived the birds they studied as American.

According to the ICBP, most South American countries had little or no conservation policies. Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay were Latin American countries where nature conservation had received the most attention. In the rest of the region laws regarding bird protection were basically non-existent, and, if they existed, they were usually used to protect birds that were useful for agriculture. Colombia was among the countries with few, if any, conservation laws. The ICBP asked the assistance of Mr. William Dawson, of the American consulate in Bogotá, to find out about the existing laws regarding the protection of birds in the country. Dawson wrote back explaining that there were none. According to a sportsman that corresponded with Pearson, pigeons and ducks were the most hunted birds in Colombia and "no hunter is satisfied if he does not take 50 or 100 birds in a day."<sup>14</sup> Pearson concluded his report with the following statement, "It is clearly our duty to transmit to the peoples of other American countries the results of our experiences, with the hope that these may serve as object lessons of what to avoid."<sup>15</sup>

13. Pearson, "Report of International Bird-Protection," 453-54.

14. *Ibid.*

15. Pearson, "Report of International Bird-Protection," 457.

Given the lack of laws and initiatives in the region to preserve wildlife, Pearson decided that a trip was necessary to get a personal sense of the situation. In 1939, the editor of *Bird-lore* described Pearson's plans in a brief editorial with the title, "Rolling Down to Rio." The piece once again emphasized how bird conservation in North America was not exclusively an American problem. Migrating birds were not protected once they left the United States in their southward travels. "So that it is quite natural that veteran conservationist and friend of birds Dr. T. Gilbert Pearson sailed [to South America]... Dr. Pearson hopes to visit all ten of the South American republics and to make a good-will tour in the cause of science and bird protection."<sup>16</sup> The time could not be more appropriate to pursue such a trip. In the midst of Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy, war broke out in Europe. As a result, the United States sought closer relations with countries in Latin America to diminish the influence of the Axis powers in the region.

In the midst of the Good Neighbor Policy, the United States certainly tried to approach Latin American countries with a friendlier attitude, looking to establish economic and political partnerships. However, this did not mean that the United States stopped pressuring its own agenda in the region. A more diplomatic approach was developed, but the United States made sure that its interests prevailed, and that the power relations between both regions were not altered. American corporations had significant economic interests in the area, and enclaves such as the Tropical Oil Company and the United Fruit Company still managed enormous amounts of land that largely benefited American business interests. Furthermore, Latin Americans were still largely indebted to U.S. banks, which allowed the United States to hold a privileged position in implementing its plans overseas.<sup>17</sup> The rise of conservation policies in the region, I argue, is an example of the way many Americans used the good neighbor approach to pursue their own agendas in the region. Pearson argued that his efforts were put into action with good-will to avoid the terrible North American conservation experience. This good-will approach was exactly the attitude Pearson took with him when he, just like the birds he loved, traveled below the equator. However, there was more to it than good will.

16. Frank M. Chapman, "'Rolling Down to Rio,'" *Bird-lore* 41, no. 5 (1939): 314.

17. For references on the power of enclaves in Latin America such as the United Fruit Company see: Marcelo Bucheli, *Bananas and Business: The United Fruit Company in Colombia, 1899-2000* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); John Soluri, *Banana Cultures: Agriculture, Consumption, and Environmental Change in Honduras and the United States* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005); Steve Striffler and Mark Moberg, *Banana Wars: Power, Production, and History in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003). For a general overview of Latin American history at the time see: John Charles Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire: A Concise History of Latin America* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001).

Pearson wrote a lively report when he returned from the trip. In it he explained that about 290 species of 33 families of North American land birds journeyed every year to Central and South America looking for warmer climates.

During some ten months' travel in nine of the republics of South America I was unable to find evidence of a single instance where anyone had been prosecuted for killing one of these migratory birds, or even a native song bird. As a matter of fact, very few laws exist in South America for the protection of non-game birds, and in some countries there is not the slightest semblance of a law for the preservation of any land bird.<sup>18</sup>

Pearson continued to explain how, on one occasion, he witnessed how a native hunter in Brazil killed a Lesser Yellow-legs thousands of miles away from where this bird was known to breed in Canada. If it had been shot while it was migrating through the United States, it would have been a violation of a federal law with a severe penalty.

Pearson strongly believed it appropriate for Americans to teach Latin Americans how to manage and preserve their natural resources. "Although there are cities in South America that were founded before any city now existing in the United States," he wrote, "the countries of the southern continent are in certain aspects younger and the natural resources less developed."<sup>19</sup> This paternalistic attitude remained prevalent in American efforts to promote bird preservation in the region. According to Pearson, even if the United States was a younger country in some respects, it was also a more experienced one. In his eyes, America's far more enlightened and civilized approach to nature protection needed implementation south of the Rio Grande.

Pearson was also aware that nature conservation needed transnational cooperation to become a reality. "No country working alone," he argued, "can insure adequate protection for its wild birds, for feathered voyagers have no knowledge of national frontiers. Bird protection is an international problem."<sup>20</sup> The idea that birds had no knowledge of national boundaries—also promoted in the film *High Over the Borders*—was often used to support the idea that nature was something that needed protection from the destroying hands of militant nationalism.

Pearson finished his report by explaining some isolated efforts being pursued to protect avifauna in South America. Brazil was by far the best case for him,

18. T. Gilbert Pearson, "Birding Below the Line," *Bird-lore* 42, no. 4 (1940): 317.

19. Pearson, "Birding Below the Line," 322.

20. Pearson, "Birding Below the Line," 315.

particularly because the government required a gun license for hunters. Argentina was also undertaking its first steps to promote the establishment of national parks, and some laws of conservation were in place. In the rest of South America laws were practically non-existent or not enforced.

Pearson, however, was optimistic, especially because during his trip he was able to create or reaffirm national sections of the ICBP throughout South America. And with Canada and Mexico already onboard the train of international conservation, he had good hopes for bird preservation all over the Americas. As he explained it himself,

With national sections of the International Committee for Bird Preservation now operating in Canada, the United States, Mexico and six South American countries, and with the movement for international treaties for wildlife preservation in all countries of the Western Hemisphere now under serious consideration, we may confidently expect the time to come when throughout all Pan-America the living bird will be raised to that high point of public esteem which it so richly deserves.<sup>21</sup>

Pearson died unexpectedly in September of 1943. However, his initiative to promote bird and animal conservation in Latin America was well underway.

### **Promoting Nature Protection in the Western Hemisphere: The North American Initiative**

Pearson's efforts in South America helped awaken and also paralleled the interest of other American conservationists in the region. One of those figures was Harold Jefferson Coolidge (1904-1986). During the 1920s and 1930s Coolidge became a leading authority on African primates at Harvard University's Museum of Comparative Zoology. Coolidge's interest in African wildlife led him to develop a strong interest in the preservation of exotic animals, first in Africa and then throughout the world. In 1948 he became a founding member of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.<sup>22</sup> Coolidge also became president of the International Commission on National Parks (ICNP), through which he made several efforts to establish new nature reserves around the world. Later on, he would become

21. Pearson, "Birding Below the Line," 322.

22. Between 1948 and 1956, the Union was known as the International Union for the Protection of Nature (IUPN). In 1990, the name World Conservation Union began to be used as well.

an important member of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), until his death in 1986.

In 1938, Coolidge wrote to Alexander Wetmore, the assistant secretary at the Smithsonian Institution,

Our executive committee has been most anxious to initiate international cooperation in the New World for the promotion of national parks and game reserves, if possible, along somewhat the pattern of the London Convention for African Nature Protection. From all the information that we could gather, it seemed that the approaching Lima conference would be the best opportunity to take an initial step in this direction.<sup>23</sup>

The executive committee Coolidge mentions was that of the American Committee for International Wild Life Protection, and the Lima conference was the Eighth International Conference of American States, a meeting of the Pan-American Union, to be held in that city in December of 1938.

The Pan-American Union—now known as the Organization of American States, OAS—was an international organization with its headquarters in Washington, D.C., that promoted a hemispheric union between all nations of North and South America. Established first in 1890 as the International Union of American Republics, this organization grew largely from a United States' initiative to strengthen solidarity across the Americas. Because of its base in Washington, the Union became a fruitful way for the United States to promote and develop its interests over the region.<sup>24</sup> In 1938, the meeting of the Pan-American Union was to become the perfect conduit for American conservationists to pursue their agenda south of the border.

In his letter to Wetmore, Coolidge explained that Lord Onslow (president of the Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire, one of the pioneering organizations in England in the promotion of the international conservation of nature) urged the ACIWL to take the initiative for the international organization to further nature protection in the New World, along the same lines that he had done for Africa and was also planning for Asia. Coolidge then concluded, “we certainly do not want the English to come over here and try and set up our convention for us!”<sup>25</sup>

23. Harold J. Coolidge to Alexander Wetmore, 4 October 1938, Folder 1, Box 78, Collection Division 2: Organizational File, Alexander Wetmore Papers Record Unit 7006, SIA.

24. Clifford B. Casey, “The Creation and Development of the Pan American Union,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 13, no. 4 (1933).

25. Harold J. Coolidge to Alexander Wetmore, 4 October 1938, Folder 1, Box 78, Collection Division 2: Organizational File, Alexander Wetmore Papers Record Unit 7006, SIA.

Coolidge disliked the idea of the English taking credit for promoting conservation in Latin America—they already had a strong presence in nature protection in Africa and Asia—and felt Latin America should be left to the United States alone. Recall that the tensions between Americans and Europeans over who had the right to intervene in Latin America go back to the nineteenth century. In 1823, after the independence wars whereby Latin American colonies gained independence from Spanish rule, the United States' government established the Monroe Doctrine, proclaiming that Europeans were no longer to colonize or interfere in the affairs of any American nation. Although throughout the nineteenth century strong links continued to exist between Europe and Latin America—in fact the most important commercial partners of the region were the United Kingdom and France—the United States steadily began to gain commercial importance for Latin Americans. By the turn of the twentieth century, the United States would soon replace Europe in influence over its southerly neighbors. Through its gigantic corporations, major loans, and the constant demand for Latin American raw materials, the United States gained a stronghold in the region. To reaffirm this position, in 1904—at the height of European imperialism in Africa—President Theodore Roosevelt added the Roosevelt corollary to the Monroe Doctrine establishing the United States' right to intervene at will in Latin America, not only to prevent European intervention, but also to police local conflicts.<sup>26</sup> Although the 1930s was the decade of the Good Neighbor Policy, Coolidge's letter was akin to a Monroe Doctrine of conservation, where he urged Wetmore to help him awaken the interest of fellow colleagues in the protection of nature south of the Rio Grande to avoid European influence.

In his letter, Coolidge included a copy of the resolution that was to be taken to the Lima conference to be signed by all the members of the Pan-American Union. The resolution began by arguing that the American republics were richly endowed with natural scenery, with indigenous wild animal and plant life, with unusual geologic formations, and with historic sites. The resolution also argued that, since the American republics were desirous of preserving and protecting these areas through systems of National Parks and Reservations for education, recreation and scientific purposes, and were also desirous of protecting and preserving in their natural habitat representatives of all species and races of their native flora and fauna including migratory birds, in sufficient numbers, and over areas extensive enough as to assure them from becoming extinct through any agency within man's control; therefore it be resolved that we, the following nations, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia,

26. Richard H. Collin, *Theodore Roosevelt's Caribbean: The Panama Canal, the Monroe Doctrine, and the Latin American Context* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990).

Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, United States, Uruguay, Venezuela, assembled at the Eighth International Conference of American States at Lima, Peru, hereby express our profound interest in the cause of Nature Protection, Wild Life Preservation, and the Preservation of Natural Scenery and Historic Sites.<sup>27</sup>

The resolution, at least as it was proposed by Coolidge, was a document drafted by American scientists and conservationists pressing Latin American nations to agree that nature conservancy was a task that should be pursued. Even if some Latin American countries had nature conservation policies of their own, the ACIWLP's desire was to regulate the effort throughout the region. Just like England and other European countries felt the need and the responsibility to oblige their African colonies to protect wildlife, Coolidge felt it was the duty of the United States to implement and encourage nature conservancy among its southern neighbors.

Migratory birds were included as an important part of the species to be protected. The resolution was clear to state that native flora and fauna should be preserved. Migratory birds, however, were hard to categorize as native from any place in particular and it is evident that a clarification was needed. Besides, migratory birds were one of the main reasons North Americans developed an interest in nature conservation in Latin America. They were thus certain to make their way into the resolution.

The resolution proposed by the ACIWLP in Lima finished with the proposition that the Pan-American Union would hold a meeting "of accredited delegates of the American Republics to draw up a convention to further International Cooperation in the New World for the promotion of National Parks, Reserves, and other measures that should be taken to preserve our vanishing fauna and flora."<sup>28</sup>

The Pan-American Union held its conference in Lima in December of 1938. Many topics were discussed among the participant nations, ranging from international law and labor migration to the promotion of the tourist industry. Among those was the resolution drafted by the ACIWLP on nature protection, which was accepted by all countries. The annual report of the ACIWLP for the year 1938 described the event as a success. "The Eighth Pan American Conference took place last December at Lima, Peru, and Mr. Alfred Kidder of the Peabody Museum, Cambridge, was designated by the American Committee

27. Resolution Submitted by The American Committee for International Wild Life Protection, n.d., Folder 1, Box 78, Collection Division 2: Organizational File, Alexander Wetmore Papers Record Unit 7006, SIA.

28. *Ibid.*

as their representative. Our Resolution which was submitted through the Pan American Union, in regard to Nature Protection, was adopted and revised, and it now constitutes Recommendation XXXVIII.”<sup>29</sup>

*Bird-lore* reported the event as a great achievement for conservation on the continent. In particular, it emphasized the importance of the meeting proposed in the resolution that would bring experts from around the Americas to discuss and promote the negotiation of treaties and acts intended to protect many forms of wildlife in the Western Hemisphere.<sup>30</sup>

Following Coolidge’s plan, in late 1938 and early 1939, the Pan-American Union began planning the meeting that was going to gather “experts” from all American nations. At the time, Coolidge explained to his colleagues—which included conservationists like T. Gilbert Pearson, Alexander Wetmore and John C. Phillips—that it was their duty to write the document that was going to be discussed in the meeting and that hopefully would establish the guidelines for nature protection throughout the Americas. Key points that should be entered into the document included the protection of migratory birds based on the Canadian treaty, a model for national parks based on the London Convention for African Nature Protection, the protection of certain species like the Galapagos turtles, national and international control of contraband, and the suggestion of methods to enforce the convention.<sup>31</sup>

The year 1939 was also important for nature conservation in Latin America for reasons unconnected to the region. The advent of World War II made it harder for Europeans and North Americans alike to focus on conservation in Africa and Asia. Many conservation initiatives in these regions had to be cancelled, including a proposed international conference for the protection of the fauna and flora of Africa, Tropical Asia and the Western Pacific, which was indefinitely postponed in 1939 due to the political situation in Europe.<sup>32</sup> The option of turning the conservation effort to Latin America seemed like the wise thing to do at the time. When Wetmore wrote to Senator Frederic Walcott, a close friend of his, describing the work of the International Committee for Bird Preservation, he explained how important it was “to consider the immediate future of work in the protection of birds in the New World with particular

29. Annual report of the American Committee for International Wild Life Protection, 8 December 1939, Folder 4, Box 79, Collection Division 2: Organizational File, Alexander Wetmore Papers Record Unit 7006, SIA.

30. Frank M. Chapman, “Wild-Life Protection in the Americas,” *Bird-lore* 41, no. 2 (1939): 112.

31. Notes on the special meeting called by the Chairman of the Pan American Committee of the International Wild Life protection in Washington, 22 May 1939, Folder 4, Box 99, Collection Division 2: Organizational File, Alexander Wetmore Papers Record Unit 7006, SIA.

32. Alexander Wetmore to Harold J. Coolidge, 7 November 1939, Folder 1, Box 78, Collection Division 2: Organizational File, Alexander Wetmore Papers Record Unit 7006, SIA.

emphasis on Latin America since the existing state of war precludes such activities in the main in the Old World.”<sup>33</sup>

The meeting of experts from the Americas was held on May 13-16, 1939, in Washington, in the offices of the Pan-American Union. Most Latin American countries were represented by a delegate sent by their own governments. The United States was represented by Alexander Wetmore. L. S. Rowe, director of the Pan-American Union, opened the meeting with a speech on the importance of nature protection throughout the continent. Modern civilization in the New World, Rowe argued, had improved the human race and brought national prosperity. However, it also brought constant intrusions in the natural world. Fertile grounds were overused for agriculture, cattle raising changed or destroyed native vegetation, and trees were cut for commercial purposes. Sources of water had become scarce, soil erosion had increased, and thousands of species of plants, birds and other animals disappeared due to lack of habitat. Given these circumstances it was important that all the American Republics paid attention to nature protection. In fact, he explained,

I have often thought that the level of protection offered by a nation to its flora and fauna is one of the exteriorizations of its civilization. By formulating plans for the protection of the flora and fauna of this continent, you are all contributing not only to the progress of Pan-American cooperation, but also to the conservation of one of the most valuable patrimonies of this continent.<sup>34</sup>

Rowe’s speech is a clear reflection of the atmosphere of cooperation between North and Latin America at the time. Nevertheless, the way he emphasized nature protection as an indication of an advanced society, showed how North Americans perceived Latin Americans as still lacking proper civilization. Furthermore, he sought to appeal to Latin American audiences by promising that if they embraced conservation practices, their prized dream of civilization and modernity would come true. What better bait could Wetmore have used?

33. Alexander Wetmore to Senator Frederic Walcott, 15 May 1943, Folder 4, Box 101, Collection Division 2: Organizational File, Alexander Wetmore Papers Record Unit 7006, SIA.

34. The original in Spanish reads: “A menudo he pensado que el grado de protección que una nación ofrece a su flora y a su fauna es una de las exteriorizaciones de su civilización. Al formular planes para la protección de la flora y de la fauna de este continente, contribuís no solo al progreso de la cooperación panamericana sino a la conservación de uno de los más valiosos patrimonios de este continente.” Actas de la sesión inaugural del comité de expertos para la protección de la flora, de la fauna y de las bellezas escénicas naturales de los países de América, 13 May 1940, Folder 2, Box 100, Collection Division 2: Organizational File, Alexander Wetmore Papers Record Unit 7006, SIA.

Alexander Wetmore was unanimously named president of the meeting. All the other delegates were named vice-presidents. Overall, the meeting made it clear that a common project was needed to promote nature preservation in the Americas. After the meeting was over, Wetmore continued to work with Coolidge on the document that was to be deposited at the Pan-American Union to be signed by all American states deciding the future of nature conservation in the Western hemisphere. Throughout 1939 both revised the document, and by mid-1940 they had completed the final version, named the "Convention on Nature Protection and Wild Life Preservation in the Western Hemisphere."

The Convention treaty began by arguing that all American republics wished to "protect and preserve in their natural habitat representatives of all species and genera of their native flora and fauna, including migratory birds," as well as "protect and preserve scenery of extraordinary beauty, unusual and striking geologic formations, regions and natural objects of aesthetic, historic or scientific value."<sup>35</sup> All governments that were to sign the Convention would agree to establish or explore the possibility of establishing national parks, national reserves, and strict wilderness reserves in their territories. They also agreed to create law-making bodies and laws to protect and preserve nature, and to cooperate among them with this end in mind. Migratory birds received a full article (article vii) intended for their protection, fulfilling Pearson's mission in South America.

By the end of 1941 most nations belonging to the Pan-American Union had already signed the convention. What role did Latin American countries play in this process? Certainly they did not sign this convention based only on the appeal of the United States. Even if North Americans had a strong power to influence many of the decisions taken in Latin America, Latin Americans had their own agendas. We will explore this topic in the last two sections of this chapter by exploring the Colombian case in more depth. Before doing so, however, it is important to expand our analysis of the organizational efforts promoted by the United States to protect nature in Latin America.

### Organizing and Institutionalizing Bird and Nature Protection in Latin America

The work of the ICBP in Latin America, and that of the American Committee for International Wild Life Protection were not separate. Pearson had close

35. *Convention on nature protection and wild life preservation in the Western Hemisphere opened for signature at the Pan American Union, October 1940* (*Convención para la protección de la flora, de la fauna, y de las bellezas escénicas naturales de los países de América, abierta a la firma el 12 de octubre de 1940*), (Washington, D.C.: Unión Panamericana, 1964).

relationships with Alexander Wetmore and Harold J. Coolidge, and they corresponded constantly to discuss the problems of nature and bird protection outside the United States. In March of 1943, for example, Pearson, Wetmore, along with other important conservationists in the United States, such as Fairfield Osborn, Jean Delacour and Frederic Walcott, met in New York's University Club on 54 and Fifth Avenue to discuss bird protection in Latin America. The meeting established that in addition to the efforts already put forward by Pearson and the ICBP, the ACIWLP should also try to implement further measures concerning bird protection. A subsequent meeting in May of the same year also established that besides closer work between the ICBP and the ACIWLP, "the various national groups in the Latin American republics should be represented in some conscious way in this work."<sup>36</sup>

The fact that the meetings were held at the University Club in New York offers evidence of the social status of the different people involved in promoting conservation on an international level. These were men with power, both economic and social. Many of them belonged to some of the most important natural history institutions in the United States, and most pursued conservation as a patrician activity with no need for financial reward. These conservationists also had personal connections with the political world in the United States. Senator Frederic Walcott, for example, a strong advocate of conservation, not only attended these meetings regularly, but he also had a personal relationship with many of them.

After Pearson's death in 1943, a close relation developed between the ICBP and the ACIWLP to facilitate the future of bird protection in Latin America. Pearson had made sure that birds, especially migrating birds, also became an important part of the agenda of the ACIWLP, which had primarily focused on the protection of big game. Through the Pan-American Union, an office devoted to nature protection in Latin America was established in 1943. Its establishment reflected the initiative of American scientists to inculcate conservation values throughout Latin America, and the political influence this group had in the diplomatic circles of Washington. Coolidge had suggested in 1941 that it was advisable to establish an organization within the Pan-American Union devoted to nature protection among the American republics.<sup>37</sup> Two years later Coolidge's idea became a reality. Thanks to an annual grant of \$15,000 from the

36. Alexander Wetmore, Memo of a meeting held in New York attended by Fred Walcott, Fairfield Osborn, Jean Delacour, T.Gilbert Pearson and Alexander Wetmore, 25 March 1943, Folder 4, Box 101, Collection Division 2: Organizational File, Alexander Wetmore Papers Record Unit 7006, SIA; Alexander Wetmore to Senator Frederic Walcott, 15 May 1943, Folder 4, Box 101, Collection Division 2: Organizational File, Alexander Wetmore Papers Record Unit 7006, SIA.  
37. Minutes of the Twelfth Annual Meeting of the ACIWLP for the year 1941, Folder 4, Box 79, Collection Division 2: Organizational File, Alexander Wetmore Papers Record Unit 7006, SIA.

Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, the Pan-American Union was able to establish a “section to take charge of all activities connected with the international protection of the fauna, flora and natural scenery of Latin American countries.”<sup>38</sup>

The new entity began work in 1943, with William Vogt in charge. Vogt, an avid North American ornithologist and conservationist, was among the few naturalists in the United States who had direct experience with Latin American conservation practices. In 1939 he was hired by the *Compañía Administradora del Guano*, the Company for the Management of Guano in Perú, to protect and increase the numbers of birds that produced guano, a key element in the development of Perú’s economy. For several years Vogt led this enterprise with much success.<sup>39</sup> When the Pan-American Union had to choose a candidate to direct the newly created office, Vogt seemed like the right choice.

One of Vogt’s first tasks as head of this office was to deliver a speech in Mexico City on February 23, 1944, at a meeting called to reorganize the Mexican section of the ICBP. Vogt began his speech by telling his audience how important it was to protect and save birds, and especially how important international cooperation was in this matter. He mentioned how Pearson had created the ICBP in 1922 to promote international collaboration, and how Latin America was an important link in this international effort, which had already won some battles. For him, the treaty that Mexico and the United States signed in 1936 was a first step in bird preservation. Vogt also mentioned the case of partridges in Argentina, which were saved because the United States banned their importation for restaurants.<sup>40</sup>

Vogt, however, focused much of his speech on the economic importance of birds. Birds, he argued, kill insects and rodents and are indispensable for the agricultural development of any country. He also talked about the economic importance of some birds, like those that produced guano, a topic that he knew from personal experience. Furthermore, he stated the importance of birds for tourism. If birds were managed wisely they would never go extinct, an aspect that could mean the awakening of a tourist industry that would attract bird watchers and nature lovers. This industry in the long run, Vogt explained, could bring more money to the country than the selling of birds by peasants in the

38. Minutes of the Fourteenth Annual Meeting of the ACIWLP for the year 1943, Folder 4, Box 79, Collection Division 2: Organizational File, Alexander Wetmore Papers Record Unit 7006, SIA.

39. For a good reference on William Vogt and the way in which Vogt’s experience in Perú changed his views on conservation see: Cushman, “The Lords of Guano: Science and the Management of Perú’s Marine Environment, 1800–1973”.

40. William Vogt, Speech delivered at the reorganization meeting of the Mexican section, 23 February 1944, Folder 4, Box 101, Collection Division 2: Organizational File, Alexander Wetmore Papers Record Unit 7006, SIA.

street market. Only at the end of his speech did Vogt remark that birds had an aesthetic value that was very important and which could not be measured by economic worth.

When Vogt returned from his trip, he immediately wrote a letter to Hoyes Lloyd, renowned Canadian conservationist and president of the Pan-American section of the ICBP at the time. He explained that the trip had gone well in all respects. However, he wrote, “there is quite frankly very little interest in bird protection in Mexico. The enjoyment of birds that we in the north possess is almost non-existent there.”<sup>41</sup>

The value of birds Vogt spoke of when addressing his Mexican audience was quite different from the value he emphasized in his letter to Lloyd. The idea that people in the north enjoyed birds for pleasure was significant; Vogt did not think that people in North America needed a specific economic reason to save the birds. Their aesthetic value and the joy they brought to the world was sufficient to protect them. However, in his speech in Mexico the aesthetic value of birds was just a small aside in the conclusion. His speech wheeled around the economic importance of birds and the financial gain that Mexico as a country could obtain if it indeed protected them.

How can we explain the different attitude in both situations? An exchange of correspondence between Wetmore and Lloyd before Vogt’s trip gives us the answer. In November 3, 1943, Wetmore wrote to Lloyd, “Vogt is making preparations now for his coming trip [to Latin America]. I have been counseling him to develop a practicable view in conservation matters. I believe that we will get much further from this angle than if we try to proceed along the purely sentimental lines of the National Audubon Society.”<sup>42</sup> Lloyd replied immediately saying, “I agree entirely with your proposals of Nov 3, 1943, towards making South American bird protection as practical as possible. There will be little progress if the protective measures collide head on with local public opinion.”<sup>43</sup>

This exchange reveals how American scientists believed that advancing the cause of conservation in Latin America depended on different means than had been used in the United States. In the United States, conservation embodied arguments for wise use of natural resources along with appeals to the aesthetic and sentimental value of nature. The latter was particularly true for bird conservation. Ever since the formation of the National Audubon Society,

41. William Vogt to Hoyes Lloyd, 1 March 1944, Folder 4, Box 101, Collection Division 2: Organizational File, Alexander Wetmore Papers Record Unit 7006, SIA.

42. Alexander Wetmore to Hoyes Lloyd, 3 November 1943, Folder 8, Box 36, Collection Division 1: General Correspondence, Alexander Wetmore Papers Record Unit 7006, SIA.

43. Hoyes Lloyd to Alexander Wetmore, 6 November 1943, Folder 8, Box 36, Collection Division 1: General Correspondence, Alexander Wetmore Papers Record Unit 7006, SIA.

one of the main arguments behind bird preservation was the joy of nature these creatures could bring. Wetmore, Lloyd, and Vogt all agreed that this idealistic attitude would have little impact in Latin America. In a region that struggled constantly with poverty, and where romantic attitudes toward nature were but a luxury, a more pragmatic approach seemed necessary. Spending too much money establishing and enforcing laws to protect birds for no other reason than the joy of nature could collide with local public opinion. Looking at the advantages of nature protection from an economic standpoint could convince Latin Americans of its importance, and in the long run would also benefit North Americans in their project to protect migratory as well as local birds.

Many American conservationists not only saw the protection of birds and nature in general as a sign of civilization, but they also thought that nature should be preserved in its own right. Yet few American conservationists believed Latin Americans were “civilized” enough to understand these arguments. Latin Americans, they believed, had yet to evolve to an advanced civilized stage in which nature protection reflected intellectual superiority and cultural refinement. This contrast between a practical versus an idealistic approach to nature conservation continued to dominate how Americans promoted their environmental agendas south of the border. Of course, we have to be careful with over simplifications. I am not arguing that all North Americans had a sentimental approach to bird or animal protection, nor do I mean to suggest that Latin Americans would only protect nature for financial gain. Indeed, the reasons why Colombians supported bird conservation efforts were as varied as those of their American counterparts. But this was the assumption held by many of the elite, white leaders of America’s conservation establishment.

### Latin American Conservation from Within: Colombia’s Struggle to Defend Wildlife

In 1936, when T. Gilbert Pearson wrote in *Bird-lore* one of the first articles to raise awareness of the need to promote bird conservation in Latin America, he explained that, according to the American consulate in Colombia, there were no laws that dealt with wild-bird preservation. The situation in the rest of Latin America, Pearson argued, was not much better. Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay required hunting licenses, but apparently they were not regulated and hunters had a significant impact on the diminishing numbers of birds.<sup>44</sup>

During his Latin American tour in 1939-1940, Pearson was successful in helping to initiate change in Colombia. During his trip to Bogotá, he organized

44. Pearson, “Report of International Bird-Protection.”

the Colombian section of the ICBP thanks to the help of two young enthusiasts: Federico Carlos Lehmann and Manuel González Martínez. Lehmann was then the director of the ornithology department at the Instituto de Ciencias Naturales at the Universidad Nacional—Colombia's most important institution devoted to the study of nature—and González was a functionary working for the Ministry of National Economy. Both had a strong interest in the protection of wildlife. During the trip Pearson discussed with them the importance of working on laws for the protection of birds in Colombia.<sup>45</sup>

Approximately one year later Pearson's efforts were yielding results. González secured favorable action from the government to approve the law that the three of them had discussed in 1940. In 1941, President Eduardo Santos signed the first national decree—decree 459 of March 7, 1941—devoted to the protection of wildlife.<sup>46</sup>

The decree was Colombia's first law devoted to the protection of wildlife. González's approach to bird protection, however, was strongly attached to agriculture. In a letter González wrote in September of 1940, he informed Pearson that “there is soon to be introduced into both chambers of Congress a bill on hunting, and a decree whereby the activities in relation to hunting are to be regulated formally, prohibiting the pursuit of all small species of birds and of the large ones that are useful to things agricultural.”<sup>47</sup> This reference to agriculture is important because it shows that for González, and to a greater extent for the government that approved the law, the protection of birds was important mostly to benefit farming. In a country where most of the economy depended on the well-being of the rural production of goods, protecting birds was a pragmatic project.

González's approach to conservation was strongly rooted in its utility. In two articles published in the *Revista Nacional de Agricultura*—National Journal of Agriculture—between 1940 and 1941, González once again made his point about the importance of birds in the destruction of plagues that posed dangers for the farmer. Basing his studies on research pursued in the United States, González argued that by inspecting the stomachs of thousands of birds, American scholars had been able to determine some of the most important species that controlled the unregulated growth of insects, larvae, and worms, among other pests that affected crops.<sup>48</sup>

45. Pearson, “Birding Below the Line,” 319.

46. T. Gilbert Pearson, “Colombia to Protect its Wildlife,” *Bird-lore* 43, no. 3 (1941): 297.

47. Manuel González Martínez to T. Gilbert Pearson, 11 September 1940, Folder COR, Box 1 CID, Federico Carlos Lehmann Papers, Inciva.

48. Manuel González Martínez, “Aves colombianas benéficas a la agricultura,” *Revista Nacional de Agricultura* 35, no. 438 (1940): 27–29; Manuel González Martínez, “Aves colombianas benéficas a la agricultura,” *Revista Nacional de Agricultura* 36, no. 440 (1941): 13–15.

The text of decree 459 of 1941 only made reference to a prohibition to hunt bird species that were beneficial to agriculture for a term of ten years. To the dismay of American conservationists, the decree made no reference to other species that were not directly beneficial to crops grown in different parts of the country, including many migratory birds. Since González's work was carried out in the Ministry of National Economy, any attempt from the government to protect nature seemed to be rooted in the potential economic benefit that it could bring to the nation.<sup>49</sup>

Colombian society, however, was far from homogeneous in the values it adhered to in preserving nature. González's more pragmatic approach was not shared by many other conservationists in Colombia. Federico Carlos Lehmann, in particular, the other founding member of the Colombian section of the ICBP, had a more altruistic attitude towards the protection of birds and wildlife in the country, a characteristic that converted him into a powerful ally of North American conservationists between the 1940s and 1960s.

Lehmann was born in Popayán, a cradle to many Colombian presidents throughout history. He belonged to the Colombian elite and just like many of the elite conservationists in the United States, he believed in the importance of protecting nature even if there were no economic benefits involved.<sup>50</sup>

Lehmann did not hesitate to tell Pearson that he disagreed completely with Manuel González's work for the government, and argued that the famous decree of 1941 was full of errors. "He did not want to hear me when he was doing it," Lehmann complained.<sup>51</sup> He explained that in a meeting of the Colombian Committee of the ICBP, attended by recognized Colombian naturalists like Armando Dugand and Enrique Pérez Arbeláez, as well as representatives of some of the major associations of hunters in the country, they made corrections to the decree, and also approved another project to be presented to the President in which the Laguna de Fúquene—a lagoon near Bogotá—would be declared a national park where hunting would be entirely prohibited.<sup>52</sup> González did not

49. For an overview of Colombia's economic endeavors in historical context see: Frank Safford and Marco Palacios, *Colombia: país fragmentado, sociedad dividida, su historia* (Bogotá: Editorial Norma, 2002).

50. Perhaps the only biographical reference to Lehmann's life is: Lelvinnova Londoño Díaz, "Federico Carlos Lehmann Valencia, 1914-1974: semblanza biográfica y recuperación del fondo acumulado" (B.A. thesis, Universidad del Valle, 1999).

51. F. C. Lehmann to T. Gilbert Pearson, 28 February 1942, Folder COR, Box 1 CID, Federico Carlos Lehmann Papers, Inciva.

52. The initial interest to create national parks in the 1940s should be understood as part of the nationalist movement in Colombia described in chapter 3. In fact, it was also proposed that the government should buy tracts of land deemed valuable for historic or natural reasons and that could help increase tourism in the country. In 1939, the head of the Dirección de Extensión Cultural de Bellas Artes, a dependency of the Ministry of Education, made a trip through the

follow the recommendations of the Committee and ignored the proposal for the national park. Lehmann explained that after this incident González was ridiculed through circulars among hunters and was not well accepted inside the Colombian section of the ICBP.

Two points deserve attention here. First, although Lehmann never explained the nature of his disapproval of González, it is probable that the tension arose from the fact that for González bird protection was only important if it benefited agriculture, while for Lehmann nature conservation was an end in itself. Although the Committee proposed the creation of a national park near Bogotá, the rejection by González suggests that he saw little reason to set aside nature sanctuaries for their own sake. Second, it is important to note that Lehmann had the support of hunter associations, even with respect to the proposal to create a national park where hunting would be entirely forbidden. This could be explained by their social position within Colombian society. Hunter associations in Colombia in the 1940s were formed by wealthy members of the elite. For them, hunting was a sport that had to be regulated. Securing the protection of many species in natural parks would ensure that birds and wildlife would not succumb to the commercial exploitation of game by lower classes in Colombian society. As in the early days of conservation in the United States, wildlife conservation in Colombia was an elitist occupation. Although we have no reference to the social status of González within Colombian society, naturalists like Lehmann, Dugand and Pérez Arbeláez came from prominent elite families and had close connections with the modernizing ideals prominent in the United States at the time. Lehmann, Dugand and Pérez Arbeláez had in fact studied in the United States and had close connections with American naturalists—another reason to take into account when trying to understand their desire to protect wildlife with more altruistic purposes.

Of course, it is important to remember that the rise of the conservation movement during the progressive era in the United States was not entirely characterized by the desire to protect nature as an end in itself or a crusade against the overexploitation of natural resources. On the contrary, this movement was influenced by a need to manage nature in more efficient ways, and was headed by technologists and experts that wanted to maximize the use of forests, lands and the development of waterways. Nevertheless, it is also true that many elite sectors of American society viewed conservation as a way to

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department of Boyacá with the mission of evaluating its touristic potential. In his report of the trip he recommended that the government should buy land in the Tota Lake finding it to be of extraordinary natural beauty. His idea was not to preserve the beauty of the place but rather to increase tourism in the country. Archivo General de la Nación (Bogotá), Archivo Anexo II, Ministerio de Educación Nacional, Actividades Culturales: informes, caja 3, carpeta 6, ff. 115-121. I would like to thank Catalina Muñoz for providing this useful reference.

preserve the frontier and romantic ideals that were perishing with the advent of civilization. Nature preservation was a moral duty for them. Furthermore, they saw locals as a danger and an obstacle to the creation of national parks in the United States who would constantly poach these new sanctuaries of nature. These conservationists colonized these supposedly vacant lands, without taking into account that the “poachers” were making a living out of them. Locals were persecuted in the name of preservation; nature conservation was pursued at the expense of social justice. In this way, Lehmann’s perception of nature conservation as a modern movement that understood the protection of wildlife and natural resources as an end itself, overlooked the pragmatic and oppressive roots it had in the United States.<sup>53</sup>

Pearson’s success in establishing the Colombian section of the ICBP had the help of one other colleague in Latin America. In 1939, Pedro Casal, president of the Argentine section of the ICBP, wrote a letter to the ambassador of Argentina in Colombia telling him about Pearson’s initiative to promote bird conservation throughout Latin America. “The action to defend birds would be much more successful if all the countries in the Americas had local sections connected with the International Committee for Bird Preservation,” he argued. Casal asked his ambassador to get him in contact with the appropriate person in Colombia to pursue this project.<sup>54</sup> Lehmann was apparently the right choice since he was the director of the ornithology department of the Instituto de Ciencias Naturales in Bogotá. A year later, Casal wrote to Lehmann explaining that Pearson was in Buenos Aires and intended to visit Bogotá before returning to the United States. Casal hoped that Lehmann could help Pearson in all matters related to bird protection in Colombia.<sup>55</sup> After Pearson’s visit, Lehmann wrote back to Casal giving him the good news that a Colombian section of the ICBP had been formed, and Lehmann had been elected president.<sup>56</sup>

There is no other trace that Casal and Lehmann continued corresponding after this short encounter. This might suggest that although there was some link between Latin American countries at the time in relation to bird conservation, efforts were largely driven by American initiatives. Casal decided to get in touch

53. William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1995); Samuel P. Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890-1920* (New York: Atheneum, 1969); Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

54. Pedro Casal to the Ministro de la República Argentina en Colombia, 21 June 1939, Folder COR, Box 1 CID, Federico Carlos Lehmann Papers, Inciva.

55. *Ibid.*

56. Pedro Casal to Federico Carlos Lehmann, 19 June 1940 and F. C. Lehmann to Pedro Casal, 1 July 1940, Folder COR, Box 1 CID, Federico Carlos Lehmann Papers, Inciva.

with conservationists in Colombia mainly because of Pearson's new interest in the region. Likewise, it is probable that both Casal and Lehmann saw the ICBP in the United States as the entity that regulated their work, and both of them relied on Pearson to advance their cause, but did little to build a strong connection among Latin American countries.

Pearson left Colombia in 1940 with a good impression of Lehmann. He wrote to Alexander Wetmore at the time saying that he had enjoyed Lehmann's companionship and found him very enthusiastic.<sup>57</sup> In fact, a few months after his arrival from South America, Pearson asked Lehmann to translate into Spanish "Birding below the line," the circular he wrote about his trip to the region.<sup>58</sup> "You as a naturalist and as an educated Spanish-speaking man would produce material in a way which I would feel is absolutely accurate," he explained. Pearson wanted to send it to all the chairmen of each of the sections of the ICBP, as well as other people in South America that would find it useful to promote the protection of birds.<sup>59</sup> Lehmann successfully translated Pearson's piece with the title "*Las aves bajo el Ecuador*," and by early 1941 had printed several thousand copies and distributed them to other naturalists around Latin America and the United States.

Since one of Pearson's main goals in Latin America—besides the promotion of bird conservation views and the establishment of ICBP sections throughout the region—was to lobby for the development of conservation laws and the acceptance from Latin American governments of North American international policies regarding nature protection, Lehmann became an important ally. In October of 1940, for example, Pearson wrote him a letter explaining that the "Convention on Nature Protection and Wild Life Preservation in the Western Hemisphere" had been signed by countries like Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay in Washington, D.C., just a few weeks earlier. Colombia, however, was still absent. "The treaty," he wrote, "provides that all countries which accept it shall look forward to the creation of national parks, national reserves, wilderness reserves, at such time as they will feel in position to do so. It also provides that each country shall seek to preserve migratory birds."<sup>60</sup> Pearson wanted to know if Lehmann and his colleagues could express to the Colombian government the importance of this treaty with the hope that the ambassador in Washington would receive instructions to sign it.

57. T. Gilbert Pearson to Alexander Wetmore, 10 July 1941, Folder 1, Box 108, Collection Division 2: Organizational File, Alexander Wetmore Papers Record Unit 7006, SIA.

58. See, Pearson, "Birding Below the Line."

59. T. Gilbert Pearson to F. C. Lehmann, 27 September and 6 November 1940, Folder COR, Box 1 CID, Federico Carlos Lehmann Papers, Inciva.

60. T. Gilbert Pearson to F. C. Lehmann, 22 October 1940, Folder COR, Box 1 CID, Federico Carlos Lehmann Papers, Inciva.

Colombia signed the Convention on January 17, 1941. Although it is not entirely clear if Lehmann and his associates were in part responsible for pushing the government to agree, one important point deserves attention. Pearson's relation with Lehmann shows the channels that American conservationists used to pursue their interests in Latin America. The diplomacy of conservation between these two regions, at least in its early stages, did not include a direct relation between governments or direct pressure from North Americans on Latin American rulers to create legislation. Instead, people like Pearson relied more on the contact with naturalists and other enthusiasts in Latin America that lobbied in their respective countries. Remember that a similar strategy was used in the late 1930s, when Coolidge and other Americans envisioned a treaty between all republics in the Americas to preserve nature. They used the channels of the Pan-American Union to call for a meeting of scientists and scholars representing all Latin American countries, who later agreed to the importance of the "Convention on Nature Protection and Wild Life Preservation in the Western Hemisphere," and had it signed by their governments.

Lehmann's relationship with North American environmentalists is an example of what we can call imperialism by invitation.<sup>61</sup> Although North Americans did not impose directly their views on Latin Americans, they found in people like Lehmann the perfect ambassadors to pursue their agenda in the region. At the same time, Lehmann was no puppet of American interests. His relation with Americans allowed him to gain a better position within certain sectors of Colombian society. Having connections with the United States was very valuable to gain a better position among other Colombian naturalists, as well as elite groups of society. Furthermore, U.S. conservationists could become powerful allies in his own quest to promote conservation in Colombia. In this way, it was in Lehmann's own interest to promote American environmental views in Colombia.

### An Ornithologist's Push for National Parks

Lehmann's case is also important because his later life allows us to understand the difficulties and obstacles that nature preservation encountered in Colombia until the 1960s, when the first national parks were finally established. Throughout the 1940s, Lehmann attempted, without much success, to lay the foundation to create some of the first nature reserves in the country. In 1943,

61. This idea of imperialism by invitation is inspired in part by: Alfonso Múnera, "Panamá: ¿La última frontera?" in *Fronteras imaginadas: la construcción de las razas y de la geografía colombiana en el siglo XIX colombiano* (Bogotá: Editorial Planeta, 2005), 89-128.

for example, when he became hunting advisor to the Ministry of Agriculture, he tried to demonstrate that the Laguna Barriales—a lagoon in the Valle del Cauca department, one of the most important agricultural regions in the country—was a nature sanctuary with important animal diversity. Hunting in this lake, Lehmann argued, should be prohibited in order to protect rare species such as the *Cairina moschata* and *Anhima cornuta*. Lehmann tried to persuade the secretary of agriculture that if established as a reserve, the lagoon could attract tourists that would enjoy watching the beauty of tropical aquatic fauna.<sup>62</sup>

The government at the time, however, only paid attention to the issue of nature protection if it involved direct benefits to the economic plans of the nation. The project to establish the Laguna Barriales as a nature reserve never made it into the Colombian legislation. Nevertheless, in that very same year the Ministry of National Economy asked Lehmann to write a resolution—resolution 11 of 1943—explaining a project to create a hydroelectric plant in the Anchicayá River. The resolution explained that the Ministry had the power to establish nature and forest reserves if they were considered of national interest. Since it was important for the hydroelectric project to maintain a good flow of the river, the Ministry deemed it important to establish a protected forest zone. In other words, while the government paid little or no attention to protect a region that Lehmann presented as important to protect rare animal species, the Ministry of Economy created a guarded forest zone to guarantee the proper development of an electrical project.

This pragmatic view of nature inside the government prevailed for another two decades. Lehmann tried constantly during the 1940s and 1950s to create nature reserves; however, it was only in the early 1960s that he was finally able to obtain the backing of the government to create the first natural parks where animals and plants deserved to be protected, independently of their influence on the economic well being of the nation. What had changed in these twenty years that made this possible?

By the early 1960s, some of Lehmann's close relatives and friends had achieved very high positions in the government. Recall that Lehmann himself was a member of Colombia's elite society. Although he never became interested in politics, some of his close friends from Popayán became important politicians. In 1961, for example, Vicente Lehmann Mosquera, his cousin, became secretary of Agriculture of the Cauca department; Otto Morales Benítez, a close friend, became minister of Agriculture; Carlos Obando, another close friend, was

62. F. C. Lehmann to the Secretario de Agricultura y Fomento, 28 November 1944, Lehmann to Heliodoro Bonilla, 1 December 1944, Folder 1, Box 1 MEN, Federico Carlos Lehmann Papers, Inciva.

appointed Colombian ambassador to France; and most important of all, in 1962, Guillermo León Valencia, a close relative and friend, became president of Colombia.

All this influence from above allowed Lehmann to pursue his conservation plans in a more thorough way. In 1961, when Lehmann wrote to Georges Dennler de La Tour, director of the Latin American section of a nature conservation foundation called ProNatura, thanking him for supporting his efforts to promote nature conservation in Colombia, he explained,

As you know, this has been my constant concern for more than twenty years and my projects have always crashed against the official indolence and incomprehension. It is only now that thanks to the coincidence of having understanding friends heading the Ministry of Agriculture, and the secretaries of Agriculture in the Valle and Cauca departments, that I have been able to introduce projects to regulate the protection of the fauna.<sup>63</sup>

The most important projects Lehmann referred to were the Parque Nacional del Puracé, in the Cauca department, and the Parque Farallones de Cali, in the Valle del Cauca department. Both projects were among the first formal initiatives to create natural parks in Colombia devoted entirely to the protection of fauna and flora.

Puracé became an official project in 1961, thanks largely to the efforts of Lehmann and the help of his cousin. With decree 199 of that year, the park was formally established through Colombian legislation. In 1961 Lehmann also began working on the project which would lead to the creation of the Parque Farallones de Cali. He relied heavily on his friendship with Otto Morales, the minister of Agriculture, to make it a reality. In 1962 the Valle del Cauca department reserved a region to create the park.<sup>64</sup>

Although both parks had been successfully established as projects by Lehmann, with the help of many friends in the government, this did not mean that they immediately became controlled regions where hunting and deforestation were prohibited. Enforcing the rules to protect the parks from people that Lehmann saw as poachers turned out to be a longer process in which the government had no immediate interest.<sup>65</sup>

63. F. C. Lehmann to Georges Dennler de La Tour, 12 September 1961, Folder 2, Box 2 DOP, Federico Carlos Lehmann Papers, Inciva. Translated from Spanish.

64. F. C. Lehmann to Otto Morales Benítez, 3 August 1961, Folder 2, Box 2 DOP, Federico Carlos Lehmann Papers, Inciva.

65. Jean Paul Harroy to Carlos Lleras Restrepo, 22 May 1967, Folder 2, Box 2 DOP, Federico Carlos Lehmann Papers, Inciva. Translated from Spanish.

This process involved more of Lehmann's personal connections along with more advice from American conservationists. At the time when Lehmann was finally able to have the first Puracé and Farallones projects approved, American influence was present in many ways in Colombia's environmental history. First, Lehmann frequently used the "Convention on Nature Protection and Wild Life Preservation in the Western Hemisphere" to convince the government that his projects were legitimate and needed attention. In a conversation with the minister of Agriculture and the governor of the Cauca department, to discuss the necessity of establishing the Puracé Park, Lehmann mentioned that by the 1941 Convention Colombia had acquired an obligation to protect natural resources. The Convention was largely a North American initiative, and twenty years later it was still influencing the way Latin Americans approached their conservation practices.

Most important, however, Lehmann established important links with several Americans who had a strong role in the promotion of nature protection on an international scale. One of them was Harold J. Coolidge. In 1962, Coolidge contacted Lehmann about his international efforts to promote the conservation of nature. Coolidge had recently heard that Lehmann was interested in promoting nature conservation programs in Colombia, and that he was traveling to New York to do some research in the ornithology department, with assistance from the American Museum Chapman Memorial Fund. Coolidge invited Lehmann to the First World Conference on National Parks, which was going to take place in Seattle that year as part of Seattle's World Fair, commonly known as the Century 21 Exposition.

Lehmann attended the Conference and made a very good impression. Coolidge wrote to him after the conference thanking him for his help in promoting nature conservation throughout Latin America. "I want you to know that of all the delegates we had from Latin America, I felt you were outstanding, not only in your cooperation as far as the Conference was concerned, but in your whole outlook." Coolidge wrote. "The assistance that you gave us in encouraging Latin American delegates to take an interest in parks and reserves and form a regional committee with whom we can work in the years ahead was most helpful."<sup>66</sup>

One of the most important consequences of the Seattle conference in terms of nature protection in Latin America was the idea of creating a Latin American section of the International Commission on Natural Parks. Coolidge was the main advocate of this idea, and he found in Lehmann the perfect local friend to pursue this project. In November of 1963, Coolidge sent Lehmann some guidelines which eventually modelled the creation of the

66. Harold J. Coolidge to F. C. Lehmann, 17 September 1962, Folder 2, Box 1 MHN, Federico Carlos Lehmann Papers, Inciva.

Comité Latinoamericano de Parques Naturales (CLAPN)—the Latin American Committee on National Parks, of which Coolidge became the president. Besides Lehmann, other members of the Colombian scientific community such as Enrique Pérez Arbeláez, Teobaldo Mozo Morrón, and Joaquín Molano Campuzano became active participants of the Committee.

Once again, Lehmann is an example of “imperialism by invitation,” common in U.S.-Colombia scientific and environmental relations. It was precisely through relationships like that of Coolidge and Lehmann that American influence easily found its way to Colombian thought and culture. Lehmann was aware of the benefits that accompanied an academic relation with an American of good scientific stature. He constantly made reference to his acquaintance with Coolidge, when writing letters to his friends in the government, as a way to legitimate his requests to protect Colombian nature.<sup>67</sup> Coolidge, on the other hand, knew that a cordial relation with Lehmann was a way to informally establish in Colombia the North American initiative to develop conservationist policies throughout the world.

Coolidge’s awakened interest in Latin America and the plans to create the CLAPN coincided with the United States government’s renewed interest in Latin America as an important ally in the international arena. After 1945, with the end of World War II and the beginning of the Cold War, the era of the Good Neighbor Policy had ended as the United States shifted its international interests elsewhere. By 1960, however, it was clear that, precisely because of the communist threat in the Cold War, the Latin American nations might turn around, rebel and start communist governments in opposition to U.S. interests. In particular, the Cuban Revolution had succeeded in overthrowing Fulgencio Batista’s pro-American dictatorship and establishing Latin America’s first communist regime in 1959. In this context, the newly elected government of John F. Kennedy established in 1961 a new program called the Alliance for Progress. The idea was to give strong economic and material support to Latin American countries to counterbalance the threat of communism in the region. The United States was willing to supply 20 billion dollars in the first ten years to help implement social and economic programs that included better education, health conditions and income per capita. “To achieve this goal,” as Kennedy himself put it March of 1961, “political freedom must accompany material progress. Our Alliance for Progress is an alliance of free governments and it must work to eliminate tyranny from a hemisphere in which it has no rightful place.”<sup>68</sup> Although the

67. F. C. Lehmann to Guillermo León Valencia, 3 June 1963, Folder 7, Box 2 DOP, Federico Carlos Lehmann Papers, Inciva.

68. John F. Kennedy, “Preliminary Formulations of the Alliance for Progress,” *United States Department of State Bulletin* 44, no. 1136 (1961): 473

aid to Latin America, and the Alliance for Progress program in general, were sharply reduced by the late 1960s, the early 1960s witnessed a considerable growth of attention from the United States towards Latin America.

Coolidge—just like Lehmann—also used his connections in the United States government to obtain support for his initiative to promote nature conservation. He was himself a descendant of Calvin Coolidge, the thirtieth president of the United States, a fact he did not hesitate to use to interest government members in his projects. In 1964, Interior secretary Stewart Lee Udall wrote to Coolidge reassuring him of his interest in the work that the IUCN had started to develop in Latin America after the international conference on national parks held in Seattle. Udall told Coolidge that he had all the backing of the United States government to promote this cause in Latin America.<sup>69</sup>

Coolidge also helped to establish stronger connections between people in the United States and Colombia to promote the creation of national parks. In 1963, he wrote to William Hart, a park planning specialist at the International Commission on National Parks (ICNP), about the different parks that Lehmann was trying to create in Colombia and recommended a visit to help with this effort. When Lehmann received the news he was thrilled and saw a perfect opportunity to explain to an American the many problems that he constantly faced when trying to promote the creation of natural reserves. Lehmann told Hart that the Ministry of Agriculture, the government entity that was ultimately responsible for creating or promoting the establishment of natural parks, had little or no interest in the topic. Furthermore, since the ministers were changed so often, it was impossible to get results, especially because raising awareness on the importance of nature protection and the establishment of areas where animals and plants were protected by law, required projects over longer periods of time. Lehmann argued that this lack of continuity was a problem common to all Latin American countries and that only when non-political autonomous bodies could be established for these purposes, would the scope of nature protection change in the region.<sup>70</sup>

In 1963 Hart visited Colombia. Lehmann accompanied him to the Puracé and Farallones de Cali parks and later on both of them traveled to Bogotá to meet members of the government, including Lehmann's friend, Guillermo León Valencia, then president of Colombia. Hart's visit illustrates two of the main themes that characterized the beginnings of the conservation movement in Colombia: the use of American connections to legitimize programs and

69. Secretary of the Interior to Coolidge, 20 February 1964, Folder 1, Box 1 CPA, Federico Carlos Lehmann Papers, Inciva.

70. F. C. Lehmann to William Hart, 29 March 1963, Folder 4, Box 1 SAV, Federico Carlos Lehmann Papers, Inciva.

projects, and the use of local political connections as the most successful way to establish nature protection programs in the country. Soon after Hart left Colombia, Lehmann wrote a report to the Valle del Cauca's secretary of Agriculture in which he explained that due to Hart's visit and the enthusiasm he showed for the recently created parks, the ICNP had assigned Colombia as the leading country in South America in terms of nature protection. The report also mentioned that in the upcoming meeting of the ICNP in Kenya, both Hart and Lehmann would try to obtain more resources for the Colombian projects.<sup>71</sup> The object of the report to the secretary of Agriculture was to explain that if Colombia was supported by North American institutions, the effort to create national parks should be supported in full by the regional and national governments in Colombia.

However, legitimizing a project based on American support was perhaps a necessary but far from sufficient condition to obtain full backing for conservation from Colombian institutions. Lehmann's personal connections were also important. As mentioned before, at the time of Hart's visit Lehmann was personally acquainted with both the minister of Agriculture and the president of Colombia, Guillermo León Valencia. During Hart's trip, Lehmann thought it necessary for them to travel to Bogotá so that Hart, "the North American specialist", as Lehmann presented him, could explain directly to the central government the significance of pursuing a program on national parks. As he had already explained to Hart, Lehmann was at the time convinced that an autonomous entity (he referred to it as a Department of Natural Resources and National Parks) had to be created, and he hoped Guillermo León Valencia's presidency would be the turning point. Lehmann believed that the protection of nature could only become a reality if there was an entity in Colombia that could survive the lack of continuity in conservation policies from one government to the next.

In 1968, two years after Guillermo León Valencia left the presidency, Inderena, the National institute devoted to the study and protection of Colombia's natural resources, was created. Inderena made the creation of national parks an important part of Colombian legislation and for the first time gave economic and staff support to the already existing national parks of Puracé and Farallones de Cali. Nature protection was finally enforced in these regions and a part of the national budget was assigned to the preservation of wildlife and flora. From 1968 to 1993, Inderena created more than twenty national parks in the country, ranging from nature sanctuaries in the Amazon basin to nature reserves in the snow peaks of the Andes to beach refuges along the Pacific and Caribbean

71. Reporte a la Secretaría de Agricultura y Ganadería del Valle de la visita de William Hart, no date, Folder 4, Box 1 SAV, Federico Carlos Lehmann Papers, Inciva.

coasts.<sup>72</sup> In 1993, the role of Inderena was absorbed by the newly created Ministry of Environment, which is still today the institution devoted to the management and preservation of natural resources in Colombia.

The flow of live birds in the mid-twentieth century between North and South America had a strong impact on the relationship between naturalists in the United States and Latin America. For North Americans it was clear that migrating birds needed protection once they left the United States. Nature belonged to all the inhabitants of the Western hemisphere and it was their duty to protect it. Between the 1940s and 1960s, North American conservationists felt the need to teach Latin Americans about nature protection and lobby for the creation of laws intended for this purpose. Even at the time of the Good Neighbor Policy, North Americans still felt the need to civilize their friends south of the Rio Grande. Latin Americans had conflicting views about the protection of birds or wildlife in their countries. Some continued to see nature as important only for pragmatic or economic purposes. Others, instead, saw nature protection as a must if Colombia wanted to become a modern nation. The idea of modernity, a concept constantly imported from United States by Latin Americans, invited stronger foreign influence and has remained up to this day a common way to invite American presence into everyday affairs within Latin America.

72. Jairo Hernán Álvarez Tamayo, *Se hace camino al andar: aportes para una historia del movimiento ambiental en Colombia* (Santa Fe de Bogotá: Ecofondo, 1997).

# Conclusion

THE IDEA THAT Colombia is the country with the highest bird diversity in the world, as represented in the patriotic panel at the entrance of the Instituto de Ciencias Naturales in Bogotá described at the beginning of this book, has been constructed over several decades, involving complex historical relations between Colombia and the United States. The strong North American economic, politic and cultural expansion into Latin America in the first half of the twentieth century paralleled a growing scientific interest in places like Colombia. Collecting, extracting, and buying thousands of Colombian birds—as well as birds, animals and plants from all over the world—to be housed in natural history museums in New York, Philadelphia or Washington reflected the growing influence of the United States around the world. Museums of natural history became a clear vision of the way North Americans constructed the natural world beyond their national borders.

Museums and institutes of natural history in Colombia in the first half of the twentieth century drastically contrasted with those in the United States in terms of the kind of research they pursued. The ICN, in particular, emerged at a time when Colombia was not only going through a period of substitution of imports but also a strong nationalism that aimed to forge an idea of Colombian identity by giving importance to popular and indigenous culture as national treasures. In this context, nature also became an important part of being Colombian. Colombia's natural world became a treasure worth studying to help establish a national identity. In the end, the idea of Colombia as a megadiverse country—as the ICN panel tells us—was the result of combining North America's extracting and imperial scientific attitudes with Colombia's search of nation through nature.<sup>1</sup>

1. Perhaps it is important to clarify that the idea of megadiversity is present in many countries in Latin America. From the publicity that surrounds well preserved national parks in Central America to the construction of the Amazon forest as a patrimony that belongs to the world as a whole, countries such as Costa Rica, Perú and Brazil, like Colombia, have invested a great deal in presenting themselves as richly diverse nations. I hope this book has given the reader

This transnational approach invited me to reflect on the topic of North American imperialism in the history of science. After 1880, Great Britain lost its supremacy in Latin America and the United States became the new power in the region. North American economic influence over the area created dependent links that had an informal influence over the general domestic policies of Latin America. This expansionist project was supported by an increasing number of scientific expeditions to Latin America from North American cultural institutions. The AMNH expeditions in the early twentieth century, and the constant extraction of birds—and nature in general—by U.S. naturalists in other institutions such as the Academy of Natural Sciences or the Smithsonian Institution, were part of this increased expansionist interest that North America developed in Latin America during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

I have also sustained, however, that we cannot study this history just in terms of American imperialism. To do so would omit an important side of the story. Taking into account recent literature in U.S. cultural relations with Latin America, this book has also argued that we have to avoid simplistic arguments of hegemony in the study of Latin America. Colombian naturalists have also benefited from the informal bonds of empire to gain recognition inside their local communities, as well as within the international scientific community. Looking at the flow of raw and manufactured goods between both regions is a good way to characterize this dynamic relation. On the one hand, Colombian scientists benefited from the extraction of raw data by gaining scientific recognition on the local and international levels; on the other hand, North American scientists perceived their theories as manufactured products and essentialized the work of Latin Americans as prospectors or amateurs helping in North America's vast enterprise to understand the natural world. Although naturalists on both sides benefited from this relationship, the power differentials allowed North Americans to obtain a greater benefit.

In the end, nonetheless, the main idea I would like this book to convey is that imperialism complemented rather than conflicted with nationalist dynamics in the study and perception of nature. Cooperation rather than competition, oppression or rebellion marked the relationship between naturalists in Colombia and the United States. For scholars like Apolinar, Nicéforo, Dugand or Lehmann the connections they established with North Americans became a strong pillar to consolidate a scientific community in the country, promote wildlife and nature conservation, and utilize nature as a bastion of national identity. For naturalists like Chapman, Meyer de Schauensee, Pearson or Wetmore,

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some tools to think critically about the way in which we continue to make strong connections between national boundaries and the natural world that surrounds us.

Colombians became the source of rare specimens to complement their research, the providers of the local knowledge needed to complement their studies, and the voice within the Colombian government to support conservation initiatives, among other aspects.

This book has also sought to go beyond the study of the interactions between Colombian and North American scientists and their different constructions of nature to look at how the birds they studied and loved had a more complex story to tell; birds were the main axis that guided this work. Following the lessons provided by commodity history, I used the constant flow of birds between these two countries as a pretext to create a history of science, economy and conservation. From the early trade of skins intended to decorate thousands of women's hats in Europe and the United States, that altered the ecological balance of one of Colombia's regions, to the yearly migrations between North and South America as a cause to promote wildlife preservation, birds have not only fascinated people in both countries, but also awakened an important scientific interest in Colombia as well as strong debates around the conservation of nature. Birds allowed me to integrate themes as different as frontier and national borders, neo-imperialism, perceptions of landscape, regionalism, and centralism, and create a history of science that takes into account a transnational approach as well as the interaction of actors ranging from commercial collectors in Colombia to elite North American scientists.

Finally, nature conservation has been, perhaps, the other big theme that has guided many of the pages in this book. The rise of conservation movements in the United States in the beginning of the twentieth century, the emergence of wildlife conservationism in Latin America in the 1940s, and the first steps towards what will later become a considerable network of national parks in Colombia during the second half of the twentieth century, were also present in these pages. The desire to preserve birds led many naturalists to pursue conservation policies on a national and a global scale. I would like to highlight two points that seem to be important in this regard. The commercial trade of birds that took place between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was an important turning point in understanding the origins of conservationism on an international level—or on a global scale, if you will. With some important exceptions mentioned earlier, studies regarding the first conservation movements tend to be focused on efforts carried on at a national scale—conservation movements in the United States, or Mexico, or Costa Rica, etc. However, some naturalists and enthusiasts were, in the early part of the twentieth century, already aware of a more global impact of conservation. The efforts made by men and women in the first Audubon societies were also triggered by the impact bird slaughter was having on countries outside the United States, including the massive commercial trade of egrets in Colombia.

Second, the history of the efforts to preserve bird life—and wildlife in general—in Colombia and Latin America should take into account the history of international relations and in particular United States-Latin America relations. The Good Neighbor Policy and the Alliance for Progress are important events to understand the new and awakened interest that North American naturalists expressed towards Latin America in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1960s. Of course, Colombian naturalists took advantage of this American interest in preserving nature in the country and used it to promote conservation laws. Eventually, it also helped them, in combination with other factors present in Colombia's historical context of the time, to create new national parks.

The story of the trade of birds between the United States and Colombia certainly did not stop in the 1960s. Colombian birds have continued to awaken interest among North American naturalists. In 1986, Steven Hilty and William Brown, two avid ornithologists from the United States and Canada, respectively, published *A Guide to the Birds of Colombia*, the most comprehensive and complete guide to the study of Colombia's avifauna. With the contribution of colleagues from the United States and Colombia, in universities and museums of natural history, as well as the help of many illustrators, particularly Guy Tudor, Hilty and Brown were able to study and describe close to 1,700 bird species, much more than Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee had previously studied back in the 1940s. And the number has only grown in the past years. The panel described at the ICN mentions about 1,850 species, a substantial growth since Hilty and Brown published their book.<sup>2</sup>

Not all birds that flowed in the second half of the twentieth century did so with scientific purposes. In the past three decades birds have become part of an enormous illegal global business that trades live wildlife specimens. Thousands of birds, reptiles, and even small mammals are hunted every year in different countries around the world and sent to underground markets in Europe and the United States, where each specimen is sold for thousands of dollars. Recent studies have estimated that this bio-piracy industry moves around 22 billion dollars each year worldwide, even though 70% of the traded animals do not survive the harsh conditions in which they are transported. Colombia, because of its great wildlife diversity, is one of the top providers of this unlawful industry.<sup>3</sup> A better understanding of the flow of wildlife and natural resources between the United States and Colombia is of particular

2. Steven L. Hilty and Bill Brown, *A Guide to the Birds of Colombia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

3. Sophia Rodríguez, "La biopiratería amenaza nuestro país con la depredación y extinción de especies," *El Tiempo*, April 12 2007.

importance today, when both countries recently signed a free trade agreement that allows the United States to develop economic and scientific projects that profit from Colombia's biodiversity. U.S. corporations will soon be able to send bio-prospectors to Colombia and extract or develop genetic studies with little or no recognition of Colombia's sovereignty over its natural resources. Furthermore, it is doubtful that the economic gain that these corporations will obtain from these biological enterprises will benefit the local communities where these studies are carried out, or even the country as a whole, as the extracting benefits will stay mostly in the United States.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time another industry based on the consumption of nature is rising: eco-tourism. There is a current explosion of tourist packages that promote travels to distant countries with the promise of experiencing nature in its most "pristine" state and watching wildlife animals firsthand. Birders, for example, flow each year to countries like Panama and Costa Rica to admire the beauty of their avifauna. Having the chance to watch hundreds of bird species in one place seduces nature lovers in Europe and the United States. However, even though Colombia is recognized as the most bird diverse country in the world, it has not been a part of this trend. The constant violence in the countryside and the threat of kidnappings kept tourists away for many years. Nevertheless, this panorama is changing. Colombia has invested a great deal of resources in changing the country's image overseas, and each year more and more visitors are traveling to the country to discover what seemed to be an undiscovered paradise full of "unspoiled" landscapes with an amazing biodiversity.

The rise of eco-tourism has changed the landscape in many of the more popular destinations nowadays. In Perú, for example, the government is struggling to decide what to do with the thousands of tourists that visit Machu Picchu, the old Inca city, each year. Although a great source of revenue for Perú's economy, the tourist industry seems to be destroying the city and its surroundings. The same is true for many of the national parks in Costa Rica. The old question of economic benefit versus the need to preserve is appearing once again in Latin American countries. In Colombia, where this boom is just starting, it seems important to carry out studies that show us how to develop an industry in ways that will balance the economic benefit that many Colombians would like to obtain from this opportunity with the need to manage and conserve our natural resources.

4. The problem of bioprospecting in underdeveloped countries has received attention by Arturo Escobar. See: Arturo Escobar, "Whose Knowledge, Whose Nature? Biodiversity Conservation and the Political Ecology of Social Movements," *Journal of Political Ecology* 5 (1998).

The continuation of scientific studies regarding Colombia's avifauna by North Americans and Colombians, as well as the rise of bio-piracy, bio-prospecting and eco-tourism, are all topics that show the many ways in which the flow and perception of birds and wildlife between the United States and Colombia continued to have importance in the second half of the twentieth century. I hope future research will shed light on these topics.

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Archivo General  
Inciva – Instituto para la Investigación del Patrimonio Cultural y Natural del Valle del Cauca, Cali  
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