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Picturing Nature: Education, Ornithology and Photography in the Life of Cordelia Stanwood: 1865-1958

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**PICTURING NATURE: EDUCATION, ORNITHOLOGY AND
PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE LIFE OF CORDELIA STANWOOD: 1865-1958**

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A THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

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An Abstract of the Thesis Presented
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The field of environmental history, with a few exceptions, has neglected gendered analysis; in addition, several women's histories have analyzed a few environmental issues, but disregard environmental scholarship. In the joining of women's and environmental history, this dissertation examines the life of one woman, Cordelia J. Stanwood of Ellsworth, Maine (1865-1958), to determine how a woman could use nature to transcend the social limits of domesticity in the early twentieth century. Research of her correspondence, published writing, photography and forty years of field notes reveals that like many other women, she took advantage of technology and evolving ideas about womanhood in order to maintain her autonomy. Most important, she pioneered in bird life history and photography for ornithologists, in the process commodifying nature for her economic support.

Stanwood's life as a naturalist began upon her return home to Ellsworth, Maine at the end of a nineteen-year teaching career in which she practiced nature study in the service of art instruction in the public schools. Once in Ellsworth, she became renown for her ornithological expertise, conducting bird studies from 1904 until 1922. She contributed new findings to ornithology and broke new ground with the bird photograph. In an era of limited professional opportunities for women, she crafted a second career as a path-breaking nature photographer, writer, and environmental advocate. Following the publication of her scientific ornithology, Stanwood pioneered the illustrated popular ornithology article. Stanwood's bird life histories make her a transitional figure in the history of ornithological writing, and her bird photographs inspired the generation of nature photographers that followed her.

Stanwood distinguished herself in her work for bird conservation as a professional ornithologist, setting herself apart from mainstream female "club lady" conservation reformers. She shares a genre of writing with other women in her scientifically oriented writing and photography, contributing original scientific work adapted to the popular audience during a period of proliferating print and visual media.

At the end of her life, Stanwood donated her house, papers, and land as a house museum and sanctuary, foreshadowing the increasingly popular land conservation ethic that is widespread today.

**To James and Stewart, who have helped me through
every stage of this project, bird by bird.**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mine has always been a “birdy” family. For Christmas, my great uncle Chester would give the family hand-cut jigsaw puzzles of birds and his own hand-made birdfeeders. In an era when backyard bird feeding had not yet come into vogue, our windowsills and yards were littered with bird feeders. Uncle Chester’s wife Aunt Gladys had assembled a scrapbook of color bird photographs that I longed for, and when I went to visit them over holidays I would pore over it for hours. My father’s sister Aunt Polly had a huge collection of carved wooden birds that I was allowed to take down off the mantel and look at. When my brother John returned home from an expedition, he always had a report of an interesting bird. Our family friend Joan Phenix could tame birds to eat out of her hand, and she taught me how to do it. Dinner table talk sometimes consisted of the day’s interesting bird sightings, and the spring season, always an exciting time following the long, snowy, cold winters in our New England climate, was filled with ecstatic reports of the first robin, phoebe, swallow, or hummingbird.

I was particularly seized with bird passion when I was around ten years old, and my family moved across town to a new house and I went to a newly-built school. The baby boom and the development of Route 128 around Boston coincided so that our town, once filled with forests and dairy farms, was giving way to tract houses, sidewalks, and crowded schools. New to this more pastoral end of town, and without any of my familiar friends, I often lingered in the schoolyard before my walk home, investigating the perimeter of the playground next to an active dairy farm. For the first time I discovered the amazing activity

that takes place in a meadow in spring: bobolinks bubbled over the grass, meadowlarks chimed from their lookouts, and tree swallows circled and twittered over the dizzying field buzzing with insects. I loved watching the cows munching on the grass and would gaze at them for hours from my desk next to the window. Much to my horror, however, the school had a darker side. Built on three levels terraced on a hill, each section of classrooms had large windows that afforded plenty of natural light into the classroom (an innovation to me, accustomed as I was to two and three-story classrooms with small thickly-paned windows positioned above my eyelevel).

Although these windows connected the pupils to the natural world on the other side of the glass, their reflective property created a death chamber for birds. That first migratory spring after the school was built, the birds returned in large, energetic, love-sick flocks, only to bash themselves headlong into the glass. Usually they were just stunned, but often they would deflect off the glass with a loud thud, dropping to the pebbled drainage area beneath the window. No one ever except me ever seemed to be aware of this slaughter taking place outside the classroom; at the sound of bam! my teacher would look up in mid-sentence, glance at the window, and continue talking. At the end of the day, after all the other children had sped out of the school yard, I would creep around looking for the brightly colored bodies of the returning bashed birds. Carefully I would wrap them in remnants of my brother's outgrown flannel shirts and carry them home in the brown paper bag left over from the lunch I had brought to school.

Once home, I would spread their wings out on my desk and carefully sketch their bodies, each wing feather exactly positioned, each barb and spicule rendered on paper with my sharply pointed drawing pencil. Fascinated with their curled toes and scaly, prehistoric-looking feet, I studied the differences between the shape of the toes of woodpeckers, swallows, warblers, and robins. One day, my mother came into my room unexpectedly and stopped short, sniffing the air. "What is that smell?" she asked me. Peering at my collection of dead birds (I had collected five or six in the last two or three days) she was horrified. "How morbid!" she exclaimed. "Get rid of those poor dead creatures!" I also did not know that I had been illegally possessing migratory birds. Forced to give up my treasures, I buried them in the woods behind my house, giving them a funeral to the tune of "All Things Bright and Beautiful."

My father convinced my mother that I did not need to see a psychiatrist because I was fascinated with death; he knew I was just fascinated with the birds. There followed many trips to the hobby shop, where my mother would purchase plastic models of birds that I would snap together and then paint by number over their rigid bodies. Out of scale and lifeless, these birds did not interest me long, despite the fumes of the paint. One day, my father came into my room bearing a sheaf of yellowed clippings. "I found some of my old scrapbook things, and I thought you might like them for your bulletin board. Take a look at this one." Amongst the scattered clippings of robins and bluebirds posed on plants floating in mid air was a rectangular black and white magazine photograph of six little chickadees perched on a branch. One little bird had a piece of moss clinging to its feet, and

each of the little birds was looking up at the camera with an attentive gaze that I would learn was similar to that made famous by the “Little Folks” photography studio in Boston. Enchanted, I pinned the photograph up on my bulletin board, where it retained a position of honor until ten years later when we moved out of the house. As I was studying for an algebra test, or getting ready for a dance, the little chickadees accompanied me as I made my passage to adulthood. I often asked myself, “How did the photographer do that? Who WAS the photographer?”

The answer did not come until thirty years later, long after I had forgotten all about the Six Little Chickadees. Engrossed in studying environmental and women’s history, I was enrolled in an environment and culture class. Paging through my newly purchased books for the semester, I was brought up short by a fleeting glimpse of a photograph of six little chickadees that passed by on the flipping pages. “Look at that!” I exclaimed to myself. “I haven’t seen that picture in years!” Sure enough, there it was, in Vera Norwood’s *Made From This Earth: American Women and Nature*.¹ From this seminal book, I learned that the photographer was a woman named Cordelia Stanwood, from Ellsworth, Maine. Grateful that I had rediscovered this wonderful photograph and learned who the photographer was, I read on.

Because biography is a good interdisciplinary meeting place to explore gender and its changing concepts, and because few scholars have made any in-depth studies of a single

¹ Vera Norwood, *Made From This Earth: American Women and Nature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

woman and her relationship with nature, a biographical study of Cordelia Stanwood, with whom I felt close kinship, and her relationship with nature made good sense. Stanwood left a rich repository of her thoughts and observations of birds and the surrounding countryside for forty years. From these "Bird Notebooks," as she titled them, I have been able to mine the rich depths of a lifetime of experiences in the natural world. I am especially grateful for the gracious hospitality of Stanley Richmond and his sister Diane Castle in sharing Birdsacre with me, often when they were pressed for time. Marion Stocking and her daughter Ann, as well as Ken Closson, Herbert Sillsby and the librarians at the Ellsworth Public Library generously answered my questions. My study of Stanwood's field notes, however, would not have been possible without the capable assistance of Anthony Weed, who enthusiastically undertook transcribing them.

In my search further afield for Stanwood's papers, the staff in special collections at the University of Oregon's Knight Library, where Henry Turner Bailey's papers were located, courteously assisted me and I holed up for several days. With the help of staff members too numerous to list, I also pored through the archives of the American Museum of Natural History, the Smithsonian, the Massachusetts College of Art, the City of Providence archives, and the resources of the Rhode Island Historical Society. At the Ornithology department of the Harvard's Natural History Museum I was generously allowed access to their considerable library, and treated to a view of some rare study skins.

Several people's enthusiasm for my project was especially heartening. At the Massachusetts College of Art, Paul Dobbs and I relished the idea of learning more about

the juncture of the arts and sciences through bird art. Peter Miller, local historian at Greenfield, Massachusetts, enthusiastically located Stanwood amongst the town's publications, and the town clerks of Marion and Springfield, Massachusetts located Stanwood amongst the school histories. Erica Hirshler of the Museum of Fine Arts shared her expertise in the visual arts and cultural history of Boston at the turn of the century, enlarging my perspective of Stanwood in the process.

Much of the legwork of research has been made immeasurably simpler by the wondrous new invention, the Internet. From online connections, I got to "know" Mary Ann Stankiewicz, who first put me on to the location of the Henry Turner Bailey archives and the field of art education. Over the years, I have come to appreciate the generosity of scholars across the nation who replied to my queries on H-Women, H-Environment, and H-Amstudy. The Internet has also enabled me to arrange exchanges leading to papers and panels at over a dozen conferences in the last five years. I participated in conferences at the American Society of Environmental Historian, the American Studies Association, the New England Chapter of the Popular Culture Association, the Nineteenth-Century Studies Association, the American Women Writers Group, and the Berkshire Conference for Women's Historians, where colleagues and senior scholars have provided valuable feedback, a forum for scholarly exchange, and the support that has sharpened my thinking and offered me much food for thought. Parts of this dissertation first appeared in papers before these audiences.

Also through the Internet, I was able to locate disparate archives that contained Stanwood's correspondence, including Western Reserve University, the University of Connecticut, Oberlin College, and the Iowa State Historical Society. The staffs there generously located and photocopied invaluable parts of Stanwood's correspondence.

Much of my work would not have been able to occur without the generous support of the Association of Graduate Students at the University of Maine which generously funded my research at the Stanwood Wildlife Foundation archives. The History department's Dunn award enabled me to travel to distant locations for research. The John Nicholas Brown Center for American Civilization at Brown University supported my fellowship at the critical beginning of the writing process, and again at its end when I returned to present my work to a gratifyingly interested audience.

At every turn in my academic career as a PhD candidate, I have been proffered the support of my committee at the University of Maine's History department. From her first introduction one snowy March day, to the recent cheery smiles with which she has greeted me, my advisor Marli Weiner has led me through the thicket of course study, comprehensive exams, orals, and the research process of my dissertation. When it came to writing, she tenaciously hung on in the face of my discouragement, at times having more faith in me than I did in myself.

Some of my earliest supporters reside at 10 Granite Street in Portland, where the American and New England Studies faculty first ignited my intellectual curiosity for all things historical. Their cutting edge scholarship continues to inspire me.

At every turn in my career, my friends and family have been my most stalwart supporters. Clio's Daughters, a wonderful group of women at the University of Maine, have been there when the going got rough, offering, food, drink, music, and helpful adages and advice. I offer my sincere thanks for their steady support and friendship in the face of my complaints, rants, fatigue and sometimes irrational silliness. My non-academic friends have always been at hand with considerate questions about my progress, generously listening to my long-winded explanations of "where" I was. My husband James and son Stewart, however, have been intimately involved with this process, suffering leftovers, overdue laundry, and nights alone while I worked away from home. Without Jim's editorial eye, and Stewart's patient love I would not have been able to accomplish so much in so little time. Saying "thank you" seems too little, but it is sincerely offered to both of you. Throughout my program of study, you have both always been with me, whether you were fishing in the red boat, together chopping wood, frowning over machines, or sharing a new bird with me.

Through my research, I have especially come to value teachers everywhere. A vastly underappreciated lot, they are responsible for establishing the nation's first environmental and gender consciousness that has been passed from generation to generation to the present day. Teachers have been agents for the social change that has brought us conservation, wildlife protection, sanctuaries, a general love of all things nature, and the social advancement of women. I look forward to becoming one of them.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	x
INTRODUCTION: BEHIND THE BLIND: WOMEN IN NATURE.....	1
1. Chapter One: A Sense of Place: Ellsworth, Maine and Providence, Rhode Island, 1865-1893.....	29
2. Chapter Two: Nature's Lessons: Teaching, Art and Nature Study, 1894-1904.....	59
3. Chapter Three: "There is Pleasure in the Pathless Woods": The Life Afield 1905-1917.	94
4. Chapter Four: "The Friendship of Nature": Stanwood the Ornithologist, 1905-1958.....	132
5. Chapter Five: The Cents of Nature: Writing and Photography, 1910- 1953.....	176
REFERENCES.....	226
BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR.....	256

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Stanwood's Blind and Screen.....	3
Figure 2.	"Which Would You Choose?".....	26
Figure 3.	Parula Nests <i>Bent's Histories of North American Birds</i>	195
Figure 4.	Six Little Chickadees.....	210
Figure 5.	Eastern Hermit Thrush.....	219

INTRODUCTION

BEHIND THE BLIND: WOMEN IN NATURE

Having first identified Cordelia Stanwood in Vera Norwood's *Made From This Earth*, I began a search for other work that analyzed women and the environment. I found that the field of environmental history, with a few exceptions, has neglected gendered analysis; in addition, of the several women's histories that have analyzed a few environmental issues, most have neglected environmental history scholarship. In an effort to redress this situation, this dissertation examines the life of one woman, Cordelia J. Stanwood of Ellsworth, Maine (1865-1958), to determine how a woman could use nature to transcend the social limits of domesticity in the early twentieth century.

At a more specific level, "Picturing Nature" is an attempt to recover and locate Stanwood's work within the broad spectrum of women's nature work, writing and photography; it is also an effort to define a new type of women's scientific work with nature during the early twentieth century. Located neither solely within the realm of women's history, environmental history, nor the study of women's nature writing and photography, *Picturing Nature* uses a biographical lens to look at the history of education and science, environmental history, women's history, literature review, and the history of photography as they are embodied by the work of Cordelia Stanwood during the early twentieth century. Taken together, a study of Stanwood's life enables historians to embrace both women's and environmental history in the process of understanding women's role on

the fluid boundaries between the sciences and the arts during the heady period at the turn of the twentieth century.

Stanwood is typical of those women who were raised with a “true woman” ideal but who found themselves in the changing world of the “new woman” upon their maturity. Although women were increasingly becoming more physically active, leaving stuffy parlors and hot, damp kitchens for the busy city streets, noisy mills, neighborhood parks or the woods and meadows of the country farms where they lived, many like Stanwood nonetheless still felt compelled to observe the gendered strictures of an earlier domestic ideal.

Because of their gender, women’s work outside the home, whether it was behind the blind, in the laboratory or in the field meant that their scientific work, was usually underpaid and overlooked, in the academic setting as well as in scientific and popular natural history writing and photography. Stanwood’s photograph of her blind and screen posed in the bushy secondary growth of a Maine pasture serves as an apt visual metaphor that illustrates the larger context of Stanwood’s work as it is described in “Picturing Nature.”



Figure 1. Stanwood's Blind and Screen. *Courtesy of the Stanwood Wildlife Foundation.*

Reprinted in both *Wilson Bulletin* and the *Auk*, the photograph of Stanwood's blind is located in a typical habitat in the field where she often worked for her bird observations. Considered in the realm of environmental, women's history, writing and photography, the anomalous umbrella blind and screen suggest several ideas simultaneously.

The canvas screen, which appears out of place in the rural pasture full of meadowsweet and balsam, is a reminder of the early screens upon which the movies were played. Far from the urban center, Stanwood's work took place outside of the growing industrial cities that characterized the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although she spent many years living in the city, ultimately Stanwood found her calling in the isolated woods, meadows and swamps of remote down east Maine while at the same time she corresponded with ornithologists nationwide. The backdrop of

Stanwood's work was in the wild, overgrown places where she found the birds. Just as the movies brought larger-than-life characters to the urban audience, Stanwood's photographs enabled birds to appear larger than life for the urban reading audiences of magazines, periodicals and newspapers.

The delicacy of the parasol's spines suggests the fragility of Stanwood's mental health in the face of the constrictions that her gender placed upon her. Continually underpaid and overworked, when she was a teacher her aunt pressured her to give up her work out of fear for her health. Ironically, it was her mental, not physical, health that became compromised in Stanwood's quest for a living wage as a teacher. Once she returned to Maine, her fragile mental health gradually improved as Stanwood took to the outdoors for solace. Taking advantage of the popular idea that bodily health meant mental wellness, Stanwood pursued exercise out of doors. Although conservative Ellsworth society frowned on this practice and thought the outdoors to be inappropriate place for a woman, let alone for her to range far and wide, nature nonetheless provided Stanwood with the mental balm she required. Changing social mores bolstered her activity, so that the emerging ideology of the "New Woman" gave credence to Stanwood's practice of bird study.

Taking a closer look, the blind in the meadow suggests how Stanwood could be at once absent and present, delicate and strong. In the photograph it is impossible to tell if Stanwood is in the blind, or not; her ghostly presence there is symbolic of the place that most womens' work with nature holds within the history of science, women, and the

environment. Although nature study such as Stanwood's concretely contributed to ornithological science, and embodied the national legacy disseminated from the classroom, in women's and environmental history it has been overlooked not only for its contribution, but also for the significance of its place in the evolution of science and its relationship with the arts in that transition.

Being behind the blind also means that Stanwood's work is masked by historiography that portrays women's environmental consciousness as essentially conservative in nature. This scholarly "blindness" means that historians have not been able to get "inside the blind" to investigate the properties of women's scientific work during this early period. "Picturing Nature," in its investigation from behind the blind and in the pages of Stanwood's field notes, looks from the inside out for a more clearly focused, detailed view of women's work with nature at the turn of the twentieth century. A brief survey of the literature reveals that until recently, much of the field of environmental history has centered on elite white men's conceptions of the environment, or on wilderness issues.¹ While these works are excellent departure points for

¹ Samuel P. Hays, *Beauty, Health and Permanence: Environmental Politics in the United States, 1955-1985* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas*, 2nd ed (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 3rd ed (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967); and Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience*, 3rd ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987).

understanding the roots of environmentalism in the United States, most of these classic works in the field ignore gender and fail to take it into account. With a lack of focus on women, many other works present environmentalism as elitist and male-centered.² Much of the historical literature describing women's involvement in the early environmental movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has been secondary to both women's history and environmental history.

Generally, the environmental history that mentions women's involvement makes little effort to analyze their activism or to tie their environmental attitudes to other kinds of nature work. Although focusing almost exclusively on elite white women, several authors have made attempts to clarify women's environmental activism during the Progressive Era. Their activism ranged from concerns about conservation and preservation to urban pollution and health concerns. As Elizabeth Blum has emphasized in her historiographic essay "Linking American Women's History and Environmental History: A Preliminary Historiography," several of these works fail to analyze why significant numbers of women became interested in environmental issues, or how striking

² Robert C. Paehlke, *Environmentalism and the Future of Progressive Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Christopher Manes, *Green Rage: Radical Environmentalism and the Unmaking of Civilization* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1990); Martin W. Lewis, *Green Delusions: An Environmentalist Critique of Radical Environmentalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1992); and Mark Dowie, *Losing Ground: American Environmentalism at the Close of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997).

their political power was in an era before women gained the right to vote.³ Others grapple with women's involvement in greater depth, often focusing on whether women's activism should be considered "conservative" or "feminist" or "radical." For example, Carolyn Merchant posits that women's involvement in the early conservation movement remained essentially conservative in nature. Merchant finds that upper and middle class women played a pivotal role in many of the early conservation issues, including forest and water conservation and the doomed fight to prevent the damming of Hatch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park in the early twentieth century. Merchant sees an inherent tension in women's involvement in the conservation issues:

Women frequently saw themselves as ideologically opposed to what they perceived as commercial and material values. Feminist and progressive in their role as activists for the public interest, they were nevertheless predominantly conservative in their desire to uphold traditional values and middle-class life styles rooted in these same material interests.⁴

The Progressive conservation movement, along with women's municipal housekeeping effort, is portrayed as primarily conservative in nature; Merchant represents the women as failing to question or oppose their roles in society.

³ Elizabeth D. Blum, "Linking American Women's History and Environmental History: A Preliminary Historiography" <<http://www.h-net.msu.edu/~environ>>: October 2002.

⁴ Carolyn Merchant, "Women of the Progressive Conservation Movement: 1900-1916, *Environmental Review* 8 (Spring, 1984): 57-85.

A few scholars, using a biographical approach, survey various women's efforts on behalf of environmentalism. Glenda Riley provides an excellent list of biographies on female conservationists in her notes to *Women and Nature: Saving the "Wild" West*. Marcia Myers Bonta, *Women in the Field: America's Pioneering Women Naturalists* and Polly Welts Kaufman, *National Parks and the Woman's Voice: A History* provide additional sketches of women. These are good starting points for understanding how women and nature have historically interacted, although neither contextualizes women's work with the history of the natural sciences or photography.⁵

Book length biographies offer the scholar the opportunity to understand women's relationship with nature in depth, in the process opening up further avenues of scholarship. The most authoritative biography of a woman environmentalist is Linda Lear's *Rachel Carson: Witness for Nature*.⁶ Meticulously researched and documented, Lear's book follows Carson's writing and the activism that placed her in the center of an emerging environmental ethic during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Lear describes Carson's driving need to "witness for nature," fostered by her early life experiences that

⁵ Glenda Riley, *Women and Nature: Saving the "Wild" West* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1999); Marcia Myers Bonta, *Women in the Field: America's Pioneering Women Naturalists* (College Station: Texas A & M Press, 1991); *American Women Afield: Writings by Pioneer Women Naturalists* (College Station: Texas A& M Press, 1995); Polly Welts Kaufman, *National Parks and the Woman's Voice: A History* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).

⁶ Linda Lear, *Rachel Carson: Witness for Nature* (New York: Henry Holt, 1997).

were enthralled in nature study, and her scientific training and activism that was countered by a somewhat shy, private personality. Lear does an excellent job with Carson's biography, placing her efforts in historical context and documenting the continuous difficulties she faced as a woman in a male field.

Chandler Richmond's biography of Cordelia Stanwood *Beyond the Spring: Cordelia Stanwood of Birdsacre, Maine's Pioneer Ornithologist and Photographer* offers tantalizing details of Stanwood's life, but offers little historical context for the scholar.⁷ Drawn exclusively from Stanwood's papers without research in the field, Richmond sketches the details of Stanwood's life impressionistically. With its personal point of view his book speaks more to the personality of the author and the time period in which it was produced, rather than the larger significance of Stanwood's work. Written during a period in which the lay public gave women's environmental activism and science work only nodding acquaintance, *Beyond the Spring* portrays Stanwood as a solitary "Birdwoman" whose life was stunted by her single state.

Few works emphasize and analyze the significant contribution of women to the bird conservation movement. Barrow's *A Passion for Birds: American Ornithology After Audubon* follows the saga of bird conservation law, paying mere lip service to the female leaders and foot soldiers in the conservation movement for birds. Robin Doughty details women's contributions in *Feather Fashions and Bird Protection: A Study in*

⁷ Chandler S. Richmond, *Beyond the Spring: Cordelia Stanwood of Birdsacre, Maine's Pioneer Ornithologist and Photographer*. (Ellsworth, Maine: Latona Press, 1989).

Nature Protection, but fails to analyze why women took up the fight on behalf of the birds. Only Jennifer Price's essay "When Women were Women, Men Were Men, and Birds Were Hats" in her essay collection *Flight Maps* documents how ideas about gender during the late nineteenth century provided impetus for women's effectiveness during the conservation battle: "the arguments brought in scientists, club women, sportsmen, nature writers and humane activists, who split divisively over the meanings of birds and nature but unified around the deeply meaningful definitions of who women are." This rubric brings the history of women and environment together on a grand scale, underscoring that it was the "politics of womanhood" that made the bird conservation fight a success, but that the men took charge of the more authoritative duties such as lectures, bird charts and legislation.⁸ This class and gender stereotyping of the environmental movement, while it contributes to understanding *how* women were effective leaders for conservation, overlooks how women of varying backgrounds, that is, club ladies and women scientists and teachers, were able to unite for conservation. Price, like Merchant, generalizes about female conservation workers during the Progressive Era by neglecting teachers' and female scientists' contributions to bird conservation, in the process painting feather band fighters with the broad brush label of "club lady."

⁸ Mark Barrow, *A Passion for Birds: American Ornithology After Audubon*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); Robin Doughty, *Feather Fashions and Bird Protection: A Study in Nature Protection*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975); Jennifer Price, "When Women Were Women, Men Were Men, and Birds Were Hats" *Flight Maps: Adventures with Nature in Modern America* (New York: Basic Books, 1999) 54-109.

The scholarly treatment of women's nature writing reflects a similar problem. Also biographically specific (with a section on Stanwood), Deborah Strom's *Birdwatching With American Women: A Selection of Nature Writings* introduces eighteen women who devoted their lives to studying birds (and other creatures and plants) as "eccentrics," a demeaning term that underscores the dearth of historical understanding concerning women's work in the natural world. Marcia Myers Bonta introduces women nature writers in *American Women Afield* but offers only tantalizing, brief sketches of women's work and writing.⁹

Vera Norwood stands nearly alone in her attempt to join the two fields of environmental and women's history, and in the realm of women's nature work and writing. *Made From This Earth* is a starting point for this important juncture. Covering a broad time period from the American Revolution through the 1980s, Norwood uses biographical sketches, including one of Stanwood, to focus on female involvement in writing nature essays, illustrating nature books, designing and developing gardens and wildlife preservation and education. This categorization places women in a tradition of nature illustration, making them secondary to men's scientific work with nature. Norwood portrays these women as having chosen their occupation or hobby for their appropriateness to gender norms, but points out that women often ended up stretching those social

⁹ Deborah Strom, *Bird-Watching with American Women: A Selection of Nature Writings* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989) 92-99; Marcia Meyers Bonta, *American Women Afield: Writings by Pioneer Women Naturalists* (College Station: Texas A& M Press, 1995).

boundaries and developing acceptability for women and environmental concerns. Because their actions implicitly critiqued patriarchal society, Norwood points out that these women exhibit historical links to the current Ecofeminist movement.¹⁰

Where Stanwood and other women are concerned, however, Norwood's analysis overlooks the importance of women's emerging professionalism in teaching and science. Norwood's emphasis on Stanwood's remaining at her home inaccurately portrays Stanwood as a woman who did *not* stretch gender boundaries; moreover, Norwood's reliance on secondary sources to compile her biographical data means that Stanwood's important scientific contributions to ornithology are overlooked. These faults are indicative of this groundbreaking book, in that it necessarily overlooks some specific details in favor of creating a broad tableau of women and environmentalism. In the end, though, this does a disservice to the serious contributions of many American women to the natural sciences. In this way, *Made From This Earth* serves as a reminder of how increasingly invisible women became in the sciences as the twentieth century progressed.

These works highlight how it is likely that Stanwood's role in conservation and field study may have been misunderstood in light of several misapprehensions about early twentieth century bird (and nature) writers and scientists. Because many writers of this period, both male and female, used domestic terminology to describe the nesting habits of birds, scholars likely have assumed that this meant that the female writers

¹⁰ Vera Norwood, *Made From This Earth: American Women and Nature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

themselves projected human domestic values onto the birds. This misconception continues today: “many women nature writers have found freedom from the domestic sphere and all that it traditionally entails by finding a home in nature, away from the indoor setting where their roles have so well—and narrowly—defined.” writes Lorraine Anderson in her introduction to *At Home on This Earth*. “They have imbued [sic] the concept of home with new meaning by expanding it to encompass the wider world.”¹¹ By reason of their domestic vocabulary, women, presumably confined by domestic roles, have projected these same roles onto the natural world.

A survey of ornithology literature during the first two decades of the twentieth century (which includes Stanwood’s work) illustrates that their writing has been misconstrued. During this period the investigation of bird “home life” was of primary importance to all ornithologists, both male and female, and use of domestic metaphors to describe bird-nesting habits was pervasive, with the term “home life” in widespread use by writers of both genders.¹² Stanwood’s work was informed and recognized within this community of ornithologists who wrote about birds in terms of

¹¹ Lorraine Anderson, “Introduction,” Lorraine Anderson and Thomas Edwards, eds., *At Home on This Earth: Two Centuries of U.S. Women’s Nature Writing* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2002) 5.

¹² A book length example is: Frances Herrick, *The Home Life of Wild Birds* (New York: G. B. Putnam & Sons, 1905).

their “home life.” Yet Stanwood herself only used domestic terms in public writing. Nowhere does she use domestic terminology in her field notes, belying any assumption that Stanwood thought of birds in domestic terms. Rather, it is likely that in her published writing, Stanwood used those terms as a lingua franca in the newly developing vocabulary of ornithological writing.

For this reason, it is important to recognize that because the nature writer was a woman and she used the widespread metaphor of “home life” to describe nature, it is incorrect to assume that her own thinking was a romantic, non-scientific projection of domestic life onto nature. As “Picturing Nature” argues, women’s nature writing is also writing based on scientific evidence and careful observation. As Daniel Phillippon has rightly emphasized in “Gender, Genus, and Genre: Women, Science, and Nature Writing in Early America,” the introduction to Thomas Edwards’ and Elizabeth DeWolfe’s anthology *Such News of the Land: U.S. Women Nature Writers*, traditionally women’s scientific work was mediated by male authorities. Recognizing the scientific legitimacy of their scientific work, Phillippon points out that early in the history of women’s scientific work that

Despite the limitations placed on these women, all of them managed to defy convention and distinguish themselves as both effective scientists and expert rhetoricians. Their investigations into the natural world advanced the state of

knowledge in their respective fields....Their attempts...can be seen as efforts...to be among the imposers of taxonomic order...rather than the ones being imposed upon.¹³

To some extent, Stanwood's work continues this tradition: in an effort to support herself, in the process of maintaining her autonomy and economic independence, she imposed her own perspective upon the birds and used popular vocabulary as she developed their lives into saleable story material.

It is important to avoid essentializing women's nature writing, in the process overlooking the historical changes that scientific methods underwent in ornithology during the early twentieth century. Changing methods of scientific inquiry and the specialization of ornithological science have been conflated as non-scientific women's writing by Anderson and Edwards in Anderson's introduction to *At Home on This Earth*, an anthology of women's nature writing:

Other women nature writers have explicitly and purposely rejected the scientific mode of inquiry. The nineteenth-century birders—in particular Olive Thorne Miller, Mabel Osgood Wright, Florence Merriam Bailey, and Gene Stratton Porter—took special pride in not killing and dissecting their bird subject in order to know them, as was the practice of male ornithologists (as well as the artist John James Audubon), but instead observing the birds undisturbed in the field, in their own homes.¹⁴

¹³ Daniel J. Phillipon, "Gender, Genus and Genre: Women, Science, and Nature Writing in Early America," ed. Thomas Edwards and Elizabeth De Wolfe, *Such News of the Land: U.S. Women Nature Writers* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2001) 11-12.

¹⁴ Lorraine Anderson, "Introduction," *At Home on This Earth: Two Centuries of U.S. Women's Nature Writing*, 6.

These individuals, except for their interest in birds, varied widely in their approaches toward nature, and hardly merit being lumped together. An esteemed “Fellow” of the American Ornithological Union (AOU), which disdained bird harvesting and promoted migratory bird conservation law, and one of its few female members, Florence Miriam Bailey would be surprised to learn that she was considered nonscientific. John James Audubon, a taxidermist and bird illustrator during the early nineteenth century, and Gene Stratton Porter, a fiction writer, photographer, bird lover and butterfly expert, worked a century apart under very different social and environmental conditions. Olive Thorne Miller primarily wrote fiction, not informative bird studies, in the early to mid-nineteenth century. Early in the twentieth century, both men and women increasingly practiced scientific ornithology without killing or dissecting their subjects, especially after the technology of binoculars and camera made live bird identification and behavior observation feasible. This misunderstanding about science nature writing, and whether it expands or compromises women’s relational interpretations of nature, overlooks women’s contributions to science, and is detrimental to understanding the larger historical questions of women’s relationship to nature.

This is the confusion exacerbated in *At Home on This Earth: Two Centuries of U.S. Women’s Nature Writing*.¹⁵ Both new voices and well-known writers are represented, often by selections not customarily reprinted. The editors have enlarged the canon of nature

¹⁵ Anderson and Edwards, *At Home on This Earth*.

writing far beyond the earlier anthologies of Marcia Myers Bonta, introducing feminist writers and ethnic women writers in another successful, if impressionistic, effort of recovery. Anderson's introduction extends the "home-based, relational tradition" of American women's nature writing, and expands the image of domesticity set forth in Vera Norwood's *Made From This Earth*. This means that Anderson and Edwards essentialize these writers by attributing their motivation to a "home-based" rationale that does not always appear in their writing. It is especially problematic in the work of those women who write from a scientific perspective, such as Stanwood (who is not included in this collection).¹⁶

Women's work with nature has recently benefited from new scholarship, albeit mostly focused on British women. Barbara Gates' anthology, *In Nature's Name*, which began as a companion text to her cultural study of the relationship of Victorian and Edwardian women, *Kindred Nature*, presents no ambiguities about the role of science in nature writing. *In Nature's Name* breaks through the traditional arrangement of nature writing and instead thematically presents a wide range of nature-oriented work, including parable and science-fairy tale. An important theoretical distinction is that Gates has consciously chosen not to separate science writing from nature literature and fiction, or environmental science writing from environmental literature, instead presenting a broad array of women's writing about nature. This arrangement allows Gates to highlight certain

¹⁶ Linda J. Lear, "Review: *In Nature's Name* and *At Home on this Earth*, *Environmental History* (Fall 2002, forthcoming).

commonalities over time, such as women's interest in domestication of plants and animals, and their desire to educate and to popularize science.¹⁷ This serves to bring to the fore the importance of women's contributions to the sciences, an approach that would be welcome in presenting American's women nature writing. As a start in this direction, "Picturing Nature" emphasizes Stanwood's scientific contributions to ornithology, at the same time highlighting her popular ornithology writing.

Although the issue is rarely addressed in any of these works concerning women's work with nature, it is important to consider women's motivations. In Stanwood's case, economics played a part in the type of nature writing and photography she produced. Stanwood's work illustrates that gender does not necessarily signify non-commercial work, and scientific work does not exclude popular writing. Even when she was practicing scientific bird study, Stanwood aggressively promoted her work and sought payment for its publication. She depended on publication of her work in order to support economically not only herself but also her family. Evidence of Stanwood's economic dependence on her writing, in the form of correspondence with editors and the resulting publication of her work in national magazines, demonstrates her far-ranging

¹⁷ Barbara T. Gates, ed., *In Nature's Name: An Anthology of Women's Writing and Illustration, 1780-1930*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Barbara Gates & Ann B. Shteir, *Natural Eloquence: Women Reinscribe Science* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997); Barbara Gates, *Kindred Nature : Victorian and Edwardian Women Embrace the Living World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

efforts. She even collected abandoned bird nests and sold them to collectors. This illustrates that Stanwood, like many female writers over time, was not at all shy about forwarding her own interests in the world of print and commerce.

Importantly, nowhere has the role of the teacher and the significance of nature study been credited in women's nature work. The inspiration for Stanwood's later bird work began with her work as a teacher in the classroom where nature study was utilized as a pedagogical tool. Scholarly understanding of nature study is only now being developed. Research on this topic in "Picturing Nature" has benefited from scholarly exchange with several contemporary historians researching the history of nature study, in addition to an enlarging historiography that is richly descriptive of the dynamic pedagogy of nature study in the schools. As a more generalized pedagogical movement, popularized by Liberty Hyde Bailey in *The Nature Study Idea*, many teachers like Stanwood took it up. Much of the debate within the Nature Study movement focused on the proper relationship between humans and nature in an industrial society—hence the interest of Nature Study for environmental historians. Yet this movement has primarily been traced through the lives of its white male participants, ignoring the legions of women who practiced it daily in the classroom. Only in Lear's *Witness for Nature* is the influence of nature study brought to the fore. The most recent book that handles the Nature Study movement in some depth is Ralph Lutts' *Nature Fakers*; an earlier book by Peter Schmitt, *Back to Nature: The Arcadian Myth in Urban America*, explores the widespread phenomenon of the nature study mania of the early twentieth century, analysis which has helped to contextualize

Stanwood's participation in this interesting movement.¹⁸ The cultural context for young people is aptly covered in Amy Green's Yale American Studies dissertation, "Savage Childhood," which explains the widespread popularization of the movement.¹⁹ None of these works, however, describe or explain the force of nature study as lifelong pursuit such as it was in Stanwood's life.

The history of photography also suffers from a lack of any comprehensive treatment of female scientific photographers such as Stanwood. Peter Palmquist's detailed bibliography of women in photography, while an enormous contribution to the field of women's photography, neglects this category entirely, focusing instead on women's artistic and journalistic photography. Stanwood is joined by other scientific photographers such as Mary C. Dickerson and Gene Stratton Porter, who photographed birds, flowers, insects, amphibians and sea life in the service of science, whose work needs further exploration to

¹⁸ Along with earlier work, Kevin Armitage of the University of Kansas has shared with me the larger framework of nature study and its subtleties as he has been writing his dissertation "Knowing Nature: Nature Study and American Life, 1873-1923" on this topic. Lear, *Rachel Carson*; Ralph J. Lutts, *The Nature Fakers: Wildlife, Science & Sentiment* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum, 1990); Peter J. Schmitt, *Back to Nature: The Arcadian Myth in Urban America*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990); Liberty H. Bailey, *The Nature Study Idea: Being an Interpretation of the New School-Movement to Put the Child in Sympathy with Nature*. (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1903).

¹⁹ Amy Green, "Savage Childhood: The Scientific Construction of Girlhood and Boyhood in the Progressive Era," (PhD. Dissertation, Yale University, 1995); see also Pamela M. Henson, "Through Books to Nature: Anna Botsford Comstock and the Nature Study Movement," in *Natural Eloquence: Women Reinscribe Science*, edited by Barbara T. Gates and Ann B. Shteir (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997) 116-143.

understand how women worked between the boundaries of the arts and sciences, expanding both areas while popularizing science and nature study for the public.²⁰

With an eye toward recovering the entirety of Stanwood's work, and addressing many of these various concerns, "Picturing Nature" comprehensively covers Stanwood's life, beginning with her childhood, to investigate the role of nature in a woman's lifetime. The first view in Chapter One begins during Stanwood's childhood and early education, in the process lending clarity to the picture of how a child could learn nature commodification lessons. Kent Ryden's *Landscape With Figures: Nature and Culture in New England* has been an invaluable aid to understanding how people's thinking about landscape could develop and grow within a changing natural world, its history evident to those whose vocabulary was developed enough to read it.²¹ Stanwood's nature vocabulary was developed early in life, gleaned from the changing working landscape and history of her people. From her early childhood, Stanwood witnessed the commodification lesson from the surrounding countryside, the deck of a ship, and the shore and riverside, where the elements of the forests and seas were extracted, refined, bought and sold.

As she grew to maturity, nature became the setting for Stanwood's familial and professional friendships. Stanwood learned from her grandmother how her colonial ancestors wrested a living from the harsh down east land. As in the shift from "Corn

²⁰ Peter E. Palmquist, *A Bibliography of Writings by and about Women in Photography, 1850-1990* (Arcata, California: Eureka Printing, 1994).

²¹ Kent C. Ryden, *Landscape With Figures: Nature and Culture in New England* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2001).

Mothers to Puritan Fathers,” Stanwood herself incorporated a visual consciousness of the land, one that Merchant so aptly describes in *Ecological Revolutions*.²² In the down east Maine of Stanwood’s childhood, the landscape of declension was the setting for her growing awareness of her environment. When she later moved to Providence as an adolescent, Stanwood learned from the city landscape how nature could be rationalized into city blocks and experimented upon for food production. Stanwood’s experiences of the eastern forest, city, and sea offer the historian a new orientation in environmental history, which until now has been derived, more often than not, from western United States history.

Stanwood’s life as a young girl from the eastern-most state of Maine, her maritime early childhood, and her first experience with nature as commodity gave her an appreciation for its resilience and life-generating properties. This was a natural world that was manipulated by humans: timbered, sailed, extracted, fished, farmed, and industrialized. Her frontier heritage actively played a part in forming her utilitarian ideas about nature even as she lived in the margins of a booming industrial society. Her arrival in Providence signaled a new perspective on how nature could be manipulated for social ends, and the emerging romantic notions about the morally uplifting aspects of nature influenced her education.

Chapter Two examines how the Nature Study movement reinforced the cultural commodification of nature for school children and traces this phenomenon along

²² Carolyn Merchant, *Ecological Revolutions: Nature, Gender, and Science in New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

Stanwood's career path as an art and primary grade school teacher. Stanwood's career brought her under the influence of John Burroughs, a man whose ideas about the "successful nature story" continue to influence nature writing to this day. As Stanwood's teaching career took its toll on her mental health, she came to rely on the benefits of exercise in the outdoors as the remedy for her neurasthenia. Ultimately, she returned to her home in Ellsworth, where she remained for the rest of her life.

When she returned to Ellsworth, Stanwood's bird work gradually became the center of her attention. For about fifteen years she actively studied birds as they courted, nested, reproduced, and migrated. Chapter Three examines the mechanics of Stanwood's work and the physical, mental and social obstacles she faced as she conducted her work. Chapter Four examines Stanwood's work with other scientists and reformers during this time period, when the cross currents of the contradictory ideals of domesticity and reform shaped the political, economic and private lives of women. In its examination of the Progressive era of secular association-building, it explores the context of Stanwood's work by looking at birding groups, the individual careers of some of her contemporaries, and her efforts on behalf of conservation reform. As the Depression deepened and the nation eventually went to war once again, Stanwood's age and social attitudes towards women's nature work curtailed her bird work.

The last and fifth chapter examines Stanwood's writing and photography, investigating its properties as professional or amateur, scientific or popular, and illustrates how the professionalization of science came to shut Stanwood out of further scientific bird

work. This process led Stanwood to write for popular magazines, where she projected her values onto the birds. Within the pages of popular ornithology, Stanwood created a profile of the ideal family life, in which the female was credited with her accomplishments while at the same time she was nurtured and supported while carrying out the important task of launching the next generation. Stanwood's career illustrates how the popular and scientific nature writing traditions were very much interdependent. Simultaneously present in Stanwood's career, both styles of writing are found in the burgeoning array of early twentieth-century publications. Further investigation into the early history of scientific writing, as well as the casual popular nature essay in wide circulation during the early twentieth century, will illuminate the dissemination of popular ideas about nature during this period.

A brief conclusion relates her years when, as a very old woman, Stanwood watched the birds from her dooryard and hosted visitors to her home, Birdsacre. Stanwood's last act of environmental action was signing over her papers, house and land as a sanctuary. This was a coda to her lifetime of caring for birds, and was also a bold prescient step in the direction of land conservation. Stanwood's legacy is a bird rehabilitation center and house museum where contemporary ecotourists can tour the sanctuary and museum, visit with the birds, and walk trails through some of the varied habitat that Stanwood described in her field notes and writing.

"Picturing Nature" describes the career of a woman whose work is located between the arts and sciences, lavishly contributing to each field while it also contributed to the

popularization of nature study. The five chapters follow the chronology of Stanwood's life: they examine the relevant social ideas about nature, women's "place" within nature, Stanwood's own ideas within that context, and how she put those ideas into practice. In Stanwood's case, Progressive ideas, antimodernism, and two world wars altered these responses at a time when the traditions of education and conservation that we live with today were being formed. Stanwood's gender, in combination with her ideas about nature and its role as a site for culture, shaped her response to her need to earn a living.

These chapters ask to what extent Stanwood's commodification of nature was a gendered notion, and about the various forms of that commodification. For Stanwood, because she was a woman, work with nature was a cultural performance within particular areas deemed acceptable for her gender at that time—the education of children, particular types and methods of conservation, ornithology (but only during a brief window of time until it was "professionalized,") and the creation of commodities made from nature (bird photographs and writing). Within this realm, her work in crafts, nature writing and photography enabled Stanwood to earn her living in a socially acceptable manner. In pursuing these activities, however, Stanwood broke new ground, inventing a new format of bird life history and pioneering the candid live bird photograph. Stanwood's turn toward nature as resource for economic support was a natural outgrowth of the gendered familial and cultural tradition of the disruption and utilization of nature that was passed to her from her family.

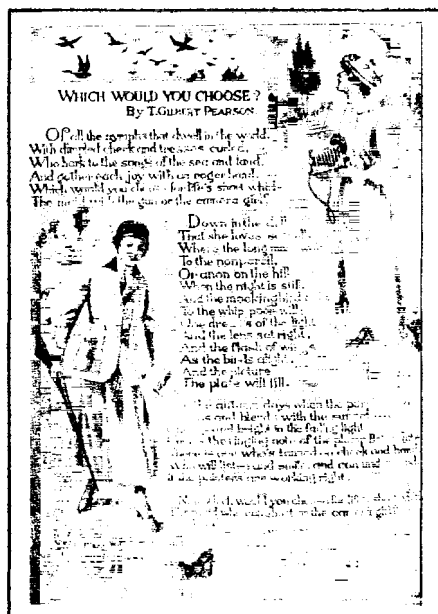


Figure 2. "Which Would You

Chose?" Cameras in sport became increasingly popular with the rise of the conservation ethic. *Bird Lore* 17 (June 1915): 190.

Cordelia Stanwood was not just a typical "Camera Girl" such as the one so coyly portrayed in the 1915 issue of *Bird Lore* (see Figure 2).²³ Stanwood's camera work was serious business and not

sport. Her blind, which housed the photographic setup for Stanwood's bird pictures, also highlights how technology has changed women's worlds—an obvious fact when it comes to indoor plumbing, the sewing machine, cook stove, vacuum, and central heat—yet is disregarded when it comes to understanding the popularization of science. In its use of the camera and the typewriter, Stanwood's work demonstrates how women, while staying within the strictures of domesticity, could also use newly innovated tools to their own advantage in non-domestic ways. As she entertained and educated the contemporary public about birds with the engaging bird photographs she so painstakingly created, Stanwood inspired photographers such as Eliot Porter, in whose introductions to his numerous books attest, to innovate new photographic techniques.

²³ T. Gilbert Pearson, "Which Would You Chose?" *Bird Lore* 17 (June 1915): 190.

“Picturing Nature” relies on the forty years of field notes, informal autobiography, scattered correspondence, scrapbooks and photographic archives at the Stanwood Wildlife Sanctuary. Most, if not all, of Stanwood’s scientific and popular articles, numbering over one hundred, have been located. More of her letters were located in the correspondence files of the Smithsonian, the American Museum of Natural History, and in private collections across the country. Histories of the communities of Ellsworth, Maine and Providence, Rhode Island, provide a snapshot of her world. Most of the annual reports of the schools where she was educated and taught create a portrait of education and its development in the early twentieth century, when ideas and debates about teaching and its content were lively and spirited.

Close examination of Stanwood’s life has illuminated the importance of teachers to the environmental consciousness. It is significant that a generation of teachers such as Stanwood, teaching children and other teachers about nature, influenced women that followed, such as Rachel Carson, to break new ground in environmental awareness. Similarly, Stanwood’s contribution to the genre of popular ornithology and her intimate nature photography represent a body of work that has been understudied, its influence on popular thinking overlooked. Stanwood’s work exemplifies how the rich traditions of art and science together lent energy to the gospel of environmental consciousness. The investigation into the life and work of Cordelia Stanwood brings a broader understanding of how women and nature interact, in process illustrating how one

woman, single and economically struggling, managed to transcend the social limits of domesticity to bring the intimate habits of birds to the public eye.

Chapter One

A SENSE OF PLACE: ELLSWORTH, MAINE AND PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND, 1865-1893

Cordelia Stanwood lived during an extraordinary time of social and environmental change. When she was born in 1865, the Civil War had only just ended and women had demonstrated their capabilities for public service with their work in the Sanitary Commission. As the country recovered from the war, it embarked on a journey of development that dramatically altered the geographic, political, and environmental conditions of the country. In Stanwood's northeastern corner of the country in Ellsworth Maine, the forests were being systematically harvested to provide railroad ties, bobbins, barrel shooks, shingles and raw lumber. Rivers were harnessed for their power, damming once-fertile fisheries. Off its Atlantic shores, schooners still billowed their sails in commercial trade, but they would soon be widely replaced with steamboats, and their trade routes would be outpaced by the railroads on land and by steam power on the sea. Maine's agriculture was in decline as farmers, having harvested the timber and depleted the marginally fertile soil, went west for better farming opportunities, or to the factories for wages.

For the young Cordelia Stanwood, this changing natural world was the setting for intimacy, family, regional and national identity, livelihood, and nourishment. Stanwood's most prominent childhood memories were of adventures in the out of doors, rather than of events within the parlor.¹ She enjoyed the woods and fields just as much as she did the sea. One of her earliest memories took place in the natural world, where she experienced the happy intimacy of family. She liked to gather strawberries in the fields and a mess of dandelion greens for her grandmother Stanwood, who lived with the family off and on until her death in 1877, when Stanwood was twelve years old. Through her Grandmother Stanwood, young Cordelia was introduced to the nineteenth century's female world's inner core of kin:

Another custom which my Grandmother ...had was to go out to spend the day with a friend. She would take me by the hand to walk with her to Mrs. Charles DeSaittre's farm or Mrs. Lemuel Jordan's. I enjoyed going to Mrs. Jordan's particularly because she had a daughter, a young lady named Sarah who would take me to walk in the woods.²

These woodland walks brought together two pleasures for Stanwood: the world of friendship with friends and family, and the beauty of nature. While many women only inhabited the domestic world of the parlor, Stanwood's earliest relationships were framed in the context of the natural world. Her natural world is best understood by envisioning a

¹Cordelia J Stanwood, undated autobiography, Stanwood House Museum, Stanwood Wildlife Foundation, Ellsworth, Maine. Subsequent references will be abbreviated "SWF."

² Ibid.

place dappled by shadows cast from the human world: the gendered kitchen door of the nineteenth century woman, the extractive workplace of the woodsman, the pastureland of the farmer, or the open seaways of the merchant sea captain. It was on these first walks in the woods, not the parlor, kitchen or hearthside, where Stanwood experienced the linking of feelings between nature and intimacy, history and personal life. Here, she first experienced intimacy with nature:

A roaring little stream ran through the Jordan land and poured into the Union River. Once there had been a mill over the brook. Some of the huge timbers still served as a footway across Card Brook. The mosses in the woodland were numerous and luxuriant. Sarah would take a basket and we would gather a beautiful selection of mosses to arrange in deep plates when we returned home.³

Stanwood's description of her childhood park reveals that it was anything but a wilderness retreat, an unspoiled or pristine landscape; rather it was a reservoir of human culture and human history, revealing man's alteration of it for his own purposes—mills that had become abandoned following the first settlers in the Ellsworth area. This playground forest's age, structure and composition were shaped by the landscape's history of lumbering and agricultural use and its subsequent abandonment.

The nature of Stanwood's nature should not be confused with commonly held, current day ideas about nature: the wide open spaces of the west, or terrains that seem

³ Ibid.

untouched by human hands.⁴ The landscape of Stanwood's childhood in the late nineteenth century was one deeply imprinted by human intervention. Its forests were lumber resources, its fields created by the labor of human hands. Commercial schooners and dories rimmed its beaches; shingles, staves and sawdust choked its rivers. The duration of this human tampering was long enough so that young Stanwood was already witnessing the decay of the human fingerprint in rotting mills and breached dams. From an early age, Stanwood played in this "natural" landscape that was thickly embroidered by New England culture, its geographic contours shaped by the hand of man. For Stanwood, there was no artificial distinction between "nature" and "culture"—unlike today, nature was not set aside as a place to be untouched by human hands. Stanwood's forests, fields, coastlines and oceans were economic resources for her family and the community. From the time she was a child, nature had a history, and its boundaries were defined by how far she could walk, the distant horizon of the cleared field, or how far her father could sail.

Nature, then, for Stanwood was altered, relative, intimate and close at hand. It was a nature shaped by time, as much as a process as a place. Her nature was peopled with family and friends in the process of playing and working. The farmhouse her family occupied had originally been built by her uncle Peleg, was later bought and rebuilt by her father, and was the family's refuge from the rigors of labor at sea and in the mills. Located on Tinker's

⁴ Kent C. Ryden, "Comments: Environment and Imagination in New England," (paper presented at the annual meeting of the New England Popular Culture Association, Portland, Maine) November, 1999.

Hill, it overlooked the city of Ellsworth, which was located along both sides of the Union River at the head of tide. Ellsworth was clustered around the bridge across the river, the low point in the surrounding landscape.⁵ A conduit for logs, shingles, sawdust waste and other detritus, the Union River ran about north through south through the town. It is the principal feature of the watery Hancock County, with a drainage area of 496 square miles, containing 43 streams and 51 ponds that were home to a large population of wildlife. Hancock County itself has a large share of inland water, bays, and swamps. Of the 1,092,731 acres in Hancock County, 64,454 acres are inland water, lakes and ponds, and 83,796 acres are bay and swampland. Stanwood's family frequently fished and tramped the countryside surrounding Ellsworth itself, the city covering the largest area in Maine with territory at 59,635 acres or 93.18 square miles, which contains 5,395 acres of inland water.⁶ Near the Stanwood homestead, Card's Brook tumbled below Tinker's Hill and had been the site for settlers' early sawmills. Because of its location on the Union River and its easy access to the sea, Ellsworth was an opportune spot for trade during the nineteenth century, and was the launching point for the Stanwood family's maritime trade. The lumber industry in Ellsworth had at one time operated as many as thirteen mills, and the shipbuilding industries churned out renowned vessels at a steady rate. Ellsworth was famous as the second largest lumbering port in the state when it peaked in the 1850s and 1860s. With the

⁵ Herbert T. Sillsby III, "Looking Backward: Old Forest Description," *Ellsworth American*, July 4, 1996, 12.

⁶ Herbert T. Sillsby III, "Looking Backward: Hancock County Landscape," *Ellsworth American*, July 18, 1996, 12.

advent of the industrial age and the Civil War, however, Ellsworth began a long decline.⁷ Stanwood grew up watching the landscape change as nature took back the alterations that human hands had made. Because the early nineteenth century settlers had expected their settlement to expand into a thickly settled community, they would be astounded at the changes in the landscape: the paved roads and bridges, the dams on the Union River, the changes in forestation, and the lack of burnt land that was so prevalent throughout the nineteenth century. Moreover, they would be surprised at the scant population. By the time Stanwood came of age, many of the nearby mills and their nearby homes had fallen into disuse, abandoned and rotting relics pitting the secondary growth forest.

During Stanwood's childhood, Ellsworth was beginning its long transition from its most populated and deforested era.⁸ The terrain of Ellsworth was in a slowly altering state throughout Stanwood's childhood, gradually becoming reforested and reclaimed by wild, unchecked growth. This reforestation was the key process that attracted Stanwood to the outdoors. Stanwood remarked in her field notes, "If one had [not] lived in her early childhood amid the desolation of cut-downs with their unsightly stumps and brush heaps, naked, head-less tree trunks, and the piled up rock deposits of ancient glaciers, he could

⁷ Scott Conners, Lawrence Haskell, and Gordon Donaldson, "Ellsworth, Maine 1902-1912: An Original History, 1983," typewritten manuscript, Special Collections, Fogler Library, University of Maine, Orono, Maine. 11, 16.

⁸ Sillsby, "Hancock County Landscape," 12.

better appreciate the wildness of the [white-throat's] song and its surroundings."⁹ As a child Stanwood witnessed the desolation timbering caused, and the depravity of its destructiveness led to her to celebrate in the land's later rejuvenation as she grew to adulthood.

The natural world was also the setting for her family's occupation. Stanwood's father, Roswell Leland Stanwood, was a merchant sailing captain. During her early childhood, until she was almost eight years old, young Cordelia, her mother and baby sisters accompanied him on his voyages.

Stanwood experienced the thrill of sailing on the open ocean as well as the terror of storms that threatened the lives of everyone on board. She learned to appreciate the natural treasures held in the ocean deep when she dropped a line overboard as entertainment, only to hook a dolphin. The sea, a wild place subject to unpredictable weather, was the transportation avenue for her father's livelihood, but it was also the setting for family outings and adventures:

At one time, Father owned a small sailboat. To our delight but to Mother's dismay he offered to take us children and two of the neighboring children for a boat ride one day. As it happened there was a brisk wind when we set out and the boat skimmed over the waves gloriously. To my Mother at home, this fine breeze seemed like a hurricane. Father caught several small fish and stopped at Shady Nook on the Union River to dress them. At a farmhouse, he bought some milk, and after kindling a nice fire of driftwood, cooked a most delicious fish chowder. We famished youngsters felt sure we never had tasted so good a chowder before.¹⁰

⁹ Stanwood, "Bird Notebook," May 6, 1911, SWF.

¹⁰ Stanwood, "Autobiography," SWF.

In this childhood adventure, nature--the sea, the river, the fish--was the source of adventure and nourishment for the child.

Fastening the natural world together was the world of the family. Stanwood descended from an unusual combination of families. Her Canadian mother was the granddaughter of George Leonard, a loyalist founder of New Brunswick, and her father the grandson of Job Stanwood, who lost his arm in the Battle of Louisburg in the French and Indian Wars. Job's son Solomon was a Patriot soldier in the Revolution--the two sides of her family representing the divergence of class and political allegiances that characterized the colonial era and the American Revolutionary War. Her father's family's history was embedded in the local history of the area: the land around Eden, Maine, which bounds present-day Mount Desert Island, and Cranberry Isles in Penobscot Bay were settled in the early eighteenth century by the Stanwood families. Stanwood's father was born at Great Head, Mt. Desert in 1830. In 1837, Solomon Bradstreet Stanwood sold his land around Great Head that included his hundred acres, and the farm bequeathed to him by his sister Bethiah. Solomon Stanwood then moved to Ellsworth, where he bought one half of the Richard Tinker property on Tinker's Hill, where he was a master ship-builder. According to her memoirs, Cordelia described her grandfather as having had one weakness: he would invest every cent he earned in a vessel--and it so happened that every vessel that he had an interest in went out to sea, was overtaken by a storm, and sank. In those days, few vessels were routinely insured. Gradually the family fortunes waned; Stanwood's family story is the story of declension as the family fortunes, along with Ellsworth's declining prosperity,

gradually ebbed away just as surely as the pastures surrounding the house on Tinker's Hill sprang up with pines and slowly reforested.

Impatient with life on land, Roswell Stanwood had shipped off as a cook's mate in Boston when he was eleven years old, learning his way around the vessels that sailed the world in the early nineteenth century. Clever, strong, intelligent and determined, he learned navigation in New York and gained a reputation as a trustworthy man. By the time he was shipping coal out of Cape Breton during the United States Civil War, he had gained a reputation as an honest and reliable sea captain, if not a rich one. There he met the Bowns of Sydney, who served in the port's customhouse and had leased the coalmines, as well as the related Ingraham family who owned two of the principal stores in Sydney. They liked him and invited him to Eskasoni, where he met Cordelia's mother, Margaret Susan (Maggie) Bown, daughter of Henry Vincent and Maria Jane Leonard Bown of Sydney and Eskasoni Cape Breton, who was born at Sydney on September 4, 1841. The Bown family of Sydney was long established from the Canadian Maritime Provinces. They were said to have come from France to England in the 16th or 17th century, and were Huguenot Protestants--they had initially migrated to England from France to escape persecution. The name of the family at that time was DeBowen, which in time became Bown. From these two leading Sydney families Cordelia's mother was raised in an atmosphere of educated and genteel Canadian maritime society. Margaret Susan Bown and Capt. Roswell Leland Stanwood were married September 4, 1864 in the Bown home.

Maggie Bown Stanwood had married expecting a life of adventure as a sea captain's wife. Those adventurous maritime years did not reach her expectations, however; she did not take to the sea and was often ill, probably because she was pregnant most of the time. She also did not think highly of raising little daughters on the deck of a ship or as itinerants in a New York City boarding house. When Cordelia was about six or seven, the family returned to the house on Tinker's Hill, the home base from which her father sailed in trade seasonally along the northeast coast of the United States. It was in the small farmhouse overlooking the city of Ellsworth that Cordelia learned needlework and family lore at her grandmother Stanwood's knee, and in its surrounding acres that she explored pastures, woods and streams.

From her Stanwood grandmother, Cordelia also learned the ways of her father's ancestors in living close to the land, and was proud of their pioneer heritage in Eden, Maine. Earlier Stanwood generations had migrated to Mt. Desert Island from Massachusetts. On this far-flung outpost, most commodities were those grown, harvested, hunted, cultivated or crafted by hand; a proficient hand at needlework had been a necessity for every woman. The tradition of the close-knit community, which grew in this era and environment, persisted into Stanwood's childhood. Despite these harsh conditions, women's education was important in the Stanwood family, and it was also esteemed by her maternal Bown relatives. Her Stanwood grandmother told her that her own grandmother, Martha Bradstreet, was a woman of uncommon education on Cranberry Isles, and that she had even written poetry. Cordelia's grandmother had taught her to read by showing her the

words for the pictures and drawings of things she loved: trees, flowers, and the creatures in the land and sea. From her early experience as a sea captain's child, she had already seen many of those in the sea, and she recognized the figures her grandmother drew for her. Just as she had shared intimacy with her family in the context of nature, it was the natural world that attracted young Stanwood to unlock the mystery of reading.

During her childhood she was intermittently enrolled in Ellsworth primary schools, usually during the summer or fall term when there were fewer students.¹¹ Although Ellsworth was a dynamic shipping center, its citizens did not deem it necessary to build a high school during the period that Stanwood came of age to attend. Stanwood's family had long associations in Providence, Rhode Island where her aunt had settled and married. The larger, more sophisticated community of Providence offered young Stanwood the opportunity to receive the education that could prepare her as a teacher, an occupation that she sought.

Providence was a booming industrial community whose growth had been supported by water-powered manufacturing mills since the early nineteenth century. Its population had grown steadily during the nineteenth century, with an accompanying growth and sophistication in its educational institutions. Moreover, it boasted Brown University and the First Baptist Church in America, both venerable institutions. Aunt Cordelia had invited her to live with her and her husband while she attended school in Providence.

¹¹ Chandler S. Richmond, *Beyond the Spring: Cordelia Stanwood of Birdsacre*, New and rev. ed. (Ellsworth, ME: Latona Press, 1989), 11.

Stanwood's mother was ambitious for her daughters and wished them to obtain a high quality education, and wanted her eldest daughter to go to school in the city.¹² Despite the arrival of a new baby, she generously encouraged young Stanwood to go to Providence in 1879, although the assistance with the added domestic chores her daughter might have provided would certainly have been welcome. The entire family prepared for young Stanwood's departure to Providence and spent the summer sewing her new clothes.

Although in the early nineteenth century eighth grade had traditionally marked the end of formal education for young women, gradually during the middle decades of the nineteenth century a new culture of intelligence for women grew. More and more women sought a formal education beyond eighth grade. The early tradition of women's limited education had roots that went deep into history several hundred years. After the Puritan banishment of Anne Hutchinson, education for women was discouraged. It was not until the widespread influence of Locke's enlightenment theories that opened the way for innovative training for the young, that education for women became understood as essential training for those in the middle to upper classes. Although awareness of education's value had feminist implications, it was not until almost 1800, when Mary Wollstonecraft declared that women's first duty was to themselves, and that duty included education, that women's education became a goal. After the Revolution, although the citizen was the foundation for the new republic, the education of women was still left out of the formal equation. Female education grew from enlightenment thinking, rather than from any

¹²Stanwood, "Autobiography," SWF.

notions of feminist advancement. Women's education gradually became linked to the republican ideal, an ideal that promoted an educated citizenry, and it was republican motherhood that furnished a utilitarian motive for educating women. This meant that the nation needed teachers.

The academy became the first form of education for women, with colleges for women succeeding them by 1850. Here again utility was the underlying motive, for increasingly women were finding occupation as teachers and they required additional training in order to qualify themselves. As the minority of females who acquired an education increased to a sizable, but still quite small number, the issue of access to education came to the forefront, with Emma Willard and others publicly addressing the issue. The new individualism for women led the way for the introduction of a new phase of life for young women between girlhood and marriage; this was a time when education or paid employment became acceptable. Education provided a new avenue with which women could broaden their horizons.

With the Morrill Land Act establishing land grant colleges in 1862, the widespread establishment of teaching training or Normal Schools, improved educational access for women. The accompanying reevaluation of society strengthened women's hopes for advancement through education.¹³ The effect of this change in social attitudes is clear in the course of Stanwood's life and her family's decision to send her to Providence to be

¹³ Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

educated. She told her Aunt Cordelia, "I have planned to earn my living by teaching."¹⁴ Stanwood's vision of a career as a teacher led her to Providence, one of the oldest of the republic's communities, and one that led the country in religious freedom, industrialization, and social reform such as abolitionism. Its urban schools were well developed social institutions led by the community's elected male leaders. As Stanwood was educated and prepared to become a teacher herself, she was constantly exposed to new ideas about society and education.

Leaving Ellsworth to go to Providence meant many dramatic changes and challenges for fourteen-year-old Stanwood. Transportation involved taking a boat alone from Bucksport to Boston, a subway through Boston, and the train from Boston to Providence. As she wrote in her memoirs, for Stanwood's mother and aunt, this was the time for a girl to leave the woodlots, fields and shores of down east Maine to get an education. "By the time that the peaches and grapes in Uncle Oliver's yard were ripe, I reached Providence and was ready to enter Federal Street Grammar School," she wrote in her memoirs.¹⁵ Moving to Providence to live with her aunt also meant learning to live in a completely different household, especially the new and strange urban environment. The transition to a new school also brought challenges: "I ranked 30 in a class of 60. I was older than most of the pupils and very sensitive about it. In the following examination, I stood 8, I think, and very soon, I was promoted to the next class." The new school left a

¹⁴ Stanwood, "Autobiography," SWF.

¹⁵ Ibid.

deep impression on Stanwood, but the difference between the landscapes of Providence and Ellsworth was equally dramatic.

As we walked up Broadway I noticed the dust on the leaves of the beautiful linden trees which lined the street and as we neared the house the heavy odor of the Concord grapes which were ripening on the arbors and trellises....2,000 feet did not make a very large garden plot, still there were arbors, and trellises covered with different varieties of rose bushes, and grape vines, and beds of gay geraniums, and luxuriant peach and pear trees. It distressed me to see huge ripe peaches fall and burst on the garden walks.¹⁶

The landscape of urban Providence seemed overblown with produce and rich growth, in spite of its built surroundings. This was very different from the stark landscape of the heavily forested, rocky field around her home in Ellsworth. In Providence, nature provided lush ornament to the man-made, urban environment.

Stanwood was anxious to go to Providence, however. She settled quickly in the genteel home on 80 Broadway with her father's sister Cordelia and her aunt's husband, Oliver Johnson. Johnson was an ambitious man who had launched a paint business during the burgeoning growth period of Providence when its early mills were under construction. From his beginnings as a druggist, he had learned sufficient chemistry to develop specific paint types suitable for mills and factories. His interests extended beyond his business, however; his optimism about science as the path toward social improvement led him to dabble in experimental agriculture, animal husbandry, and beekeeping at his family farm, Natankett Farm, in Coweset Bay in East Greenwich, Rhode Island. Johnson also let the

¹⁶ Ibid.

farm as a summer resort to Rhode Island Senator Nelson B. Aldrich. Oliver Johnson took young Stanwood to the farm on outings for fresh fruits, vegetables and seafood. "It was a wonderful resort for clam dinners," Stanwood wrote in her memoirs.¹⁷ Johnson's leadership in his agricultural endeavors was reflected in his membership in the standing committee of the Rhode Island Society for the Encouragement of Domestic Industry. From her uncle, Stanwood first developed a scientific curiosity about the natural world to which she was so deeply attracted. This interest was complimented by her education in Providence.

Stanwood's educational curriculum reflected the evolving education standards, practices and theories of the period. Providence's school system was under the jurisdiction of elected ward leaders and thus was particularly subject to popular opinion and patronage; the school system's teachers were hired by these popularly elected leaders rather than by the professional staff of the school. Curriculum was also subject to the vagaries of popular opinion and varied in small ways from year to year. Both boys and girls were divided into three tracks: Classical, English, and the English and Scientific schools. Stanwood graduated from the Girl's English school, which consisted of 59 female students who had studied philosophy, algebra, composition, history, botany, Latin, English literature, rhetoric, geometry, trigonometry, natural philosophy, French and chemistry. Latin and composition courses were taught every year; the others were taught several times over the course of the four-year high school. Stanwood took several elective botany classes that

¹⁷ Ibid.

emphasized taxonomy. Girl's English generally prepared the female student for teaching, while the Classical School was intended to prepare either the male or female student for college education. The English and Scientific school, composed of both boys and girls, comparable in many ways to Stanwood's English High school, differed in the inclusion of mechanical drawing for the boys and bookkeeping for the girls. This curriculum difference points to an upwardly mobile, vocational emphasis that was intended for training working-class students for clerical work or manufacturing. Most of the graduates in Stanwood's Girl's English class applied for teaching positions and were encouraged by principal Sarah Doyle, who was ambitious for her female students.

Stanwood lived in Providence with her aunt and uncle for seven years. When she graduated from Girl's English High School in 1886, Stanwood's class led both the Arbor Day and 250th Roger Williams's anniversary celebrations that were held in combination. On April 30, 1886 at Roger Williams Park, the exercises included the planting of three trees, one for each high school, and were accompanied by addresses and a poem. Foreshadowing her interest in nature study, Stanwood addressed the community with her speech "The Language of Trees" for the event.¹⁸ An increasingly popular event that

¹⁸ "Exhibition, Providence High School Wednesday, June 23, 1886," (Providence: Providence Press, 1886), Rhode Island Historical Society Special Collections, Providence, Rhode Island.

included participation by the schools, community groups, and city government, Arbor Day in Providence become popular in 1885, the year before Stanwood's graduation.¹⁹

In addition to Stanwood's speech, other students addressed such themes as "Literature and Nature," "The Value of Forests," "The Significance of Arbor Day," and an extract from Bryant's "Forest Hymn." The trees were dedicated in honor of Sarah Doyle, English teacher and principal in the High School from 1873 to 1876, who led the community in social reform, promoting such things as Arbor Day and higher education for women.

Following her graduation in 1886, Stanwood went home to Ellsworth hoping to get a teaching position there. She worked with her former Sunday School teacher Lucy Phelps, who held Sunday School meetings in the little red schoolhouse, and assisted Stanwood in her search for a job. She asked Cordelia to help her at the school, which meant that Stanwood tended to the work of keeping the schoolhouse neat, fetching the wood and keeping up the fire, which was "no small chore."²⁰ In return, Phelps tutored her French.

¹⁹ Library of Congress, "The First Arbor Day," <<http://memory.loc.gov.ammem/today/Apr10.html>> September 27, 2002. Considered an important part of conservation chronology, Arbor Day first took place on April 10, 1872 in Nebraska, the brainchild of Julius Sterling Morton (1832-1902), a Nebraska journalist and politician originally from Michigan. Morton felt that Nebraska's landscape and economy would benefit from the wide-scale planting of trees. In the years following that first Arbor Day, Morton's ideas spread to all the states so that by 1907, Arbor Day was observed in every state in the Union, principally through school programs. School children were urged, through these celebrations, to consider the planting of a tree as a patriotic, even pious act, as well as a sound investment and a contribution to community ethics.

²⁰ Stanwood, "Autobiography," SWF.

Stanwood tried for a position in Ellsworth but it did not materialize. She then applied for and received a position as teacher-in-training at the Messer Street Teacher Training School in Providence.

When Stanwood began her teacher training at the Messer Street School, the feminization of the profession was well underway. Although male schoolmasters were common during the early nineteenth century, increasingly towns in New England began to hire middle class, unmarried women after they completed their own schooling. Towns preferred them to men because they lacked familial obligation, could be paid less, and were more available. In spite of this, school officials still considered women inferior to male teachers, usually assigning women to the summer sessions (which were shorter and paid less) and the men to the long, more prestigious and remunerative winter sessions. Nineteenth century labor conditions facilitated the feminization of teaching; demand for instructors rose due to population growth and school reform, and the traditional high turnover for teachers exacerbated this situation. A ready labor supply appeared with an increased number of well educated, middle-class women, who, since many other professions excluded them, turned to the classroom as the primary alternative for their talents. The oversupply depressed salaries, and the drive to maintain low cost school budgets kept their wages low.²¹

²¹ Richard J. Altenbaugh, editor. "Introduction," *The Teacher's Voice: A Social History of Teaching in Twentieth-Century America* (Bristol, Pennsylvania: The Falmer Press, Taylor & Francis Inc., 1992), 9.

The cult of domesticity reinforced this situation. Extolling the presumed inherent nurturance, piety, virtue and submission of women, it ensured a favorable cultural environment for the entrance of females into teaching. Through her ubiquitous writings and teaching, long before the 1880s Catharine Beecher redefined the sex of the American teacher, envisioning teaching as an exclusively female occupation in which women would exert their moral influence to educate tomorrow's republican citizens. As secretary of the first public school system in the country, Horace Mann officially promoted this notion, particularly in the case of young children. Neither Beecher nor Mann intended teaching as a career but rather as a step in the life of a young woman before marriage, at which time the young woman would stop teaching to devote herself to her family. During her teaching years as she was looking for her husband, the teacher's educational work was pliantly conducted under the male superintendent who led an expanded, increasingly bureaucratized and hierarchical school system.

All of these factors worked together to create a profound transformation in education, so that by the time Cordelia entered the Messer Street Training School, most female teachers taught a median of four years before marrying, and men an average of seven before they went on to more lucrative professions. Teaching itself was not considered a career goal; for men, teaching was a stepping-stone on an upward professional path, but for women teaching was viewed as a short interval of public employment that was

preface to the career of marriage and motherhood.²² This was not Stanwood's perception, however, and she worked hard despite illness so that she could accomplish her goal of becoming a teacher. During the year that she was at the Messer Street School, Cordelia became ill with a cold that dragged on, and she felt pressure from her Aunt to relinquish her goals:

Dr. Hall the family physician said to Aunt Cordelia, "Mrs. Johnson, if your niece continues that course in teaching, I think she will have consumption before the year is out." Aunt Cordelia told me, and I said, "I have planned to earn my living by teaching. I can do no otherwise than to continue the course." Aunt Cordelia was an excellent nurse. All kinds of helpful medicines she poured down my throat. I thoroughly enjoyed the work.²³

Stanwood was determined to have a career; she desired to have a good income, and wished to live independently. Through perseverance, she completed the teacher-training course, earlier than most, in one short year. She then successfully obtained a position at the Plain Street School in Providence, when there was fierce competition, which points to her excellence as a teacher. Yet even this training did not long qualify her for the highest salaries. In order to earn a livable wage and live independently, Stanwood was constantly under pressure to improve her skills and learn new pedagogy. Even though she had received advanced training to become a teacher, in order to remain competitive and increase her salary beyond bare subsistence levels, she was continually required to further

²² Altenbaugh, "Introduction," *Teacher's Voice*, 10.

²³ Stanwood, "Autobiography," SWF.

her training.²⁴ In order to keep their positions for even a second year, school administrators expected all teachers to improve their methods through summer study at their own expense. Summer institutes, such as the Martha's Vineyard Summer Institute, which was staffed and run by senior teachers, offered courses from one to five weeks for two subjects and cost about \$7.00 per week, although there were group discounts and reduced prices for taking combinations of courses. In addition, participants had to pay for board and lodging which cost from \$6.00 to \$10.00 per week. For a teacher who earned \$600 per annum, this was not an inexpensive investment. During the early years of teaching in Providence, Stanwood opted to attend the Martha's Vineyard Summer Institute, held during July and August, which was "established for the purpose of affording teachers and others the opportunity of combining the study of some specialty with the rest and recreation of a delightful and *inexpensive* seaside resort."²⁵ Founded as a collaborative effort by leading teachers of the day who wished to advance the profession, it was composed of both men and women.

Going to the Martha's Vineyard Summer Institute meant that Stanwood was introduced to a new idea about nature, as well as yet another environment: that of the specially constructed "city" located in the midst of nature—the summer recreation and health resort which had become popular among city-dwellers. In the tradition of the earlier form of summer recreation that boasted an educational or self-improvement component,

²⁴ Altenbaugh, "Introduction," *Teacher's Voice*, 11.

²⁵ *Martha's Vineyard Summer Institute* (Boston: Everett Press Company, 1896) Italics in the original.

and created with the goal of self-improvement of both body and mind, the Institute offered the new curriculum of nature study for teachers at this interesting “city” setting on Martha’s Vineyard. Teachers often took advantage of these “self-improving” vacations just as other Americans did. By the late nineteenth century, summer travel had become an established part of life for wealthy northeastern city dwellers, and increasingly close-to-home places offered vacations to those with less time and money to spend. For most of the latter half of the nineteenth century, a growing number of Americans of limited means had been finding ways to take a week or two away from the cares of their city lives, boarding at farms or lodging houses in rural areas, or erecting “tent cities” or cottages along the coast. These tourists and the people who catered to them created entirely new tourist industries; the resorts were characteristically inexpensive and designed to fulfill the vacationers’ need for entertainment, social events, and education that would offer them the opportunity to fulfill their aspirations.

At Martha’s Vineyard, a depression in the whaling industry had left islanders badly in need of income, and seeking economic relief through developing the tourism industry, the camp meeting at Wesleyan Grove was born. It reached its pinnacle in 1859, and rapidly grew to an established city of small cottages where families rusticated and devoted themselves to Methodist worship.²⁶ By the 1890s, Cottage City had been overlaid by a sophisticated infrastructure of large buildings devoted to the professional-class vacationer

²⁶ Dona Brown, *Inventing New England: Regional Tourism in the Nineteenth Century* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 75-79.

such as teachers. The Martha's Vineyard Summer Institute was held in Cottage City which by then was a group of cottages, with avenues, streets, hotels, churches and places of amusement laid over the earlier camp-meeting resort. It was located at the northeastern extremity of Martha's Vineyard, about five miles from mainland Massachusetts, bordering Vineyard Sound. Facilities included Agassiz Hall, named in memory of the naturalist and teacher, which was the principal building; sixteen classrooms; a dormitory for women (in charge of a competent matron); a dining room; and a new auditorium.²⁷

The Institute's reputation rested on its progressive teaching ideas and methods, and its location on Martha's Vineyard, home to rich marine fauna and flora, attracted many teachers of zoology, botany, or other natural sciences. The Institute hosted nature study courses, photography science, and the New Method of drawing. In its brochure the Institute boasted, "the universal testimony of our students in the past has been that a session at the M.V.S.I. is *restful, invigorating, and healthful*."²⁸ Class instruction took place between nine and eleven in the morning, and in the afternoon between three and five. The middle of the day was set apart for sea bathing and rest. Additional public lectures, receptions, and informal gatherings were given in the Union Chapel. Sea bathing, bicycling, rowing, yachting and fishing facilities and field trips completed the recreational possibilities.

²⁷ Ibid. Agassiz founded the first summer school on the nearby island of Penikese.

²⁸ *Institute*, 12.

Besides the allure of interesting recreation and the opportunity for professional advancement, the Institute also provided a setting for women to work alongside male scientists. As a summer school modeled after Agassiz's Anderson School of Natural History, Martha's Vineyard Summer Institute offered serious study in natural history. In part as a result of women's work at such summer schools, the convention that precluded women from becoming scholars—especially scholars in the natural sciences—began to break down in the 1880s and 1890s.²⁹ For Stanwood, this meant that she was able to pursue seriously her interest in botany, as well learn natural history from the leading innovative scientists of the day, who not only took a vacation at Martha's Vineyard, but were also being paid to teach the pedagogy of their own fields of study to eager learners.

During the summer at Martha's Vineyard, Stanwood was introduced to new methods of teaching drawing and Nature Study. She recalled:

When the teachers were not attending lectures, the warm water at the beach was always alluring. We all spent much time at the shore. Mr. Boyden and his son from Bridgewater Normal School were very interesting in their presentation of nature studies. Mr. Murdock made geography a most fascinating subject to investigate, and Prof. Bailey lectured and sketched on the blackboard in such a fascinating way that we wished he would never stop.³⁰

Stanwood was introduced to a larger professional world that encouraged her interest in nature and art, while at the same time exposing her to numerous professional opportunities.

²⁹ Joan N. Burstyn, "Early Women in Education: The Role of the Anderson School of Natural History," *Journal of Education* 159 (August 1977): 61.

³⁰ Stanwood, "Autobiography," SWF.

In the afternoon teachers interested in drawing worked in the studio under the direction of Mr. Berry and Prof. Henry Turner Bailey sketching botanical specimens to be found in the surrounding woodlands, or studying color work. This opened a new world of society and learning to her, in which networking in professional teaching circles, touring the sights of Martha's Vineyard, and learning the latest teaching methods were combined to create a stimulating experience.

I presented my letter of introduction and enjoyed all my work very much. Mr. Bailey loaned me a valuable book which I found interesting. We spent a day at Gay Head Nantucket where the Indians were selling their pottery and baskets. My notebook was bulging with useful notes. I met many interesting people, and one lady with whom I shared a bathhouse, offered me a position in her private school.³¹

The acquaintances Stanwood made at the Martha's Vineyard Summer Institute were to serve her well in the future. Most important, with nature as the academic focus and physical setting, Stanwood's professional and social lives, as well as her intellectual thoughts and emotions, complimented one another. Her intellectual interest in nature developed serious professional dimensions at the same time as she reinforced her sensation that nature was the appropriate heart of her mental and spiritual world.

The natural world thus took on the character of the workplace. Stanwood made professional contacts, explored nature for its resources in the classroom, and developed new ideas about teaching. Miss S. E. Brassill, Supervisor of Science in Quincy and Cambridge, Massachusetts, assisted Arthur C. Boyden, of the Bridgewater, Massachusetts

³¹ Ibid.

Normal School. Boyden's four-week, twenty lesson course on Nature Study outlined the aim, material, and plan for the year; its general method in the primary, intermediate, and grammar grades; and its relation to drawing, language, literature, geography, and elementary science. It utilized flowers, fruits and seed, and explained the cycle of plant life as well as insects, their development, and relation to plants. Deciduous tree, grasses, grains, evergreen trees and their uses were comprehensively covered in addition to the properties of matter: air, water, common minerals and natural phenomena. The forces of heat and combustion, erosion and soil, crystals and rock, backboned animals, and coal and metals topics were also covered. In each of these areas lessons were suggested for primary and grammar grades, with conferences of teachers of different grades held as time allowed. In addition to the drawing and nature study courses that Stanwood mentioned in her memoirs, the Summer Institute also offered pedagogy, psychology, and photographic science, both optical and chemical.

Stanwood traveled to other landscapes for holidays during some of her other summers off from teaching. During her early teaching years, she saved enough money to travel to Cape Breton to meet her Canadian grandparents for the first time. Her trip there linked family, history, and the natural environment in ways that reinforced the meaning of landscape for Stanwood. She visited the ruins of Fort Louisburg where her great, great grandfather Job Stanwood lost an arm in battle. She saw the reversing falls of the St. John River, and sailed up it as far as Hampstead, where she feasted on a salmon dinner with wild strawberry dessert.

I think the scene was what the poet called “silence rendered visible.” The river was very broad and smooth as glass. There was just enough moisture in the air to prevent a glare. Occasionally a huge raft of immense logs sailed noiselessly down the river, and occasionally the distant tinkle of a cowbell was audible. The air was fragrant with red clover and wild strawberries.³²

This reminiscence was written many years later, indicating that Stanwood never forgot this trip. This pastoral scene evoked an awed yet philosophical response in Stanwood; she was sensitive to the hand of man’s effect on the natural world. Floating on a quiet boat on a Canadian river, Stanwood registered the destruction of the forests, witnessed by the huge log rafts that floated downstream, ironically and queerly quiet as they carried a floating forest past her. Although she titled the scene “silence rendered visible,” paradoxically it was nature rendered silent, and man’s effects rendered audible, that Stanwood heard as she stood on the deck of the ship. In the midst of the river she was able to discern the tinkling of a cowbell from a distant pasture, made audible in a tamed farmland that had been wrested from the forest by the hand of man. In its combination of dramatic yet tamed natural scenery, family history, and vivid sights and sounds, this trip made a deep impression on Stanwood. Once again the natural world, torn asunder by the effects of its demolition by man, served as a font for both her feelings about the human world and reinforced the landscape as the symbol of the manipulated, larger world she inhabited. It was a world controlled and manipulated by humans for their own purposes,

³² Ibid.

one that she must learn to navigate within in order to ensure her own survival. The natural world, writ large as the workplace, became Stanwood's own most important habitat.

Stanwood taught for four years following her training year in Providence, but like many other women, her salary remained low even though in the last year she was appointed Primary Principal of a small school in Providence. This brought her salary to \$700, which in U.S. year 2000 dollars meant that she would earn about \$12,500 -- hardly enough to live on comfortably during this period.³³ She saw little opportunity of advancement despite her efforts to hone her skills and learn the latest teaching methods during the summer institutes. Eager to get ahead and to earn more money, Stanwood took advantage of the growing need for art teachers in the public schools. A colleague of hers, a Miss White, had studied at the Massachusetts Normal Art School for only one year and was earning an annual salary of \$1500. Thinking she might do the same, Stanwood saved her salary, applied for admission, and was accepted at the Massachusetts Normal Art School for the next year. Further training in a specialized field of teaching would give Stanwood the autonomy, not to mention the higher income that she sought for herself. This move indicated a career ambition that had matured since Stanwood first went to Providence to complete her education.

During this last year in Providence, in her traditional role as the eldest daughter, Stanwood also felt pressure to care for her family, but her efforts were short-lived. In 1892,

³³ Economic History Services, *Economic History Resources: How Much is That?* <<http://www.eh.net/ehresources/howmuch/dollarq.php>> July 7, 2002.

Stanwood had brought her ailing youngest sister to live with her in a housekeeping tenement. Despite her best efforts, her sister Maria did not recover from her tuberculosis, and she died in October. The following January, her uncle Oliver died of old age. That June, Stanwood left for Boston.

The expectant young girl who had arrived in Providence thirteen years earlier left a mature woman with career goals. Following her high school education, she had attended a year of teacher training and summer institutes, acquired lifetime friends, buried her uncle and her sister, learned the usefulness of nature study as an education tool, and had experienced firsthand how landscape linked family and social history together. She learned to view the natural world as a workplace laboratory for new teaching techniques. As she gained experience as a teacher, nature and art became vocation. Determined to pursue a career as a special teacher, one that might earn her more money, Stanwood left Providence for Boston to learn specialized art training. Once in Boston, new environments were ahead of Stanwood.

Chapter Two

NATURE'S LESSONS: TEACHING, ART AND NATURE STUDY, 1894-1904

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, teaching represented the “one true and honorable vocation” for middle class women. It was the principal occupation for educated women, even as conditions changed to allow women other possibilities in the workforce.¹ At the end of the nineteenth century, when teaching itself was becoming increasingly bureaucratized and professionalized, headed by male supervisors whose pay scales were beyond the reach of most female teachers, art education became a diversified specialty within the teaching field that offered women the potential of upward mobility.

As part of the new Progressive education movement, nature was often the object of art education for children in the public schools. The Progressive education movement called for new methods of teaching the pupil, who had been reconceived as an individual in need of training appropriate for the new industrial society. Alongside drawing skills, children were also taught about the natural objects they had collected from nature, so that nature study became the new interdisciplinary pedagogical tool in the schools. In this way, Stanwood’s training in art education led her back to the natural world as she combined her training in the latest teaching method—instruction of drawing from nature—with her art instruction training. Increasingly, as a result of her heightened interest in nature itself,

¹ Karen Graves, *Girls’ Schooling During the Progressive Era: From Female Scholar to Domesticated Citizen* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 63.

nature study became the primary focus of Stanwood's work as a teacher. The nature of Stanwood's nature—the changing natural world that had been the setting for intimacy, family, regional and national identity, livelihood, and nourishment—now became a pedagogical tool. Nature became the object of Stanwood's own artwork and intellectual study.

Hopeful of an increased salary, at the age of 28 in October of 1893 Stanwood enrolled in the Massachusetts Normal Art School (now Massachusetts College of Art) and completed class A ("Elementary Drawing"), qualifying her to teach drawing in the Massachusetts public schools in 1894. For the next decade, Stanwood's vision of independence, her talent as an artist, and her knowledge and enjoyment of the outdoors would be employed in this newly professionalized branch of the teaching profession. In the process, Stanwood would learn that she could view the natural landscape in myriad ways. While she was a teacher, she learned to interact with nature through the lens of the artist, the pedagogy of the teacher, the lexis of the natural history student, and the narrative of the history aficionado. Nature became the raw material of the lesson plan.

At the end of the nineteenth century, art teachers were in demand to bring art skills to every home.² This was a period in which Americans embraced the Arts and Crafts movement, placing high spiritual and ethical values upon art.³ Massachusetts Normal Art

² Alicia Craig Faxon and Sylvia Moore, *Pilgrims and Pioneers: New England Women in the Arts* (New York: Midmarch Arts Press, 1987), 35.

³ Erica E. Hirshler, *A Studio of Her Own: Women Artists in Boston* (Boston: MFA Publications, 2001), 25.

School (MNAS), founded by the state in 1873, revolutionized *who* could study art in this country. As a normal school, it was one of the institutions created as part of a movement to improve the quality of teachers, but as a normal *art* school, it was unique in the country. For centuries before then, fine art had been associated with affluence and privilege. At this fledgling school, art was reinterpreted as the legitimate domain of working people. Even now, descendants still reminisce about how the school opened the world of art to the whole family because a great aunt, grandmother, or uncle could study there free.⁴

Since viewers from all the states had sung praises for the display of MNAS student artwork at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, over the next quarter century MNAS alumni became prized everywhere. The field of public school art teaching had burgeoned after Massachusetts's passing of the 1870 Drawing Act, which required that free drawing classes be offered in every city and town with population in excess of ten thousand, had created a demand for art teachers. In 1873 the MNAS had been explicitly created to train aspiring draughts men and women to expand their skills, not only training artists, but also training their teachers. Even after twelve hours of work, men and women would come to these classes in the evening to learn and to practice. By the turn of the century, 121 (12 percent) of the MNAS women graduates had committed themselves to careers as art teachers in order to supervise this new subject of art in classrooms of children from kindergarten through high school, and others taught in evening schools, industrial

⁴Faxon and Moore, *Pilgrims and Pioneers*, 35.

settings, or privately.⁵ Mill cities such as Springfield, Massachusetts had the population to justify free evening drawing classes. Industrial workers who wished to improve their skills enthusiastically embraced these drawing programs.

Determined to improve her skills so that she could command a higher salary as an art teacher, Stanwood took up the academic study of art from the point of view of a teacher, but she already had experience with drawing for most of her life. The world of art was certainly familiar terrain. Stanwood's mother had kept her and her sisters well supplied with art materials as they were growing up.⁶ By the time she and each of her sisters were twelve years old, they were competent artists. The one surviving painting created by young Cordelia, a painting of chickens in a dooryard, displays a practiced though untrained hand. The scene depicts a mother hen who looks on in horrified surprise at her young chicks swimming in a duck pond. It reveals a sense of humor in the genteel medium of oil paints. In depicting this scene, it is as though Cordelia saw herself as one of those chicks who, determined to be independent, sought to learn new skills and to do new and unconventional things. The Massachusetts Normal Art School offered Stanwood the opportunity to swim in new ponds.

When Stanwood went to Boston to train at MNAS, the single woman training as an artist or art teacher in the city was not an unusual phenomenon. Because of the expanding demand for art teachers occasioned by the new art education mandates in Massachusetts,

⁵ Ibid. 35.

⁶ Cordelia J Stanwood, "Autobiography," SWF.

like many other women, Stanwood went to the MNAS in Boston, where it was acceptable for a young woman to rent a room in a boarding house and attend daytime drawing classes, or to train as an art teacher.⁷ In the years between 1870 and 1940, hundreds of women in Boston became professional artists; Boston women were known, and had been recognized for years, for their accomplishments in a variety of artistic disciplines. For twenty years the MNAS, which was located at the corner of Newbury and Exeter streets in Boston, had established its reputation in this city known its artistic milieu.

The importance of MNAS's accomplishments went beyond teacher training, however. Its first director, Walter Smith, had transformed not only individuals and families, but also the direction of opportunities in America. For women, two important consequences of the founding of this public art school were the creation of a framework in which middle-class women could develop skills that enabled them to pursue careers in art related fields, and the social acceptance of female teachers as specialists in the teaching profession. The development of this specialty led to further opportunity in education for women, thus professionalizing a new occupational specialty.

MNAS offered Stanwood a way up the career ladder during a period in which few other paths to upward mobility were available to women. Director Walter Smith wrote, "It seems to me that an infinite amount of good would be done by opening up the whole field of art instruction and art workmanship to the gentler sex.... We shall attain...one great result... We shall double the agency and area of art culture, and provide employment for a

⁷Hirshler, *A Studio of Her Own*, 4.

large number of excellent persons who suffer the lack of it now.” Of a total of 1117 men and women who received certificates for at least one art specialty in the first thirty years of the school, only 219 were men, while 898 were women.⁸ As one of those 898 women, Stanwood hoped to follow the example of her supervisor in her Rhode Island school, Harriet Pierce, who had gained more training to qualify for this specialty, and as a result, earned a higher salary.

The school was “intended to be a training school for teachers of industrial art. The specific aim at present is to prepare instructors to teach and superintend industrial drawing in the schools of the state. It also aims to provide for skill in technical drawing, and for industrial art culture.”⁹ In order to gain admittance to train as an art teacher, Stanwood was required to pass examinations in outline and shaded model drawing and historical ornament. In addition, her entrance into the “Class A” or “drawing study” was based on work that she submitted for approval (such as the current-day portfolio or transcript); she matriculated into a program which consisted of work in geometry, perspective, orthographic projection, projection of shadows, machine drawing, model theory, building construction, historic ornament, and drawing strength.

Stanwood’s study program was “devoted to elementary drawing, and students having completed the work of class A received a diploma certifying that they are qualified

⁸Faxon and Moore, *Pilgrims and Pioneers*, 34.

⁹ Massachusetts Board of Education, *Circular of the Massachusetts Normal Art School, Twentieth Year*, (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1893).

to teach mechanical and architectural drawing. Having completed the work of class A, choice will be given each pupil of beginning a course of study that will fit him especially for teaching and supervising drawing in the public schools, or one that will prepare him to teach the broad subject of industrial art.”¹⁰ The faculty in the Class A program consisted of ten members who taught in various fields related to drawing, ranging from modeling, drawing and painting from antique figures, painting in oil, freehand drawing, drawing in the public schools, descriptive geometry and machine drawing, building construction and architectural design, modeling and casting, design in the round, painting in water color, historic schools of painting, and ship drafting. Stanwood trained for supervising of drawing in the public schools, but did not pursue any further training at MNAS beyond this and Class A.

Inspired by the summer institute sessions in which she heard Henry Turner Bailey’s lectures on the value of art education for children, and familiar with new ideas about the value of art in life generally, Stanwood’s entry into the Massachusetts Normal Art School seemed a logical next step in her career. Henry Turner Bailey, the editor of *School Arts* magazine for fourteen years, was also an influence on teachers throughout the United States. Stanwood was not alone in falling under his influence. By 1912, between thirty and forty thousand teachers relied on the opinions in *School Arts*. One of the guiding principles in Bailey’s work was his love of nature and his desire to open the mind of the pupil to its significance. His enthusiasm for nature study as he conceived it was well

¹⁰ Massachusetts College of Art, *Circular* 3.

known. He emphasized that many decorative units in architecture and ornament, such as the ornamental designs in the classical architecture that Stanwood studied at MNAS, were conventionalized plant forms. He declared: "Study nature for materials and principles. Study historic ornament to see how these have been applied."¹¹ Because of his own genuine love and appreciation for nature, and his appreciation for beauty in natural forms, Bailey advocated drawing directly from natural objects. *School Arts* magazine ran a series of instructions for drawing and painting flowers, leaves, grasses, and all other forms from nature. This served to break teachers away from dependence on cast and two-dimensional copying, and was in step with the larger nature study movement.

In addition to numerous articles about nature in professional teaching magazines such as *School Arts*, Bailey published the book *Tree Folk* containing pencil sketches and informal essays.¹² Its persuasive language and format convinced readers to approach their teaching with an added appreciation for nature. Ultimately, through Bailey's efforts and influence, drawing from nature was formally introduced into Massachusetts schools. This movement took place within the larger nature study movement, a phenomenon that was itself part of the larger Arcadian movement often called the "back to the land" movement in the early twentieth century.¹³ Although teaching primary school or even industrial art seemed a long way from the natural world, as part of the education reform movement,

¹¹ Eleanor Hyde Beaton, "The Contributions of Henry Turner Bailey to Art Education" (Master of Arts Thesis, Boston University, 1945), 15.

¹² Henry Turner Bailey, *The Tree Folk* (Cambridge: Washburn & Thomas, 1925).

Bailey's theories led the teacher out of the classroom and into the outdoors. Bailey's enthusiasm sprang from his devout Baptists beliefs. His love of nature as a kind of neo-Platonism was one that had been transmitted by the Puritans, purified by the Transcendentalists, and disseminated by contemporary nineteenth-century nature writers such as John Muir and John Burroughs.¹⁴ In this way Bailey added a crucial spiritual element to his ambition that children study nature. This proselytizing attitude was infectious; those who heard him speak often left inspired and motivated to put his ideas into practice. These ideas about art training dovetailed well with the science study programs that were already introduced in the schools in Massachusetts in the early 1890s, when Stanwood had first enrolled in Arthur Boyden's courses. Stanwood enthusiastically embraced this pedagogical approach.

Many who contributed to the Arcadian mystique are today only modestly known, but their influence is still felt in our contemporary classrooms. Of similar philosophy as Henry Turner Bailey was Cornell University educator Liberty Hyde Bailey (no relation). Liberty Hyde Bailey felt himself a spokesman for the nature movement, and his writings illustrate something of the fervor of the "nature-lovers." His reputation rested on his career as a teacher of teachers at Cornell. He reached even further than Henry Turner Bailey in his efforts to get Americans outdoors appreciating nature; convinced that city dwellers needed

¹³Peter J. Schmitt, *Back to Nature: The Arcadian Myth in Urban America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969), xxii.

¹⁴Mark Stoll, *Protestantism, Capitalism, and Nature in America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 16.

outdoor life, he turned in 1901 to editing Doubleday, Page's new suburban journal, *Country Life in America*. Integrating inspiration and do-it-yourself directions for the good life in the country, he made that journal the most popular of all suburban periodicals.

Bird-watching, landscaping, and the new interest in city parks seemed proof to Liberty Hyde Bailey that urban America heard the call of the wild, but he particularly feared that city children might lose this call's echo of the country.¹⁵ In 1903, Bailey published *The Nature Study Idea*, a high-water mark in the philosophy of the nature movement. He emphasized the importance of educating the city child about the natural world. "Of late years," he wrote, "there has been a rapidly growing feeling that we must live closer to nature and we must perforce begin with the child. Correctly taught in city schools, summer camps and youth groups, in nature essays and wilderness novels, nature lore could transform first the children and then society. Bailey's philosophy provided many city dwellers with a rationale for the move to the country: "Nature-love tends towards naturalness, and towards simplicity of living. It tends countryward." L. H. Bailey was adamant that nature study in the classroom would raise a generation of peace-lovers: "Its legitimate result is education...its central purpose is to make the individual happy; for happiness is pleasant thinking. The happiness of the ignorant man is largely the thoughts

¹⁵ Schmitt, *Back to Nature*, 16.

born of physical pleasures; that of the educated man is the thoughts born of intellectual pleasure. One way to lessen evil-doing is to interest the coming generation in dandelions.”¹⁶

While Henry Turner Bailey viewed nature as a tool for understanding art, Liberty Hyde Bailey’s enthusiasm for the natural world centered on its beneficial emotional, intellectual, and physical properties. This can be seen as part of the larger idea that nature was the remedy for the deleterious effects of the industrial age that was manifested in the late nineteenth century’s designation as an Age of Nervousness. Concerned with the increasing evidence that cities were bad for one’s mental and physical health, many middle and upper class people were seeking the country not only to improve their physical, but also their mental, condition. They wished that their children not suffer the anxiety and nervousness that they themselves had experienced. Further, many eastern urban dwellers were concerned that they had lost touch with their own rural past. They believed that “rusticating,” nature study, exercise and the fresh country air would benefit both young and old alike. Nature study in the classroom meant that not only would young people learn how to draw by focusing on nature, but they would also would grow up to learn about, understand, appreciate, and later be attracted to, the healthful outdoors.

The pedagogical counterpart of the nature study movement had originated in educational theories emphasizing the importance of each child’s full sensory participation

¹⁶ Liberty Hyde Bailey, “The Nature-Study Idea,” *Country Life in America* (February 1901): 128-9.

in his or her learning, stretching beyond books to learning through experience. Object teaching (drawing from the object at hand, and copying from a book), which became popular in the United States in the latter part of the nineteenth century, was its precursor. Stanwood learned object teaching from Henry T Bailey as he taught it in the summer schools. Teachers used objects from nature to focus their students' attention on the lesson, the core method that Stanwood and her contemporaries espoused and deployed. If, for example, a lesson were about trees, students would actually be able to handle and examine tree limbs, branches, leaves and fruit. They would then draw the parts of the trees. By the beginning of the twentieth century, cross-curriculum nature study such as this was well established in classrooms throughout the nation, especially in elementary schools, where the curriculum was integrated into the natural history of the local community. These were the methods that Stanwood had learned at the summer school, where she learned to teach children through going outdoors, finding specimens, and drawing them while scientifically learning about them. In this way, nature study employed the direct observation of nature across the curriculum. This process was believed to encourage the development of observation and reasoning skills, an innovative alternative to rote learning. Stanwood's experience in community-wide nature study not only inspired her teaching; it was also later to inspire her in her own field observations.

Stanwood's interest in this new method of teaching meant that much of her classroom lesson plans involved nature study as Henry Turner Bailey' instructed, and as Liberty Hyde Bailey philosophized about it. Liberty Bailey's nature study movement

encouraged using nature as the raw material for moral instruction; Stanwood embraced Henry Turner Bailey's pedagogy of nature as the raw material for the art lesson. Stanwood's knowledge of nature study programs and her training in art education reinforced her desire to work from natural objects in order to teach her young charges about drawing. She described her experience later as a teacher in Brookline:

Our next best study was drawing. Miss Green had gotten a permit to go to the public garden in Boston and collect any specimens she needed for her work. She seemed to be unable to get up early in the morning and procure the specimens, so I offered to take her permit and gather specimens for us both....I might ask, "What pupil would like to come to the front seat where the drawing supplies are, and select a specimen and paint it so that Dr. Dutton can see how well and quickly you can draw and paint it?" Up would go the hands and I would select a careful workman.¹⁷

Nature study provided Stanwood with lessons plans, but it also stimulated her own interest in the outdoors. Following her training as MNAS, Stanwood continued to attend teacher's summer schools that were a continuation of her art teacher training.¹⁸ She enrolled in classes on natural science and the pedagogy of nature study training from Arthur C. Boyden of the Bridgewater, Massachusetts Normal School, and also took classes in pedagogy and psychology from John Dewey. She enrolled in drawing classes where she continued to be inspired by Henry Turner Bailey.

¹⁷ Stanwood, "Autobiography," SWF.

¹⁸ In her autobiography, Stanwood wrote that she attended the Martha's Vineyard Summer Institute at least twice and the Glens Falls, NY Chautauqua for one summer, and studied drawing at Nonquit Beach at the estate of Hetty Green in Massachusetts for two summers. In addition to those programs, she also studied at Harvard, taking unspecified courses.

Stanwood's summer courses, in combination with the training of the Massachusetts Normal Art School and Henry Turner Bailey's instruction, guidance and enthusiasm, formed the preparation for her position as Co-Supervisor of Art in the Springfield, Massachusetts school system in 1894.¹⁹ Once in Springfield, she did not just teach others about drawing; already well educated in botany, biology, and drawing, she began sketching out-of-doors on her own.

In 1895, the drawing course in the Springfield primary schools included a three-month unit in drawing leaves, flowers, fruits and vegetables from nature. This course of study was conducted in all five of the city's district schools. Stanwood taught drawing both for the schools' elementary students and in the city's Evening School in 1894 through 1896. She shared these duties with another drawing teacher, Georgia Fraser, a former classmate from Providence, who supervised the entire drawing curriculum and had responsibility for students in the primary grades. The Springfield Massachusetts' School Committee reported that "the modern method of coordinating the science work and the drawing with the regular studies add much to their interest and the good accomplished, and is of immense advantage in comparison with the old system of work along independent lines."²⁰ The Springfield School Committee evidently agreed that nature was excellent material as part of the efficient lesson plan for its students.

¹⁹ Massachusetts Normal Art School, *Circular of the Massachusetts Normal Art School, Twentieth Year, 1893-4* (Boston: Wright & Potter State Printers, 1893).

²⁰ School Committee's Report (Springfield, Massachusetts: Springfield Schools, 1894), 15.

Stanwood was listed in the 1894 School Committee report as the Assistant Supervisor of drawing under Fraser for the city of Springfield. Stanwood collaborated with another teacher, Frannie A. Stebbins, in nature study in her day school classroom and shared drawing teacher duties with two other teachers in the Evening School. Stanwood wrote in her memoirs that Dr. Balliet, the Springfield schools superintendent, was also interested in nature study and encouraged the program, which was most enthusiastically pursued by Stebbins.²¹ Stanwood admired Stebbins's technique in the classroom and in the community: "She always had a basket of mosses, twigs of cedar, or other specimens on her arm for the children to study. She also taught birds. Even the ministers and their wives were strolling in the cemetery which was well patronized by the bird folks in the early morning."²² The lesson was not lost on Stanwood that while nature could be an efficient vehicle for teaching, it could also be the foundation of community. Her experience in community-wide nature study not only inspired her Springfield teaching, but it also animated classroom experience the following year in Greenfield, Massachusetts.

Like many other teachers, she found that schoolchildren loved nature and that lessons that began with nature provided an avenue for teaching many subjects. Nature provided teachers the means to integrate or correlate the entire school curriculum.

²¹ Frannie Stebbins, *Nature Study in the Public Schools* (Springfield, Massachusetts: Springfield Schools, 1907). Stebbins's enthusiasm for nature translated into a sanctuary in western Massachusetts being named for her, now a national landmark.

²² Stanwood, "Autobiography," SWF.

Nature study also contained a vestige of natural theology, which was often revealed in its claims of moral or spiritual value. One textbook noted, “the study of the wonderful things of the world, their beautiful fineness for the existence and functions, the remarkable progressive tendency of all organic life, and the unity that prevails in it create admiration in the beholder and tend to his spiritual uplifting.”²³ While the students may be spiritually uplifted, Stanwood herself was also uplifted by the experience of leading and teaching nature study.

In spite of the enriching curriculum and teaching experience, all had not been well in Springfield. Stanwood’s working conditions in Springfield were so poor that they were reported in the 1895 School Committee Report:

The good work which this school is doing entitles it to better quarters. The present quarters, however, may be improved; and the reasonable comfort and convenience of teachers and pupils require that certain changes be made. The rooms are lighted with arc lights, one in each room, which constantly flicker, and sometimes go out. Incandescent lights, and plenty of them, would be an improvement. The steam pipes which run along the high ceilings do not furnish sufficient heat. Making the rooms more comfortable in cold weather would be another improvement.²⁴

Beside poor working conditions that included inadequate space, light, ventilation and heat, Stanwood also was the subject of professional jealousy.

²³Frederick L. Holz, *Nature-Study: A Manual for Teachers and Students* (New York: Charles Scribners & Sons, 1908) in Ralph H. Lutts, *The Nature Fakers*, 28-30.

²⁴Springfield School Committee, *School Committee Report* (Springfield, Massachusetts: Springfield School Committee, 1895), 15.

At the spring vacation in the second year in Springfield, Miss Fraser passed me some books I had loaned her and said, "Good Bye." I did not realize that I had been dismissed.

I was talking afterward with Miss Sally Bailey, Prof. Bailey's sister, who was in my class in the Art School. I asked Sally, "Did you know what was the difficulty in Springfield?" Sally said, "Prof. Bailey said he knew of no reason for the break save jealousy."

Dr. Balliet made this comment on Prof. Bailey once when he was talking with me. "I never knew Prof. Bailey to recommend a teacher to me who was not an efficient teacher."²⁵

This dismissal took Stanwood by surprise, yet eventually she would have sought another position, in any case. But finding another position was not easy: women trained for one year as arts teachers had come to glut the market by the time Stanwood sought another position for the 1896 school year. "The day of getting a \$1500 position by studying one year had passed. In order to make as [much as possible in the] beginning...young men would take 2 or 3 small towns and earn enough money to live by their work."²⁶ It is probable that Stanwood's use of the term "young men" was intentional. Often it was only young men who had the stamina to drive a buggy by themselves over the area of three towns in order to earn their living. Even then, teaching was an occupation that men viewed only as a stepping-stone in their career, whereas Stanwood viewed it as an end in itself. Few female teachers taught for long, and few could support themselves independently with such low wages. That was certainly true for Stanwood: in Springfield she was only paid a

²⁵ Stanwood, "Autobiography," SWF.

²⁶ Ibid

base salary of \$600 for having charge of 90 teachers' art curriculum; in addition, she received \$2.50 per night for her evening work which took place three evenings a week for three months. Despite her growing attachment to the nature study program in rural western Massachusetts, Stanwood sought to move closer to Boston and looked for another position where she could pursue more art training and the possibility of better pay.

After some bargaining with the superintendent of the Webster, Massachusetts schools who wished her to work there, Stanwood instead secured a position in Greenfield for \$750. She was moving up the salary ladder, although this was considerably less than the \$1500 she had hoped would come following her specialized education.²⁷ While it was not closer to Boston, the position was a step up the career ladder, too. Most attractive to Stanwood, however, was the cultural and natural landscape of Greenfield that she grew to know intimately during her position there.

As the Supervisor of Art, Stanwood was required to visit each of the one-room schoolhouses in Greenfield in order to oversee the art teaching that took place there. This meant that she learned to drive a buggy over the hills from one schoolhouse to another. The geography of the landscape itself intrigued Stanwood. "Everything about Greenfield was interesting," wrote Stanwood. "Everyone seemed to want to contribute to my happiness....I was very happy there...it was a wonderful place to study flowers, and also birds. Three rivers, the Connecticut, Deerfield, and the Greene watered the locality, and its abundant

²⁷ \$750 is equivalent to \$14,962.75 in 2000 U.S. dollars.

nature material was protected by public sentiment.”²⁸ Greenfield was the setting once again for Stanwood’s two principal pleasures: the world of friendship, and the beauty and interest of nature. The nature of Stanwood’s nature grew to encompass not only a pantheon of local residents and the enrichment of friendship, but also historical narrative embedded in the surroundings. In Greenfield, the countryside also conveyed history to Stanwood.

Stanwood discovered the interest that the past lends to landscape. Greenfield and nearby Deerfield were famous for their history as colonial frontier settlements. This was a landscape of times gone by, of nature that was embossed by colonial settlement and inscribed with a national story. In the course of her work in visiting schools, Stanwood learned Greenfield’s history through mythical tales of family settlements at the same time she learned about new species of birds, flowers and trees. She had always been keenly aware of her own family’s history in coastal Maine, but now she learned to appreciate how an earlier colonial past was inscribed on the hills of Greenfield. During her drives over the countryside, new friends who showed her the landscape’s historical and botanical secrets often accompanied her:

In Old Deerfield we found the pale blue crowfoot violet growing under the trees in the wide, sunny sides of the street in such quantities that people filled large milk pans with them to make into wreaths for Decoration Day. Yellow violets were also new to me. They grew among the leaves in the woodlands; the rare maidenhair fern flourished about the damp rushes overhanging the turbulent Green river, and gay bittersweet vines climbed decaying stumps along old stone walls. It was Miss Nims,

²⁸ Stanwood, “Autobiography,” SWF.

also, that took me to the Watering Place beside the street, where the rare scouring rushes grew. They had been used by our ancestors with which to scour their milk pans (sic).²⁹

Accompanied by her new friends, Stanwood picnicked and went on outings along the legendary Connecticut River and to the storied Bloody Brook House in Old Deerfield, site of the famous Indian massacres, where she relished the experience of history and nature together creating a lush cultural landscape. She pursued her oil painting there. Today, a pleasing landscape of a wooded shore, bordered by a woods road and the fabled New England stone walls, survives in the Stanwood House Museum in Ellsworth.

Stanwood was inspired in her teaching of nature study and art in the Greenfield schools. In her report to the school committee, she thanked the children “who have taken up the work so responsively, who have not even let a tramp in the rain or snow prevent them from getting beautiful fresh specimens for the nature lessons.”³⁰ Although they were already learning about art in their classroom instruction, the students formed a club consisting of over forty members that studied pictures and the lives of artists.

Stanwood led the students in raising money for illustrations of classic works of art to decorate in the classrooms. The Greenfield newspaper reported that “Miss Stanwood, the teacher of drawing in the public schools, has purchased from the proceeds of Mr.[Henry Turner] Bailey’s lecture, the ‘Aurora,’ by Guido Reni, and has had it placed on the east wall of the assembly room in the high school building. This picture is an excellent

²⁹Stanwood, “Autobiography,” SWF.

photograph of the great painting and a genuine work of art and is in accord with the modern idea of school room decoration."³¹ Stanwood was most devoted to nature study, however. She concluded her report to the school committee in 1898 with a quote from Henry Turner Bailey:

The day cannot be far distant when every school-room shall have beautiful pictures upon its walls, sculpture in its halls, and, as material for constant reference and inspiration, photographs of the master pieces of Greek and Italian art, casts of design and decoration from the great temples and public buildings of the works, and colored prints from that highly artistic nation Japan. Meanwhile the rich and varied lavishness of nature is ours.³²

Bailey's comment reflects Stanwood's sentiment that the natural world offered the student just as much subject for study as did the artistic ornament of western civilization. This reflected the idea that nature could be the raw material for the education of young minds just as effectively as could the art of Europe. Stanwood was a disciple of both approaches, but nature was the more readily accessible and appealing resource. The lush landscape of the Greenfield area inspired her; it was the scene for her first adventures in bird watching, where she found that the area held a treasure chest of experiences for the birdwatcher.

³⁰ *Greenfield Massachusetts Annual Report* (Greenfield, Mass: Stetson's Electric Print, 1898), 12-13.

³¹ Loose Greenfield, Massachusetts newspaper clipping, 1897, scrapbook, SWF. This painting evidently was very much loved by the students in Greenfield. Many years later, after the school had burned down, the students wrote Stanwood in Maine asking for the name of the painting and where they could find a replacement. Stanwood. "Autobiography," SWF.

³² *Greenfield Annual Report*, 14.

Years later, she clearly remembered her first bird identification as though it had only recently happened:

There were two teachers in Greenfield, sisters, who evidently had filled more arduous positions, and were taking Greenfield as a sort of rest cure. I never knew the circumstances, but one of these ladies invited me to go for a walk one day in a beautiful bit of woods around Poet's Seat. I heard my little friend, the black-throated green warbler for the first time that day. It seemed to me wonderful that the lady could hear that sweet strain in the tree-tops, "Sweet, sweet, O how sweet" or his other little ditty, "Ready, steady" and recognize the musician without any effort. I was happy to observe a few days later a white-breasted nuthatch feeding her brood in a dead limb.³³

Just as her first intimate family relationships were framed in the context of nature when she was a child, as adult Stanwood's first bird identifications were in the context of friendship. Stanwood's friendships were formed from common interests in nature, and her pleasure in these friendships reinforced the pleasure she felt when she explored for birds and flowers.

This pleasure in nature did not overcome her distaste for the travel component of her job. Stanwood had never driven a horse until she went to Greenfield, and she had been warned that in winter when the snow was deep, other teachers had upset their sleighs and "the accidents had proven to be quite serious. I did not upset my sleigh but I pretty near froze my fingers. As the next winter approached I did not see how I could stand the out of town work." Determined to find a position that demanded less physical hardship, Stanwood heard of an opening working with artist Irene Weir in Brookline, Massachusetts. "I left Greenfield with deep regret. I felt and still feel that all the people in Greenfield,

³³ Stanwood, "Autobiography," SWF.

Massachusetts are pure gold.” She wrote in her report to the school committee the year following her departure, “Almost nowhere can a person work with greater freedom than in Greenfield.”³⁴ This remark echoes her own memoirs in which she fondly recalls the people of Greenfield, especially her close relationship with Henry Turner Bailey. He considered Greenfield one of his successes in promoting the study of art and nature, and Stanwood felt guilty about her departure. In Greenfield not only had Stanwood experienced the cultural landscape, but she had also felt deep pleasure in her teaching experience. She explained this to Henry Turner Bailey in a letter:

I sometimes wonder if I ever again could experience the intense pleasure in the unfolding of the spring that I have this year. I can’t describe the feeling to you.... I can’t say much about our technique but the children have drawn and drawn and drawn flowers and loved them. Mr. Dame [the superintendent of schools] came across some very good drawings of flowers from boys that haven’t taken much interest in the school work in one of the rooms....I have [taken the] teachers and the children out into the fields and woods where they can yield themselves “to the beautiful whole.”³⁵

Stanwood’s letter to Bailey reflects her pleasure in teaching the children about nature. It also reveals her inspiration from the landscape itself. Her experience with teaching out of doors had been so successful that she had even made converts of unyielding boys—an indicator of a teacher’s true success.

³⁴ Town of Greenfield, Massachusetts, *Annual Report of the Town Officers of the Town of Greenfield* (Greenfield, MA: Town of Greenfield, 1898), 9-11.

³⁵ Cordelia J. Stanwood to Henry Turner Bailey, Ellsworth, 1896, Henry Turner Bailey Collection, Division of Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon Library, Eugene, Oregon, hereafter HTB.

Stanwood's move to Brookline proved to be equally enriching, albeit for different reasons. She was able to re-establish her art training in Boston as well as her nature study in the surrounding landscape of the Boston fens, its environmental restoration already underway in the capable and visionary hands of Frederick Law Olmstead. Her pupils were from the fifth, sixth and seventh grades from a "slum district between Boston and Brookline" in the William H. Lincoln School.³⁶ Stanwood's position was lower in rank than in Greenfield, but she felt that this was compensated by working with Irene Weir, who was a painter, art teacher, and writer on art. Weir's family was distinguished for its several talented artists. Her uncle, J. Alden Weir, was a prominent artist and leader of the New York art world, and Irene was an esteemed artist in her own right. She had studied at the Yale School of Fine Arts and later studied under the direction of her uncle. Following her work in Brookline, Weir moved to New York City and was the founding director of the School of Design and Liberal Arts.³⁷ Stanwood relished Irene Weir's assistance with drawing classes in which Weir demonstrated innovative drawing techniques. Stanwood often invited Weir to demonstrate drawing techniques to the children. Brookline was a very different environment from Springfield and Greenfield. Most of the teachers were more sophisticated college graduates and many had traveled abroad. Stanwood taught two art

³⁶ Stanwood, "Autobiography," SWF.

³⁷ Delia Gaze, *Dictionary of Women Artists* (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1997), 557-559.

classes in addition to regular classroom instruction: Miss Green, the teacher next door to Stanwood, taught her music unit, and she taught Miss Green's drawing.

Stanwood broadened her social, professional, and intellectual world in Brookline. She learned new areas of study and developed new curriculum aids. She specialized in teaching composition and assembled a book collection as a resource for the students for this purpose. She admired Dr. Dutton, the superintendent of schools, who traveled widely and was a humane and caring director, but he organized his schools differently from the way Stanwood was accustomed. In the Brookline schools, the specialists such as the art teachers only taught in the high schools. Because she taught the lower grades, this meant that Stanwood did not supervise art curriculum as she had in Springfield and Greenfield. However, Stanwood was able to learn from the other teachers. Many of the other teachers who were in the high school had highly advanced training in geography, architecture, and science. Brookline presented a more elite, educated community than that of Greenfield, and Stanwood enjoyed her teaching opportunities there.

Besides drawing with Irene Weir, Stanwood enjoyed collecting plant specimens from the public gardens in Boston for her drawing classes. Although no longer done today, this was considered an acceptable practice during this era in which the benefits of learning about nature outweighed the possible harm incurred from removing a few branches or flowers. Stanwood was also able to secure a pass to the Arnold Arboretum where she had free range for her own study. The Arnold Arboretum, located on 265 acres in the Jamaica Plain area of Boston, has a renowned research and education institution, and today still

manages a collection of hardy trees, shrubs, and vines, and associated herbarium and library collections. The grounds were planned and designed by the Arboretum's first director, Charles Sprague Sargent, in collaboration with the landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted as part of Boston's Emerald Necklace park system.³⁸

The Arboretum was a magnet for Stanwood. She went to the Arboretum for collection, sketching and bird watching. It became the focus of her activities, from working on her artistic skills, to learning new birds, to collecting specimens for teaching. Following the example of her Springfield teaching associate, Frannie Stebbins, she kept flower specimens on her desk and asked students to draw them. One of the students' drawings was admitted for an exhibit of school drawings in Boston arranged by Emma Sargent, wife of artist Walter Sargent and sister of Henry Turner Bailey. At the Arboretum, nature offered Stanwood a fresh, lush and varied resource for her chief pleasures of art, nature, friendship and occupation as she continued to work on new plant and bird identification skills, gathered specimens for her nature study education, and walked with her friends.

Yet Brookline itself did not anchor Stanwood for long. After teaching there for two years, she was lured away in order to teach at the recently formed Quincy School in Poughkeepsie, New York. When Stanwood had gone to Martha's Vineyard, she met Miss Alliger, the owner and director of the private Quincy School, which was founded as an advanced academy for the children of the Vassar College faculty. Its brochure stated "The

³⁸ The President and Fellows of Harvard College, *The Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University* <<http://www.arboretum.harvard.edu>> (March 11, 2002).

Quincy Method is not so much a method, as combination of methods. It does not consist of fixed details, but rather presents the art of teaching as THE GREATEST ART in all the world....The true Quincy teacher makes a careful study of the child's mind, breaks away from traditional forms and comes back to the natural methods of aiding the mind's development."³⁹ The pedagogical methods utilized in the Quincy school sprang from the nature study model; these were methods that Stanwood embraced. At the Quincy School, she could employ the new methods of direct observation for teaching. The curriculum for the third and fourth grades included nature study and drawing, and German was taught school-wide. The Quincy School proffered even more new ideas to Stanwood. While Stanwood taught at the school, two annual lectures were given: one by John Burroughs whose speech was "A Talk of Nature" and the other by Jacob A. Riis, on "True Americans."

Her students' parents were infused with nature study enthusiasm, and they encouraged associations with the leading nature writers of the day. John Burroughs frequently took the Vassar girls on nature walks accompanied by Miss Hawkey, a colleague of Stanwood's. Hawkey was a disciple of Burroughs and herself led bird walks. In addition, every year John Burroughs would come to the nearby Quincy school to let the children ask him questions. These visits inspired Stanwood's interest in nature and Burroughs and his entourage of admirers fascinated her. She later remarked in a letter to

³⁹ Quincy School Company, *The Quincy School for Boys and Girls* (Poughkeepsie, New York: Quincy School, 1900-1901), 7.

Henry Turner Bailey: "Once in a while, I am ashamed to say, Mr. Burroughs is a little bit repulsive too. Perhaps it is partly because he came to school with egg on his beard one morning and his clothes not quite clean, but some of his suggestions have opened my eyes as none of the other nature writers have."⁴⁰ Her burgeoning interest in all aspects of nature study led Stanwood to become even more interested in observing and writing about the natural world. It was heightened again when Ernest Seton Thompson was invited to speak at the school. "He was one of the most interesting speakers I have ever heard. He filled the woods and fields with fascinating life," wrote Stanwood.⁴¹ After the lecture, he and Miss Alliger (the director of the school) passed through Stanwood's classroom where they saw the children's drawings. When Seton mistook the high quality drawings of her young students for those of Vassar students, Stanwood was filled with pride. Following the examples of her earlier experience of participating in nature walks, encouraged by the experimental leadership of the school's directors, and inspired by Burroughs and Seton, Stanwood led nature walks for her own students. She took them across the Hudson River where they studied nature, picnicked and roasted marshmallows.

Stanwood's tenure at the Quincy school lasted only two years, and she left before the school closed in 1905 when its leaders left for the Midwest to start other schools. Soon she was back in the Boston area where she could combine the elements she most enjoyed as she earned her living: taking art lessons and exploring the natural world. When she

⁴⁰ Stanwood to Henry Turner Bailey, July 12, 1907, HTB.

⁴¹ Stanwood, "Autobiography," SWF.

returned to Massachusetts she located in Braintree, where she resumed her former work of supervising art classes and teaching art in the evening schools, but she stayed there only one year.

She next moved to Marion, Massachusetts where she oversaw the art curriculum. Stanwood was familiar with Marion, which was near the estate of Hetty Green, where a few years earlier she had summered and practiced her art work with Henry Turner Bailey's sister Sally.⁴² When Stanwood began teaching there, Marion's school system resembled that of Greenfield's when she had first arrived there: there were many small schoolhouses scattered over a wide area, with the students taught using rote methods. As in Greenfield, in Marion it was her job to institute new pedagogy and to coordinate the entire art curriculum across the various schools. According to the report of the school committee, she made great progress in instituting the new program.

By the autumn of 1904, Stanwood was beginning her twentieth year as a teacher and was working in her sixth school system. She was thirty-nine years old, boarding in the homes of others and working several evenings a week teaching drawing in order to supplement her income. After having gained the skills of art education and nature study pedagogy, and working with children as well as adults teaching art, Stanwood was an experienced, mature educator who still, because she was a woman, lacked opportunities for financial or occupational advancement.

⁴² Stanwood summered in the Horseneck Beach, Massachusetts area for two seasons.

That autumn, Stanwood tendered her resignation to the Marion school system, citing ill health. She checked herself into the Adams Nervine Asylum, a mental health hospital adjacent to the Arnold Arboretum in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts. The Adams Nervine, as it was called, treated “nervous people who are not insane.”⁴³ The Adams Nervine had been in operation since 1877, when it was created by the will of Seth Adams of Newton for “indigent, debilitated, ‘nervous’ inhabitants of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts who needed the “benefit of the institution.”” In 1904 it housed about 150 residents, both men and women. It had an “established reputation for refusing no worthy and suitable case for lack of means.”⁴⁴ Its census statistics reflect a wide diversity of men and women, with the preponderance of the population being women between the ages of 30 and 50, 10 of whom were teachers when Stanwood was there. Half the women were married. “The usual means for occupation, diversion and treatments have been freely used, and opportunity constantly given for each one to interest him or herself in things which divert the thoughts from the subjective sensations and help to overcome habits of introspection.” The Adams Nervine had a greenhouse, which produced pinks in addition to other cut flowers and many ornamental potted plants, azaleas, Easter lilies, geraniums and begonias that they sold for profit. The greenhouse served as a type of occupational therapy.

⁴³ Jean Strouse, *Alice James: A Biography*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 221.

⁴⁴ Dr. H. A. Evans Miner, *28th Annual Report of the Managers of the Adams Nervine Asylum, May 1, 1904 through April 30, 1905* (Boston: Adams Nervine Asylum, 1906).

The institution acquired a full set of “nature library” books and a subscription to *Country Life* magazine during the period that Stanwood was there. The Adams Nervine was also a teaching hospital: it trained hospital nurses and sponsored an interchange of nurses from other hospitals. Most of the patients who went to the Adams Nervine stayed on average about four and a half months before they were discharged as “relieved” or “recovered;” while some were also listed as “not relieved,” many “were discharged to continue their convalescence to perfect recovery outside a sanitarium.”⁴⁵ The Adams Nervine did not boast any unusual cures or approaches to achieving “perfect recovery” beyond rest and occupation: basket making, pyrography and other crafts, in addition to greenhouse work, were encouraged to occupy the hands in productive activity. Its proximity to Arnold Arboretum likely added to its healing properties for Stanwood. Stanwood offered no explanation for the cause of her collapse beyond labeling it a “nervous breakdown,” except that she did write that she felt that she needed a “rest.”⁴⁶

There are several plausible explanations for this apparently sudden collapse of Stanwood’s health. The discontinuity between the promise of a career that offered advancement and the reality of low pay, long hours, and arduous physical demands alone would prompt almost any person to become depressed. It is possible that Stanwood, after training continuously and following every opportunity to advance, could not face the prospect of another year such as that she had experienced in Greenfield and now in Marion,

⁴⁵ Ibid., 8.

⁴⁶ Stanwood, “Autobiography,” SWF.

where she would drive a buggy and chase down teachers in their schoolhouses to check on the art curriculum. In an era in which women were expected to marry and have children, at her age of 39, most other women had homes of their own and children to manage. Her teacher contemporaries such as Frannie Stebbins had mostly gained autonomy in developing their own programs and attained success in financially satisfactory jobs, where they remained in one place within their native communities. Her family in Ellsworth had relied on her sending some of her meager funds to them, and she was always looking for higher pay. Unable to put down roots in any particular community because of her need to find a congenial, well-paying job, Stanwood was single, constantly moving, and boarding out with strangers year after year; because of her gender she was continually poor with no further route for increased pay. Considering that she had struggled constantly to earn sufficient income to survive, had no home of her own, and no prospects for advancement in the educational career ladder, it is quite likely that she simply became exhausted.

These factors, in combination with her long-time relationship with Henry Turner Bailey, offer another plausible explanation. "If all the people in the world were like you, this world would be a very different place to live in from what it is," she wrote Bailey in 1921.⁴⁷ She may have been disappointed in love with someone else, but there is no evidence that she had formed any serious attachments with men beyond that with Bailey.

⁴⁷ Stanwood to Henry T. Bailey, August 6, 1921, HTB.

Bailey, however, was a devout Baptist and devoted to his wife, who was his childhood sweetheart. Yet Stanwood and Bailey were close, having been involved in a teacher-mentor relationship for ten years. She was close with his family: "I always keep photos of [Bailey's sisters] Emma and Sally on my mantle shelf except when I have spells of house cleaning. They are a great deal of company. They suggest such pleasant associations." She wrote in a letter to him three years later.⁴⁸ Stanwood had summered with Emma and Sally, taken art lessons with them, and confided in them.

Moreover, Stanwood and Bailey would correspond for nearly thirty years following her move back to Maine; Stanwood relied on Bailey's influence to help her secure connections for her writing and photography and she often asked his advice on matters concerning philosophy, nature study, and pedagogy. This long correspondence points to a strong and fruitful friendship, but there is no evidence for anything more intimate about their relationship.

From her memoirs it is easy to discern that Stanwood greatly admired Bailey, and that he encouraged her at every step. When Stanwood went to the Adams Nervine, Bailey had just departed for a yearlong trip to Europe. It is possible that Stanwood had been able to carry on in her duties under his encouragement, but that the prospect of continuing under arduous circumstances without his moral support was just too overwhelming. Tired, broke, and without the support of her closest friend, Stanwood needed a rest.

There is no explanation for why Stanwood returned to Ellsworth to live with her

⁴⁸ Stanwood to Henry Turner Bailey, July 12, 1907, HTB.

parents rather than going to Providence to live with her aunt, or why she did not continue to live independently, except that she could not afford to. At that time, Stanwood wrote in her memoirs, her Aunt Cordelia persuaded her father, who was by then almost eighty, to give up his merchant sailing and retire. Aunt Cordelia herself was nearly eighty and a widow in Providence, and did not invite Stanwood to live with her. It is likely that the doctors at the Adams Nervine, seeing that she was gradually recovering, suggested that she remove herself to a secluded rural place where she could rest and recover fully, unhindered by her aunt in Providence. There, she could reacquaint herself with her family; Stanwood had only sporadically visited with her parents and brother in Ellsworth, and her younger sisters were off in households of their own, themselves visiting Ellsworth during the summers. Her memoirs indicate that she left for Maine intending to take up teaching again at a later date. After she moved to Maine she never returned to her teaching career although she was later offered positions in Massachusetts. In early 1905, Stanwood was back at her family's home in Ellsworth.

Stanwood's nineteen years as a teacher, while only permitting a precarious financial existence, had broadened her horizons considerably. She had learned new skills as an artist and a teacher, gained new knowledge in natural history, and had met and worked with many interesting and influential people. Most critical to understanding Stanwood's life, however, is her deepening understanding of nature. The nature of Stanwood's nature—what had been intimacy, family, regional and national identity, livelihood, and nourishment—had been enhanced through its usefulness as a teaching tool. Yet nature was

not simply a pedagogical device. With every new teaching experience, Stanwood also made professional associations while at the same she learned about new birds and flowers. She learned to appreciate novel species and varieties; she became excited at the prospect of a new discovery every time she went outdoors. Stanwood's earlier, most intimate experiences with her family had taken place in the context of nature, and this pattern was reinforced into her adult professional life, so that her teaching took place in the context of nature just as her most pleasing early relationships as a child were formed in the framework of adventures outdoors. In this way, as she taught, the natural world continued to develop as the most important element of Stanwood's emotional life.

By extension, the natural world itself became just as important as her teaching work. As she learned more about birds, they became important in themselves. Stanwood longed to learn more about nature as she grew older. As both teacher and student of nature, she had learned that nature offered more than entertainment or intimacy with her family and friends. Not only did nature provide the raw material for the lesson plan and her own knowledge, but also her experiences in the natural world emotionally buoyed her with their luxuriant richness and beauty. Nature provided the ballast for her mental health. Returning to Ellsworth meant that Stanwood went to her home territory with a deep awareness of nature. Ellsworth would provide a rich environment for her continued quest for both knowledge and emotional health. Once home, in the identity of a teacher, she set out to explore nature with informed, appreciative eyes

Chapter Three

“THERE IS PLEASURE IN THE PATHLESS WOODS”: THE LIFE AFIELD 1905-1917

I shall always remember Brookline as the town where I first saw the dainty American Redstart floating about among the leaves of an elm; Hyde-Park-on-the-Hudson as the spot where I caught my first glimpse of the meadow-lark.... Nor shall I ever forget the first time that I heard the rose-breasted grosbeak sing in Greenfield, saw the scarlet tanager in Brockton, or flushed the black-capped warbler from the swamp grass in Ellsworth, Maine.¹

Birds had always played a part in Stanwood's appreciation of nature, but they became the central focus of her attention when she returned to Ellsworth following her illness in Massachusetts in the fall of 1904. "I never had time to study the birds until I stopped teaching," she wrote in her memoirs.² Determined to earn her living as an ornithological writer, she commenced serious bird study when she went to live in Ellsworth. She began to keep field notes of her identification, sightings, and behavior observations of birds.

Through her bird study Stanwood learned to cultivate a new relationship with the land. Overlying the natural and cultural history of her community she came to understand the landscape through her bird study, so that she understood the landscape in terms of bird habitat. The nature of Stanwood's nature, already understood to be altered, relative,

¹ Cordelia J Stanwood, "Nature Study as Diversion," *Normal Instructor and Primary Plans*, (June 1915).

² Stanwood, "Autobiography," SWF.

intimate and close at hand, as well as a pedagogical tool, once again became a process and a place—because she was continually learning about bird behavior, it became land in the *process* of being understood in terms of birds. On May 7, 1916, she wrote:

Set out for home not because I wanted to but because I had to. I came through the old Holt wood road, and I almost reached the big tree where the Kinglets nested in 1911....After the birds nested in the spruce in 1911, the spruce budworms attacked it, and I was afraid that it was going to die. This morning I was looking to see what the health of this tree was when I heard the Kinglets. I was delighted the old tree was in fine old condition....At last I saw a few bits of moss and some spiders' silk hanging from the twigs on the underside of a branch about fifteen feet from the ground and about 15 inches from the tip of the branch-- I did not think this could possibly be a nest of the Kinglet just begun, but I had laid my coat on the ground and stretched out upon it so that I could look up easily. In a few minutes I heard gee, gee, gee. Gre-ee-ee-ee-ee. Gee, gee, gee, gee, gee, w-h-y d-o y-o-u shilly-shally? [the call of the kinglet]³

Stanwood viewed the territory as setting for the work of the ornithologist. Moreover, as she identified bird habitats in her working landscape, she created a new mental topography denoted by her relationships with children—relationships that rested on the foundation of her bird work. Stanwood's nature was commodified for ornithological purposes. Yet like the complex structure of a bird nest, Stanwood's nature was interwoven with the uneven strands of different kinds of relationships and lined with her most intimate feelings. The strands consisted of different textures: relationships with her teacher friends, her family, and with children. The mud that held those strands together was her reliance on nature for her mental health. The lining of the nest, the part that nurtured her continuing fascination,

³ Stanwood, "Bird Notebooks," May 7, 1916, SWF.

was her special relationship with the birds. Stanwood's nature, like the intimate, complex nest structure of a bird—was built on the land itself.

The land consisted of her family's 40 acres and the three miles in all directions accessible on foot, a rugged Maine landscape consisting of pastures, mixed growth woodlands, bogs, heaths, shores, brooks, ponds and rivers. Her home, a little gable-ended cottage on Tinker's Hill overlooking the surrounding countryside, was perched westerly above the city of Ellsworth. On the side of the hill bubbled a spring that remained open throughout the year. During her childhood most of the area surrounding her home pastureland in Ellsworth, which she now called "the cut-off," had been used for timber extraction. When she returned in 1904 the old pasture area was budding secondary growth of alder, pine, and birch. The land had experienced burns from the cinders of passing trains, and downtown Ellsworth experienced periodic floods as a result of the barren hills' lack of cover. Stanwood appreciated this landscape for its birds. On August 6, 1910, she wrote: "Last night I was on the sprout land of Judge Redman that was run over with a fire and on the tops of the dead pines, firs, and spruces were perched cedar waxwings that flew after an insect and after catching it returned to their various perches."⁴ This territory so rich with birdlife, owned by male judges, burnt over and left to regrow, had been manipulated by man, but the result was a topography that provided a wealth of avian study material. Thin topsoil covered the higher rocky ground, and bogs and swamps lay in the bottoms below

⁴ Ibid., August 6, 1910.

her home. Further away from her home the Union River wended its way to the sea, fed by brooks and streams descending from higher land inland. Although the riverbank was nearby and the ocean not far beyond, with the exception of observing kingfishers, Stanwood did not explore this territory very extensively. Rather, she studied birds, trees and flowers in the many small ecosystems that changed from year to year as they recovered from the impact of forest extraction. This varied terrain provided many types of habitats for bird study. The habits of the birds that occupied these habitats were relatively unknown by ornithologists.

Stanwood's bird studies were modeled on the scientific methods that she had learned from classes in biology and ornithology at the Martha's Vineyard Summer Institute. The information she gathered and reported on warblers, chickadees, woodpeckers and thrushes led to significant new facts in the body of ornithological knowledge. Within the first five years of this work, Stanwood became known for her ornithological expertise, and in less than ten years the community boasted about her as "Ellsworth's Famous Birdwoman."⁵ While over the following decade and half society's ideas about gender worked to silence Stanwood's voice in the scientific community, she still continued her bird study field work. From 1905 to 1917, Stanwood added significantly to ornithological science and gathered the copious field notes that were to provide ample material for writing projects for decades to come. In the process, Stanwood maintained her identity as a teacher,

⁵ "Ellsworth's Famous Birdwoman" *Bangor Sunday Commercial*, November 23, 1952.

enjoyed the mental health benefits of being outdoors, relished her unusual relationships with birds, and gained new friendships through her interests in ornithology.

Returning to Ellsworth meant big adjustments for Stanwood. No longer independent, living within the bosom of her family in their small house on the hill, she had to become accustomed to living with her elderly parents and a twenty-four year old brother whom she barely knew, since he was born around the time she left for Providence. She felt compelled to observe the niceties of social life, and felt responsible to take care of the household. The outdoors, however, pulled her from the house and provided an alluring destination to explore:

I have a peculiar capacity for doing nothing and yet enjoying myself. To sit and look out into what Whitman calls the huge and thoughtful night was a comely and sufficient occupation for the best part of me; and as for the rest, the inferior or domestic part, the fingers that might have been busy, the tongue that might have been wagged, the superficial bit of brain used for the planning of trivialities, how good it is that [it] all should often be idle.⁶

Preferring the society of the birds to the idle social gossip, Stanwood set out to establish herself as a nature writer. Indicating the seriousness of her intention to study birds, she named her home "Birdsacre."

It is not clear how much her family relied on her income in the first few years she lived with them, but Stanwood had long been accustomed to sending some funds for their support while she was teaching. When Stanwood returned to Ellsworth in late 1904, her

⁶ Stanwood, "Bird Notebooks, May 10, 1911, SWF.

father, already past seventy, had just retired from his merchant sailing ventures. Her family soon became heavily dependent on her income, especially after her brother left the house a few years later. Her sisters often stayed at the house for protracted periods, and her mother relied on Stanwood increasingly as she became more aged and frail, especially after Roswell Stanwood died in 1914. Stanwood's earliest income-producing activities were crafts enterprises that consisted mainly of basketry kits and published articles of instruction, along with small articles in professional teaching journals. In about five years, once she had collected sufficient material to compile life histories of birds, however, she began publishing bird life histories.

Stanwood's reliance on the nearby woods and fields to provide subject matter for her writing career illustrates her reliance on writing while remaining at home with her family as a gendered source of income. This conservative practice dovetails with traditional women's literary practice. In a departure from traditional women's writing, however, Stanwood's early writing was not fiction or advice books based on domestic life, but rather was scientific writing that was the result of field observations. Her later commodification of birds for this purpose was quite clear. "When I was short of material for articles I used to set out in the morning with this thought in mind: 'I will keep traveling until I come upon an idea that I can transform into a five dollar check.'"⁷ Birds were important not only for

⁷ Stanwood, "Autobiography," SWF.

themselves, but also for the income potential they brought when Stanwood was able to transform their activities into a scientific report or a story.

When Stanwood returned to Maine and began her travels in the woods, she returned to a society that reinforced a woman's traditional domestic identity, one that was interwoven with long-time family associations in the history of the region. Once in Ellsworth, her gender, her economic needs and her social class shaped Stanwood's craft and nature study activities. These were activities that she likely felt most suited her as a woman, but they also contributed valuable family income. Most important to *her*, however, was her continuous bird study work. Stanwood was to notate her bird observations, whether they were as simple as the first spring robin or the complex nesting behavior of the brown creeper, for the next forty years. Over the remainder of her life she kept field notes that she developed into articles that were published in an array of magazines, from the scientific *Wilson Bulletin* to the style-conscious *House Beautiful*.

Besides providing income, Stanwood's bird study was important to her for another reason: it was an integral part of her identity as a teacher of nature study. It was also as a teacher that she left her house and observed birds, and it was Stanwood the teacher who enticed Ellsworth children into helping her carry her heavy camera, climb ladders up towering pines to investigate hawk's nests, and drag brush to create blinds for her bird studies. It was Stanwood the teacher who traded the secrets of the nesting birds around Ellsworth with the town children who knew every nook and cranny of the fields and woods

near their homes. She was always striving to learn more about birds and then to teach others what she had learned, whether in print or in person.

The birds she studied were the foundation of her teacher-oriented web of social relationships. As the setting for her mental map of bird habitats, she labeled the land after the children who lived there. For example, in her field notes she referred to the locations of bird nests by referring to the homes of the children who lived nearby. Many of her studies were conducted on nesting sites located on these children's (parent's) property; often she would set up blinds there for days at a time. Children brought her nestlings, insects and plants for identification, and these in turn acted as magnets for social interaction in her home with both children and her teacher friends in the community. Outings to good birding spots were invariably with teachers or children, and "tips" of unusual sightings often originated from them. In this way, even though she was no longer actively teaching, Stanwood's social world, though based on birds, centered on her relationships with children and continued to reinforce her former identity as a teacher.

Stanwood was aware that she viewed nature differently than others. She became particularly proud of her expertise in locating nests. She reflected in her field notes: "Mr. Trueworthy told me this morning that although he worked at logging in the forest for 17 years, he never found a bird's nest in the wild."⁸ Unlike those who earned their living extracting commodities out of the woods, Stanwood worked outdoors to learn its secrets. In

⁸ Stanwood, "Bird Notebook," January 10, 1910, SWF.

the process, however, she commodified her knowledge of birds and plants as a writer. In this way, Stanwood was just as much a worker in the woods as the lumberman whose ignorance of nature she disdained.

Stanwood kept approximately 50 notebooks over the years beginning in 1904 and ending in June 1953 when she was 88 years old. Over time she varied her approach to her work and as a result she kept different kinds of notes. Stanwood's bird work can be divided into three periods. The first was the years 1905 through 1913, when she kept notes for the purpose of producing bird life histories in ornithological publications. The earliest notes from this time period, from 1905 until 1908, are lists of birds and their nesting locations; once she began photographing birds around 1908, her notes begin to concern themselves with transporting the birds to Elwood Osgood's photography studio. Later during second period from 1913 to 1923, when she used her own camera to photograph birds (and other nature subjects as well as architecture and antiques) to illustrate both ornithological and popular magazines, she included more bird behavior as well as nesting data. The notes from 1913 until 1919 include highly detailed studies from within the blind. The later part of these notes—from about 1917 to 1923—contain less scientific data, but concern themselves with bird behavior, including accounts of her taking birds from nests, taming and then photographing them. The third period—from 1922-3 until her death in 1958—were less detailed reports and notes about her observations and experiences with the birds. The years 1924 through 1929 simply record a bird census with occasional observations of bird behavior. After 1923 or 24 Stanwood no longer used her camera, but

she kept notes on birds that were later written up for publication in newspapers. There are few notes surviving for the period 1930 through 1939, but comments in notes from the 1940s refer to earlier notes of the 1930s. Evidently her detailed notes were lost. For the years 1950 through 1953, the notes document the birds around the dooryard as well as Stanwood's increasing mental confusion in her old age.

Throughout each of these periods Stanwood's field notes portray her not only as an individual, but also reveal her understanding of research and science, her writing and photography process, and her social world. By tracing the contents of the notes, it is also possible to trace the unfolding of ornithology as a science, witnessing in the process the crowding out of women from its ranks. Unlike many ornithologists who reported from far flung locales, she did not seek exotic climes to do her work, and her observations were always conducted in Maine. Because Stanwood's movement was circumscribed by the demands of family, finances and later age and health, fieldwork meant the space outside her door.

Staying close to home rather than traveling to exotic places did not seem to bother Stanwood. At times, her notes shade into a diary that provides a window into Stanwood's thoughts and feelings and show her enthusiasm for the bird watching that took place close to home. She often wrote as though she were on a travel adventure. For example, on May 27, 1911, she wrote:

This morning I was up at 5 AM. Some dried fruit, a bit of cheese, a slice of bread and butter, and a cup of warm milk sufficed for breakfast. A draft from the boiling spring as I passed supplied me with all the beverage that I needed for the morning.

Then off to the woods in earnest, with a similar luncheon in a candy box. Old clothes kept me from worrying over my appearance.⁹

Like a traveler embarking on a perilous journey to exotic location, Stanwood wished to ignore ordinary social conventions of dress and routine, suspending for a time the cares of the everyday world. Only in the field did she feel free to roam without regard to the restrictions she normally felt compelled to observe.

Because the natural world remained the center of her social and professional relationships, not only with adult men and women but also with children, it was an integral part of her life. Although she relied on it for her economic support, nature was more than just a commodity. The natural world had an even deeper meaning for her. Not merely existing as part of her everyday routine, the natural world—the fields, forests and their inhabitants—were Stanwood's psychological anchor. Especially in her earliest years of bird study, Stanwood sought out particular places in order to enjoy their special qualities—places that touched her spiritually:

Most of the evening I spent in Tinker's woods, one of the most beautiful bits of woodland I know. It consists of mostly white pine white birch, and spruce. The trees are mostly from 80 to 100 feet tall, slender, branched toward the top, and far enough apart to give considerable light. The effect is that of the aisles in some dim, gothic church. Near the ground is a perfect forest of low firs. It gives the woods an appearance of a fairyland. The warblers and kinglets flit among the highest branches. Were it not for the voices, one would scarcely suspect they were there.¹⁰

⁹ Ibid., May 27, 1911.

¹⁰ Ibid., May 12, 1912.

Stanwood was an enthusiastic woods explorer who energetically investigated the outdoors for mental, spiritual and physical exercise and intellectual curiosity. Her determination to be literally out of the house would, she believed, help her to maintain her mental health. Left only to domestic chores, she became nervous and irritable. Stanwood disliked domestic work of any kind, including shopping and marketing, and she avoided these tasks as much as possible, leaving them to her mother or, when it was affordable, hired help. This often meant that Stanwood spent her time seeking and observing birds. "The finding of a new bird always fills me with enthusiasm. That part of me that responds to birds reminds me of the soul of a child. It is perennially fresh and equally responsive to each newcomer."¹¹ Going out into the woods meant a release from domestic duties, yet domesticity nonetheless claimed her imagination. Paradoxically, she often thought of nature in terms of domestic metaphors. "The sweet fern as I bruise the stems with my heavy boot, sends up a pungent spicy odor, even my dress as it rubs against the opening catkins, bears away delicious fragrance that might make one suspect that it had but lately been shaken from some old-fashioned chest, unearthed from some chest in which it had been packed by some careful housekeeper of long ago."¹² Unconcerned with housekeeping, Stanwood nonetheless found the natural world appealing for its domestic attributes. The passage also reveals Stanwood's unusual dress: tall rubber boots and a long skirt. The boots

¹¹ Cordelia J. Stanwood, "Clever Builders: Nest and Young of the Bay-Breasted Warbler," *Journal of the Maine Ornithological Society* 11 (December 1909) No. 4.

¹² Stanwood, "Bird Notebooks," April 30, 1911, SWF.

were an obvious compromise for practicality, but unlike many of her contemporaries, such as Gene Stratton Porter, Stanwood eschewed dress reform in favor of long skirts.¹³ She not only adhered to conventions appropriate for a woman but also to those of the naturalist, wearing both dress and boots, sending sweet fern aroma wafting sensuously to her nose as she sought birds' nests.

Despite her pursuit of the naturalist's remedy for nervous tension, apparently being outdoors did not always solve Stanwood's problems. The deleterious effects of domestic life were not Stanwood's alone. On October 20, 1913, naturalist and folklorist Fannie Hardy Eckstorm of Brewer, Maine, wrote to Stanwood:

Your letter came today, and I can understand the situation better than you think. For fourteen years past, to your nine, I have been living on the ragged edge of nerves, forbidden by my doctor much of the time to write what I have wanted to write, and chained to housework as the safest form of exercise. I know all about being unable to sit in the room with any people, or to endure even a little excitement. But anyone who loves the outdoor world and has real interests in it, has in her own hands the best possible remedy for such conditions. My misfortune is that I have no time to go in the woods or to see things. Perhaps two or three days in the year I can get off in the woods; all the rest of the time I never have a chance to enter them. So you see you are rather a favored mortal after all!¹⁴

Stanwood must have shared her anxiety with Eckstorm. Eckstorm's response illustrates that prevailing social norms demanded that women stay within the bounds of the home, even to the point of being told not to write or go outdoors. Fortunately, Stanwood did not feel such

¹³ Judith Reick Long, *Gene Stratton-Porter: Novelist and Naturalist* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1990).

¹⁴ Fannie. Hardy Eckstorm to Cordelia Stanwood, October 20, 1913, SWF.

intense pressure until the late 1920s when, after her father had died, her elderly mother did not like being left alone for long periods while Stanwood was outdoors. Other than her own behavior, which left behind the legacy of her work as a writer and a photographer, Stanwood left no evidence of what she thought of Eckstorm's advice to go into the woods as the remedy for mental health, yet evidently she agreed with Eckstorm's advice.

Stanwood noted the effect of her work in the woods:

The blessed fog veiled the sun, and prevented everything from being burned up today. Remained in the woods until dark. The fog closed in thick. All the birds sang a great deal but the Hermit and the Olive-backed were superb. The air was heavy with fragrance that came from the opening buds of birches, and sweet ferns, and as I drank the fragrance into my lungs, it seemed to quiet my nerves.¹⁵

Being outdoors pursuing her bird work quieted Stanwood's nerves, and her efforts in her bird work gradually became even more absorbing and time consuming as she brought camera work into the process.

Stanwood's reflection on the balm of nature, and Eckstorm's comment on her good fortune for having so much time to be outdoors and write freely, reveal the physical and emotional cost of conforming to the gender roles of the early twentieth century. Women's opportunities for rewarding work, social lives, and physical exercise were so sharply limited that many, like Stanwood, spent their energy trying to maintain their precarious mental health. While many urban women younger than she were able to break free of these social constraints, Stanwood evidently was unable to do so. She often felt pressure to cut

¹⁵ Stanwood, "Bird Notebooks," May 21, 1914, SWF.

short her time in the woods in order to return home, only to feel nervously anxious when she knew the birds were outdoors to be observed. A generation ahead of the emerging “new woman” of the early twentieth century, Stanwood may have been tied to an earlier value that dictated she remain indoors to pursue domestic activities. Yet these indoor domestic pursuits, unless they were her crafts of interest, gave rise to feelings of claustrophobia. Had she felt freer to pursue her bird work for longer periods or even further away from home, one can speculate about how she might have accomplished even more than she did. Stanwood complained about how “tongues wagged” when she walked over the countryside; evidently in Ellsworth the conservative social norms scorning women’s outdoor activity meant that her quest for autonomy eventually earned her a reputation for eccentricity, even as the community respected her for her intellect and knowledge about art and birds.

In the autumn of 1912, Stanwood acquired her own camera and went into the field to photograph nesting birds. What had begun in 1910 as a type of bird portraiture, accomplished by removing the birds from their nests and carrying them to Osgood’s photography studio in downtown Ellsworth, developed into a serious photographic pursuit. Rather than bringing the birds to the camera, Stanwood would bring the camera to the birds. By taking her own photographs, she would have illustrations depicting behavior no one had ever before seen in a bird life history. Her observations and photographs together would provide an informative essay for an ornithological audience. In his book *Bird Studies with a Camera*, Frank Chapman emphasized that bird photography not only

enriches the life of the naturalist, but enhances the knowledge of the scientific community: "There are certain matters, such as a bird's song...which must be set forth with the pen; there are others, such as its haunts, nesting site, nest, eggs, the appearance and development of its young, where the camera is so far ahead of the pen in its power of graphic representation that it is a waste of time to use the former when circumstances permit the utilization of the latter."¹⁶ After having spent eight years in the field, Stanwood was prepared to create with the camera what heretofore was rarely presented to ornithologists: a bird life history that included close photographs.

Beyond its value as a tool in bird study, photography also offered Stanwood another advantage: she could sell her illustrations to ornithological and popular magazines, thereby setting herself up in business as a bird illustrator. Owning a camera meant that Stanwood could produce a salable material commodity derived from her bird study, so that the birds would support her through her writing and photographic illustrations. She was able to recycle her photographs, selling them over and over again to different publishers, so that the rewards of her efforts were magnified.

For Stanwood, photography was a logical next step in this era during which magazines enthusiastically promoted photography for women as a pastime. Because women were considered more sensitive and artistic than men, photography was viewed as a natural medium for them. Magazine articles pronounced that women's hands were

¹⁶ Frank M. Chapman, *Bird Studies with a Camera, with Introductory chapters on the Outfit and Methods of the Bird Photographer* (New York: Appleton & Co. 1900), 2.

dexterous and could easily handle the fine work of developing a photograph. Photography necessitated organizational ability, attention to detail, and patience with trial-and-error proceedings that were presumed to appeal to women. Magazines rationalized that photography would appeal to women because they possessed the traits demanded of the photographer. These were the same traits demanded of the ornithologist.

Even if a photograph of a bird would be deemed a failure from an artistic standpoint, it could still be valuable to the ornithologist for its veracity in the depiction of bird position and expression, arrangement of the feathers, shape and pattern of markings of the eggs. Stanwood sought to photograph birds on the nest and the development of their young, an idea that Chapman praised as being “portrayed by the camera with a realism which convinces one of the truthfulness of the result.”¹⁷ In patiently waiting behind the blind, Stanwood would break new barriers not only in the field of photography, but also in photography in the field. As she had with specialized art teaching, Stanwood took advantage new opportunities for women when she took up photography.

Stanwood took her own path to photography. Although she purchased camera equipment in 1912, Stanwood never developed and printed her own photographs, presumably because her house was never converted to indoor plumbing or wired for electricity. Rather, she relied on Ellsworth photographer Embert Osgood to process and print her photographs. This was an expense that became increasingly prohibitive for her as

¹⁷ Chapman, *Bird Studies with a Camera*, 2.

time went on. Her early approach of bringing the birds to Osgood's studio meant that there were also distinct disadvantages to the birds:

11:30 A.M. Went to the nest of the Whitethroats and was surprised to see the four still in the nest. I sat beside the nest and very slowly put my hand near and covered it with mosquito netting. When I went to lift the nest, one bird flew; I caught it and got the nest and four birds into my lap. The bird that tried to escape called 'tsip and both parents immediately appeared calling 'tsip, and flew frantically around and around the nest. When I went to secure the netting, two birds flew. I simply folded up the two in the nest and ran pursued by the calling birds. One of these, the older flew at the netting, bit it with its beak and chirped loudly 'tsip or 'tsip-'tsip-tsip. I brought them home, put them in the nest, and the nest in a grape basket, covered with a white cloth and well ventilated. I left the room and the little ones ceased to call, went to sleep. Carried them to the city and had five photographs taken. The birds were so tamed that they would perch on my finger and be quiet at any time. It was 5 o'clock when I returned them to the woods. They called softly and I reached the spot from which I took the nest, the parent birds flew chirping through the trees to meet us. They seemed bewildered, scolded at me while they perched in the branches just above the young.¹⁸

Presumably Stanwood purchased her camera because taking her own photographs would be considerably more convenient than taking the birds to the photographer. For one, the photographs would be more realistic. Accordingly, Stanwood modestly outfitted herself after researching her special needs for bird photography.

In his book *Bird Studies with a Camera*, Frank M. Chapman outlined the techniques, rationales, and adventures of bird photography, along with a list of recommended equipment for taking certain kinds of photographs of birds.¹⁹ Bird photography required a camera that could carry a 4 x 5 plate for portrayal of a bird, its nest

¹⁸Stanwood, "Bird Notebooks," June 22, 1912, SWF.

¹⁹ Chapman, *Bird Studies with a Camera*.

and eggs. The smaller cameras using roll film that so popularized photography were not adapted to the needs of bird photography. Chapman was explicit as to the type of camera and lenses that would be meet the needs of the bird photographer, and Stanwood had also evidently researched her own needs when she wrote him on August 2, 1912, asking him to purchase equipment for her:

You said a 5 x7 camera would be heavy but is it necessary that it should be so heavy as this? If this is about what a person should expect, it is all right. Could a focusing scale be added to this camera? I would like a century view finder added, and I would like a number 13 Ziess-Protar lens, Series 7a, convertible, combined equivalent focus 9 and a half inches, front and back lens each with a focus of 16 and 1/8 inches. I would also like an ordinary tripod that will do satisfactory work on a windy day and a case that will hold the outfit.²⁰

It is easy to imagine that a photographic setup such as this, built of wood and metal, would have been extremely heavy. Its advantage lay in its focusing adaptability. This equipment also provided good depth of field that was necessary to portray the habitat background.²¹

Stanwood found that there were many complications when photographing birds, especially composing the subjects for the photograph:

9:58, from now to 10:30, I spent in raising the sides of the nest which I had pinned back, photographing the young, and building the top of the nest into place with fine wire.

²⁰ Cordelia J. Stanwood to Frank Chapman, August 2, 1912, Frank Chapman Collection, Department of Ornithology, American Museum of Natural History, New York.

²¹ In order to understand this photography, the author received a demonstration from Dr. John B. Watkins, photographer, who owns a camera similar to Stanwood's. It is quite a versatile apparatus, surprisingly adaptable to a variety of depth of field portrayals. It takes considerable experience to learn how to use a camera of this type. Setup time is quite long.

The young birds snuggled away from the light and shut their eyes right when the sun came out.

11:20, the female entered the nest to brood the young a few minutes, the male came near, perched on a stick, raised his tail at angle of 30 degrees with his back and song softly around as he peered in from a distance.²²

Besides getting the nest in sights, the lighting and the subjects within it must be appropriate for the photograph once the setup was achieved.

Stanwood made no mention of the ethics of disrupting nestlings or taking them from the nest, except to describe their behavior in the photography studio or worry about getting them back into their wild habitat without getting pecked too badly by the parents. Contemporary literature on birds frequently included posed bird nestling photographs and it was not until well after bird conservation became a widespread concern (even among ornithologists, who at that time were still collecting eggs) that this practice was frowned upon. During this period, the taming of wild birds was frequently the subject of articles in professional ornithological journals such as *The Auk*. Stanwood became quite adept at handling nestlings and was familiar with their developmental timetable. By the time she purchased her own camera and was carrying it into the field in 1913, she could predict when the brooding parents, and later the nestlings, would be optimally photogenic.

Stanwood observed and photographed many species of warblers, titmice, nuthatches, woodpeckers, thrushes and creepers for her articles in ornithological journals. She learned that the secret to success was the gradual introduction of the blind with careful

²² Stanwood, "Bird Notebooks," June 12, 1913, SWF.

checking of the bird's reactions at every new stage. She noted the incremental distances of the blind to the nest, understanding that there are three "crisis points" in bird photography: the blind, the lens and the shutter. The first time that each apparatus is introduced to the bird, the nestlings' reactions may vary according to the age of the birds in the nest or the flightiness of the parents. Stanwood had mixed success in this regard. Sometimes she would miscalculate the age of the nestlings and be surprised by a turn of events:

4:50, a bird came and perched near the nest where he could see the eggs and hastily flew away. I think my face at the large hole in the blind frightened the bird. I looked up later and both birds were perched up on a dead tree above the blind where they can look down into it, calling.
At 5:15, they still remained away. I left in hope that they would return to the eggs at once. I thought that they might just have begun to incubate, that could make the study better when they had gotten thoroughly used to the blind.²³

Ironically, this and similar experiences with nest disruptions led to a number of stories about tame birds that later sold well.

Beside disruptions at the nest, Stanwood also had to contend with natural elements, primarily wind, rain, mud, and cattle. Wind made trees sway so that work was impossible because of vibration. It was often necessary to tie back and trim branches in order to gain good access to the nest. Blind construction often required heavy physical labor. "While there is great pleasure in traveling the pathless woods, it involves great physical weariness," she wrote of her efforts in locating appropriate nests for photography study.²⁴

²³ Ibid., June 25, 1913.

²⁴ Ibid., April 30, 1911.

The open fields and woods not only presented physical challenges, but they also contained other dangers. Several times she was obliged to flee her blind setup in a meadow when cattle charged her. Fording streams with camera, tripod and blind equipment, crossing cutovers filled with brush-covered hummocks, and traipsing through mud often exhausted her. Sometimes nesting sites were more than three miles in one direction from her home. As she grew older, trips to nests became social events when children helped carry her equipment. Her efforts to secure observations also meant that she walked downtown to observe birds at work amongst the men in the busy brickyards, lumber sheds, and wharves, where she watched the birds picking up mud for nests in the sheds, and feeding amongst the masts and sails. Working behind the blind also required discomforting hours of sitting perfectly still and quiet inside a canvas blind on hot, sunny days.

Stanwood constructed several different kinds of blinds. A simple umbrella blind was often effective with less shy birds. An open umbrella was propped on the ground and draped with canvas, with the entrance at the far side of the nest vantage point. The bird would be introduced to the blind by gradually advancing it closer and closer to the nest over a few days, so that access to the bird could be as close as two feet. Her field notes record the efforts involved in the process:

June 12, arose at 3:30, wind northeast, cloudy, thermometer 54 degrees. At 5:40, I had focused my camera, and was in the blind. The sky was thick and gray and remained so until the sun was off the front of the nest. I waited anxiously all this time up to 7:30. Then I knew that the sun was behind the tree. At this time the clouds began to part and blow away before the gale. Then I decided to cut down the nest and photograph the birds when the sun shone into the nest or had come

from behind the tree. This happened at 9:18. After I had taken 6 plates, I closed the top of the nest again, bound it securely ...and in less than five minutes in every case the bird came and fed the young.²⁵

Besides rising early in the morning in order to photograph the birds, and trimming around their nest, Stanwood often constructed brush blinds in more open secondary growth spaces. These were constructed of saplings cut and bound together in teepee fashion so that the blinds, once constructed, resembled a thicket. The effort in constructing these blinds was exhausting. Once inside the blind, Stanwood faced a new obstacle: the insects that found her the perfect victim for biting. The ants that crawled over her came in handy, however, when she needed food for nestlings. While quietly waiting in the blind, she would harvest the ants in order to feed them to the young birds she had disrupted. She also captured the grasshoppers that bounded into the blind. From within the blind she observed the progress of the Spruce Budworm and watched Cecropia Moths build cocoons and then emerge from the chrysalis. She noted the facts of these insect stages in her notes and often took some home to show the children. Stanwood found the moths to be good photographic subjects.

Her notes also record her increasing understanding of ornithology. Stanwood had learned plant taxonomy from her education in Providence and at the summer institutes, but she still needed to learn to identify some of the birds when she first began her bird studies. In the earliest years, the notes reveal that she was still learning song recognition and habitat preference. After three years of watching birds in the field, she still recorded her uncertainty about warbler species—these birds were often particularly difficult to identify

²⁵ Ibid., June 13, 1913.

by eye, so that their song was an important identification key. Stanwood developed bird song identification helpers that became quite popular when she published them in her articles and shared them with other interested birders.

June 4, 1909: One thing that has pleased me this spring has been the fact that the words I have connected with the song of the warbler, have readily been recalled to me by the song of the warbler [species], so that I have recognized the warbler before I saw it. I have noted another thing. The warblers seem to frequent the same corners of the pastures each season. The bay-breasted is on the Burnt Land, the chestnut-sided in the upper corner of Mr. Redman's pasture next to the swamp, etc.²⁶

Even though she learned characteristic songs and habitat preference, it is evident from her consistent identification and detailed descriptions of plants, animals and birds that she was still concerned with recording all the elements of natural history. Each bird notebook was carefully dated, and for many years the temperature, time and weather conditions were noted. When she made nesting studies, each movement of the bird was timed. In her earliest years of field study, she kept several different notebooks during the same time period, recording her nesting encounters in one and lists of birds seen and heard in another. Every year she would keep a running tally that included species seen and heard and the nest studies that she had conducted.

Stanwood's meticulous note taking reflects a person determined to ascertain facts, yet in the process she described not just bird identification and behavior, but also the smells, colors and sounds of her world. These descriptions are framed within a methodical

²⁶ Ibid., June 4, 1909.

note taking system, in which she stuck to the calendar rather than the seasons as her organizing principle. Each notebook was dated on the outside cover, and when she had used material from the notebook to compose an article, she would note the name of the article or an easily understood reference, such as "Olive-backed thrush story" or "Used for 'Tenants of Birdsacre.'" If she filled a notebook, she simply continued on to another, titling it "Bird Notebook" with the beginning dates. On many of the covers are lists of bird species heard and seen, or lists of nests to check for the season. In this way, her notes reflect Elliott Coues' advice on note taking in *Field Ornithology*. He advised the field ornithologist not to trust to memory, but to write everything when it was fresh in mind and to breathe life into the subject.²⁷

After this style of close observation, Stanwood's notes were descriptive, textual and pictorial, but she often posed questions for herself, or behaviors to check in the field, within her notes. In this way they resemble the artist's sketchpad: not only did she actually sketch bird nest diagrams, but she also often made reminder notes to herself, timed how long it took to get to a site, and wrote scenic descriptions of habitat and discovery of nests. She made note of the numbers of sapling poles cut to construct blinds and how long it took to construct them during the humid, buggy days of early June.

²⁷ Steven G. Herman, *The Naturalist's Field Journal: A Manual of Instruction Based on a System Established by Joseph Grinnell* (Vermillion, SD: Buteo Books, 1989), 29.

When Stanwood began observing birds, many taxonomic issues relating to eastern birds had been settled, and few if any new species were to be discovered in the field in which Stanwood observed, but their nesting behavior was relatively unknown. For this reason, Stanwood declared in her letters to others that she deliberately chose to study bird-nesting behavior as a way to add to the scholarly body of knowledge in ornithology. "From the beginning, 1905, I made a special study of nests and building," she wrote Henry Turner Bailey.²⁸ As a result, her notes were predominantly about nesting behavior rather than species identifications.

Through her use of scientific anatomical terms, Stanwood's field notes from 1905-1913 reveal her scientific perspective and knowledge of bird biology. Nowhere in her field notes does she use informal terms that indicate a bias toward domestic terminology, such as "home" instead of "nest" or "father bird" instead of "male." It is also clear that she shared the scientists' perspective that birds were objects to be manipulated, measured and experimented upon. On many occasions during this time, until she brought her own camera to the nest and was more concerned with photography than statistics, she carried a scale to the field and weighed nestlings as they grew, recording their dimensions, weight, feather growth and coloration. Her difficulty in keeping a wriggly nestling flat to measure is amusing reading. She described them as "eggs without a shell" that flopped over on legs too weak to stand. In addition to weighing them she assessed their improvement in strength and agility. She measured nests and nest cavities and casually manipulated nestlings, taking

²⁸Cordelia J. Stanwood to H. T. Bailey, April 2, 1921, HTB.

them from the nest to document their developmental stages through photographs. She reported this information in her scientific articles. She was not indifferent to the birds, however, and she often recorded her worry over parent birds and nestlings exposed to severe weather and suffering poor health:

I was out in Dyer Jordan's woods, at the feet of a Redstart by 6:15. By 10 o'clock I was in the woods again, wet through. The rainstorm continued all that day, pouring violently in the afternoon and evening, and all day Sunday, June 18th. I thought of the little mother Redstart, without even a leaf to cover her, sitting there with that heavy rain falling on her during the long cold, night. The other birds fared nearly as badly. What would become of the little Nashville Warblers in the damp bank?²⁹

Despite her concern for the birds in the wild, she apparently was not aware of the inconsistency that arose when she brought nestlings into her house as a convenience when photographing them. These contradictions were prevalent in ornithology at the time, when it was splitting off from natural history to become its own science.

The boundaries between amateur natural history and the increasingly professionalizing realm of the sciences were permeable and changing, and individuals interested in birds included those whose sole efforts were devoted to taming birds rather than scientifically studying them. Others, like Stanwood, had a special affinity for birds, but wished to learn more about them intellectually. In the process, they asked questions about their behavior, distribution, and habits that could only be answered by careful observation. Stanwood's ability to locate nests and her aptitude in handling birds was

²⁹Cordelia J. Stanwood, "Bird Notebooks," June 19, 1916, SWF.

particularly notable. Her insight into bird behavior often worked mysteriously. "The nature of insight in science, as elsewhere, is notoriously elusive. And almost all great scientists—those who learn to cultivate insight—learn also to respect its mysterious workings," wrote Evelyn Fox Keller.³⁰ Stanwood's special talent was handling birds.

Her notes make no mention of the harm she might have inflicted on the birds, but she did understand that she should try to train fledglings to take to the wild. While Stanwood usually behaved as we have come to expect of the scientist, who interacts but presumably does not attach emotionally to the subject, she seemed to enjoy raising young birds. This was a popular activity among ornithologists, both male and female, during this period and was the subject of articles in professional ornithological journals. Stanwood's practice led to experiments in hand-raising nestlings, and this activity, though potentially harmful to the nestlings, she recorded in warm, maternal language.³¹ Referring to young a Hermit Thrush she named "Pet" she wrote: "Twice tonight he alighted on my head. It is amusing while he seems to take me for his mother, is so pleased when I am near, yet he resents being interfered with and squirms so savagely...all of that time I was trying to persuade the little rascal to go to bed but he would be fed, and tidy his feathers"³² This

³⁰ Evelyn Fox Keller, *A Feeling for the Organism: The Life and Work of Barbara McClintock* (New York: W. H. Freeman, 1983), 103.

³¹ Josephine Donovan and Carol J. Adams, "Introduction" *Animals and Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995); Linda K. Kerber, "Some Cautionary Words for Historians" *An Ethic of Care*, ed. Marfy Jeanne Larrabee, *Feminist and Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

³² Cordelia J. Stanwood, "Bird Notebooks," July 12, 1909, SWF.

suggests that Stanwood, working with the birds out of a scientific motivation, brought a maternal sensibility to her scientific work. These isolated incidences of intimacy with the birds indoors were outweighed by her habitual scientific observations of them in the wild, however, so that the balance of her activities were in the realm of science rather than sentiment. If one were to ascribe maternal motivations to Stanwood, they seemed rather to be directed toward the young people upon whom she relied for assistance in carrying her equipment, locating bird nests, and climbing trees.

Although Stanwood did experiment with taming wild birds, most of her efforts went into studying them in the wild. Even though she wrote about young birds as though they were incorrigible children, she measured and weighed them as they grew, gathering food for them and tracking their daily progress. This required a great deal of work. She banged the ground to harvest crane flies, boiled and dried grasshoppers, and chopped earthworms to make nestling food. Her talent in handling birds grew as she photographed them.

Stanwood was remarkably adept at catching birds and taming them. She did so for practical and not capricious purposes, however; she did so either to carry them to Embert Osgood or to pose them herself for her own camera work. This process closely resembled the ritual social occasions that families would enact when taking themselves to the photographer for studio shots; wherein the process of obtaining the photograph became just as interesting as the resulting photograph itself. For human subjects, the studio photographer acquired special props or even clothing with which the subjects could be

adorned. Portrait photography demanded particular pose conventions: often families grouped themselves according to age or rank in the family. Portrait subjects were usually posed three-quarters to the camera rather than frontally, and it was the photographer's art to engage the subject sufficiently to gain a satisfactory pose. An artistic yet "truthful" portrait demanded that the subject think of something pleasant, keep the chin up, and the shoulders back. The photographer would then distract the subject so that he or she was relaxed. In order to achieve that end, the photographer often brought in caged birds for the subject to look at, from which is derived the expression, "Watch the birdie!"³³

Ironically, it was Osgood and Stanwood, from the other side of the camera, who looked at the birdie and attempted to pose it successfully for a portrait. This met with limited success; often Osgood accompanied Stanwood to the field himself in order to photograph nestlings. In later years, her nephew Alfred Langewald accompanied her. She also asked neighborhood boys to carry the camera equipment. The young birds were a challenge to control under studio conditions, and field conditions often depended on particular light before a satisfactory shot could be made. At all times, Stanwood sought an artistic portrait of the birds, whether in the nest or in the studio. This meant that she manipulated the nestlings and they became quite tame. This also meant that her photographs possessed an intimate aura that few other bird photographs showed.

³³ Shirley Wajda, "'Social Currency': A Domestic History of the Portrait Photograph in the United States, 1839-1889" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1992), *passim*.

She was mindful that young birds should become adapted to living in the wild. After she had photographed a nest full of birds, she gradually introduced them back to the wild by taking them to the “boiling spring,” a spring-fed stream that rarely froze or ran dry regardless of season or weather conditions. This was a particularly favored place for birds and wildlife, and Stanwood herself preferred the water from that stream to well water. Often the juvenile birds that she left there overnight would still be there the following morning, waiting for her to feed them the grasshoppers, worms and concoctions of hamburger and milk that she mixed up. While her earliest stories are of adventures of birds in the studio, many of her later stories were based on her experiences with the birds she released near the boiling spring.

Stanwood’s experiences working with birds extended across many species, including crows and hawks. Throughout her lifetime she was attentive to the behavior of crows in the wild and she always noted their behavioral changes throughout the year. One year, she rescued a young crow that stayed with her at Birdsacre for a year until it was shot. It made a nuisance of itself with the neighbors, flying through open windows into their houses, picking up small objects, and carrying them off. Stanwood wrote several stories about “Beppo” the crow. In an era in which raptors of all kinds were thought of as useless or worse, Stanwood was nevertheless interested in their growth and development. She admired the hunting ability of the hawk. Every year she tracked the migratory appearance of the broad-winged hawk, one year photographing two young in various stages of growth. She checked on the growth of the young birds:

July 1, walking in the partially overgrown wood road I heard a faint rustle and saw what might have been a mouse but think it was a young mole.... I said to myself, "How I wish my Hawk had these little animals for a meal. The young birds look so thin." In several minutes I was startled to see the Hawk flying almost in my face. I think, however, he saw me too soon to make a capture. I arose and passed on. Then I heard from some treetop around, the "Tee-wheat!" of the Hawk. I hope he lingered until his courage returned and he secured a dinner. It shows how these hawks work for their living.³⁴

It is likely that Stanwood, having fed many young birds during her studies, was well aware of how demanding they were. She had hunted food for baby birds and understood first hand how hard the parent birds worked.

Stanwood was very busy at the height of the bird-nesting season. For example, during the summer of 1916, she kept track of over 20 different warbler nests, photographing them and recording the feeding and behavior of the parents. Some of her efforts to secure photographs, such a clipping back brush in order to gain good photographs, met with disastrous results. When working with a Golden-crowned Kinglet nest, Stanwood and the birds discovered what could happen:

Went to the nest of the Golden-crowned Kinglet before 7am....Cold. Placed the nest down low on the other side of the tree. Saw the female trying to feed the young where the nest had been. She flew from branch to branch and peered constantly around. The young birds had deep yellowish bodies, and their eyes were not yet open. They were about an inch long, seven or eight were in the nest. It was one of the prettiest sights I have ever saw. [sic]

When I visited the nest at 1:30pm, the young birds seemed bright. Save for one gee, gee call of the parent birds, I saw nothing of him. [sic]

I waited around some time and fearing lest the young were starving, I walked away home, got bread and milk, and the tree clippers thinking that I would take them home for the night if the parent birds did not appear. They did not seem so active after taking the milk and I thought that I must get the nest where I could

³⁴Cordelia J. Stanwood, "Bird Notebook," July 1, 1919, SWF.

feed the young better. Just as I clipped off the nest I heard the gee call again. The young appeared to be dying. I placed the nest nearer the old location and came away.

I think if I had not interfered that the young might have lived. That is, the parent birds, perhaps, were caring for them but timid.³⁵

Despite Stanwood's best intention, and her growing ability to care for nestling birds, she could not always make her bird studies a success. Although Stanwood tamed birds in ways that today we may deem inappropriate, nevertheless she conducted her fieldwork for a serious purpose. Moreover, her talent with birds became widely known, and often people brought her injured birds, or children brought her nests full of birds, for her nurse to health. She took notes on their physical characteristics, noting such things as changing bill color, the growth of the feathers, or the agility of the bird as it grew or recovered. In this way, Stanwood came to understand bird biology, particularly of those birds she chose to study for her life histories.

By the time Stanwood ceased her careful bird studies around 1917, many of the conventions of bird life histories were well established. In the 1916 issues of *The Auk*, Julian Huxley had formalized the methods and approach for conducting a properly informative bird life history. He emphasized the importance of good field glasses and other equipment, but he was also concerned that the bird student be fully versed in the theoretical approaches to bird study. "The main biological problems demanding solution seem to me to be connected with the courtship of birds.... First and foremost comes the need for

³⁵ Ibid., June 20, 1916.

facts.... It is important for the professional biologist to have many new facts.... To get these he must turn to the naturalist and the bird-watcher; and for these latter it is enormously important to have the old facts summarized and correlated into principles.”³⁶ Huxley emphasized the importance of good field notes through continuous watching, in which the bird student chose a single species of bird breeding in a single locality, and to study it to “get at the bottom of its life-history.” He made suggestions as to the types of notepads to use to aid in ease of filing statistics, describing in close detail the use of file cards and an index system so that a species’ notes could be compiled over several seasons’ time. Although she did not use this system, Stanwood’s field work corresponded to the categories of inquiry that Huxley suggested were important: autumn and winter habits; actions connected with the beginning of the breeding season; courtship and display; fighting and actions connected with jealousy (including questions of territory); nest-building, egg-laying and associated actions; incubation and care of the young; and miscellaneous notes, including localities, identification, call-notes and other particulars of the species. Huxley emphasized that

Bird-watching is the foundation of a real science, the science of the behavior of birds in their natural environment. Bird-watching, too, is in itself a sport, as all who have tried it well know; but those who attempt to understand the motives of the birds, the connection of their doings and the origin of their various habits, will find themselves not only experiencing the sportsman’s thrill, but also

³⁶ Julian Huxley, “Bird-Watching and Biological Science” *The Auk* 28 (April 1916): 143-161.

the intellectual interest of the detective piecing together the broken chain of evidence, and the human feelings of a spectator at the play.³⁷

As we have seen, Stanwood was often in the grip of fascination during her bird work, and her careful notes, while not of Huxley's system, followed the categorical imperatives he suggested. Stanwood's bird life histories met the need for facts through her extensive field study.

As early as 1910, Stanwood's field studies were recognized for their important contribution to ornithological knowledge. In the January, 1910 issue of *The Auk*, the "Bird Notes" column included a reference to her expertise. In a paragraph titled "Another Swan for Maine," Maine ornithologist Ora Willis Knight described how he relied on her measure to describe a swan that had been spotted in a downtown Ellsworth taxidermist's shop. "Recently I asked Miss Cordelia J. Stanwood...if she would not get careful measurements and a description of the bird for me, knowing she was a careful observer and bird student.... In connection with Miss Stanwood's description and my own distant view of the bird [through the shop's window] I have no hesitation in pronouncing it a Whistling Swan, a bird new to Maine."³⁸ Upon Knight's request, Stanwood had gone to the taxidermist shop and measured the swan in order to obtain a detailed report for the AOU's list. This was the

³⁷ Julian Huxley, "Bird-watching and Biological Science" *The Auk* 33 (July 1916): 256-270 (concluded from p.161).

³⁸ Ora Willis Knight, "Another Swan for Maine," *The Auk* 27 (January 1910): 78-79.

beginning of her contribution of bird information to the larger scientific community; in just five years, Stanwood had been accepted as a reliable authority.

Although she was far from other ornithologists and only exchanged ideas through her correspondence, she gained an excellent reputation for her work. Both the Maine Ornithological Society and the editor of *The Auk* noted that her work was published in a number of periodicals:

Recent Bird Biographies by Miss Stanwood: Numerous sketches of birds and their nesting activities have appeared during the last few years from the pen of Miss Stanwood, all of them evidently based upon careful study and written in a style that is pleasing and yet serious enough to suit the importance of many of the facts that are recorded. These sketches can well be taken as models for others who have the time to make careful studies of the activities of the birds' nests, and ability to set them down in biographical sketches.³⁹

Stanwood's success speaks for her leadership in the emerging field of ornithology, as well as her talent and persistence. She published twenty nesting bird studies in the *Maine Journal of Ornithology*, *Auk*, *Wilson Bulletin* and *Bird Lore* between 1910 and 1917. Following those years, although she continued to go out into the field, she focused her work on gathering ideas for short stories and sketches that were appropriate for popular audiences, but she did gather census and breeding bird information that she sent to the Breeding Bird Biological Survey (under the auspices of the U.S. Government). By the time of World War I, Stanwood had met with success in her bird studies. In the process, she rediscovered the landscape around her home, rewrote her mental landscape map to include

³⁹ "Recent Publications," *The Auk* (April 1916): 214-215.

the plants and birds, and formed new relationships with the local children. She took up photography, in the process learning how to tame birds as well as the art of the camera. Science was to close the doors to Stanwood's further serious ornithological work, but its benefits were lasting. Her bird work also brought her a good reputation in the ornithological world that did not fade until she reached her old age and had outlived her contemporaries. With these other ornithologists, she worked on conservation reform, sold her photographs, and contributed biological information to support the Smithsonian's and U.S. Fish and Wildlife's Biological Surveys of birds. She participated in bird banding research. Stanwood's work reached beyond the ornithological world, however. Her second decade of bird study and writing brought her country birds to city people in the form of popular magazine articles.

Throughout these activities, the woods and fields surrounding Birdsacre not only grounded Stanwood in purposeful work, but they also inspired her; the woods themselves had the power to inspire awe in Stanwood, and occasionally she lapsed into rhapsodic prose:

This evening the northern sky is full of long, dark, gray-blue clouds. The sunset is one of those gorgeous visual effects that come at this time of year, yellow, deep orange, and purple. A few warblers, the black-throated green and the magnolia sing in the twilight bush, occasionally a song sparrow but the wild, sweet tranquil songs of the white-throat sparrow and the hermit thrush dominate the evening. The leisurely measures come first from one, then another, so that one fancies that all is still for the night when the sweet wild whistle of the white-throat or the bell-like peals of the hermit thrush ring out again, and it is only when it is quite dark, and the fireflies begin to twinkle that last song dies on the evening air....Just at this time the dark-green of the evergreen is becoming more intense, the light green is becoming greener and deeper. The contrast is not so great as it has been but the trees present

an aspect of great vigor, and the difference is still conspicuous, as each beautiful, irregular, branch mass is picked out in lighter green.

In some fields the hawk weed makes bright orange patches, but the ordinary field is just swaying grass, that the wind makes [it] willowy as it rolls over it, white with daisy, red with clover, yellow with buttercups—a good sight to look upon.⁴⁰

Remaining in the woods in the darkening summer evenings, Stanwood sometimes encountered the gothic church of the woods, and she often experienced conflicts when she felt she should remain at home, expressing frustration at having to leave the field to return home to domestic duties. She wrote about her “capacity for doing nothing” when she went into the field, a reflection of the value society held on women’s fieldwork, yet her work served as a model for those seeking to contribute to the newly emerging science of ornithology. Moreover, for forty years she kept careful track of her field experiences in the non-exotic, nearby location of her home. In the process, her work offers the environmental historian the key to understanding how reverence, curiosity, careful observation, and attention to detail in the every day world can unlock the secrets of a bird’s life, in the process freeing a woman from the strictures of domesticity and indoor life.

⁴⁰ Stanwood, “Bird Notebooks,” June 24, 1911, SWF.

Chapter Four

“THE FRIENDSHIP OF NATURE”: STANWOOD THE ORNITHOLOGIST, 1904-1958

My dear Miss Stanwood: I received the other day a copy of “Nature and Culture” with your article on the red-breasted nuthatch. How well you do this sort of thing! You stand a fair chance of becoming famous as a naturalist.

Letter from H. T. Bailey, September 30, 1913¹

Stanwood returned to live with her family in Maine and conducted her bird studies in an area within a few miles from her home, but her influence extended far beyond the distance she could walk. Her excursions fishing on the ponds, streams and beaches, tramping in the woods, sleighing through the piney woods with her women friends, and her far-ranging expeditions with schoolchildren to bird nesting areas and fishing spots meant that her knowledge, informally shared with other adults and children, enriched their lives and educated them to the ways of the birds. Her bird subjects themselves migrated past the physical territories in which she studied them, and her bird conservation efforts allied her to reformers in Maine and across the nation. Her publications and her correspondence with other ornithologists linked her to other people around the world.

These connections can be imagined graphically. If one were to picture the migration paths of the birds she studied, envisioning them as lines across the globe, their traces would be visible south to the southern hemisphere (warbler migrations), the circumpolar regions (raptors and seabirds), and occasionally to Europe (European ducks).

¹ Henry Turner Bailey to Cordelia J. Stanwood, September 30, 1914, SWF.

Imagine the globe again, this time to overlay line traces representing the circulation of the Auk, *Bird Lore* and other publications, and one can see that the circulation of Stanwood's observations reached throughout the international birding community. When that vision includes hubs in Maine and places such as Cleveland, Ohio, New York City, Boston and Washington, DC where Stanwood's ornithology and conservation correspondents lived, it is clear that Stanwood's sway far exceeded that of many contemporary women. Add the factor of time, and Stanwood's influence is still felt today through her observations published in Palmer's *Maine Birds* and A.C. Bent's *Life Histories of Birds*, even surviving as footnotes in contemporary ornithology.² The nature of Stanwood's nature stretched past the geographic limits of Ellsworth and extended beyond the time period in which she conducted her bird studies. In essence, Stanwood's understanding of nature, developed from her fieldwork, photography and writing, transcended time and space.

The pathway for that transcendence was ornithology. The evolution of ornithologists' interest in bird nomenclature, bird conservation, and the increasingly sophisticated science of bird study behavior parallels and compliments Stanwood's work. In extending her voice to the public as a bird expert, Stanwood transcended the domestic realm in which she dwelt at home in Ellsworth. Through her writing and reform efforts,

² Arthur Cleveland Bent, *Life Histories of North American Jays, Crows and Titmice, Order Passeriformes* (Washington, DC: U.S. Printing Office, 1946); Ralph Palmer, "Maine Birds," *Bulletin of the Museum of Comparative Zoology* (Washington, DC: US Printing Office, 1949); Ralph S. Palmer and Herbert Norton, *Maine Birds* (Cambridge: The Museum, 1949); Susan A. Smith, *The Black-capped Chickadee: Behavioral Ecology and Natural History* (Ithaca: Comstock Publishing Associates, 1991).

Stanwood's private "home"—the outdoor world within walking distance of her house—became a public place that her readers grew to know well. In this way, the virtual dimensions of house far exceeded the physical space of her home and its surrounding woods and fields in Ellsworth, where Stanwood gradually built her career in ornithology.

Within the evolving practice of ornithological science, Stanwood emerged as a well-respected ornithologist whose work, though lost to obscurity for decades, was esteemed and recognized in her day. Stanwood's example illustrates that in the early twentieth century women scientists pioneered both scientific and popular writing about nature, and that at the same time they worked with concerned lay volunteers for conservation reform. Most important, as a bird scientist and writer, Stanwood not only worked to protect the birds, but she commodified them just as surely as did the feather dealers and game merchants she fought to defeat. Stanwood's commodification of birds through her writing and photography was more ethical and sustainable, yet it foreshadowed our postindustrial use of nature that promotes commercial products on the basis of their supposed affinity with nature.

When she returned to Ellsworth, Stanwood was forced to contend with others who sought to shape her identity. Her mother wished her to stay indoors at home, and Stanwood often wrote in her notes that "tongues wagged" when she ventured far and wide after nesting birds.³ Stanwood's work took place in a world in which women worked under a

³ Stanwood, "Bird Notebooks," SWF, *passim*.

different set of constraints than did men, and they were gradually excluded from professional science as the century wore on. Nonetheless they persisted in their desire to study, protect, conserve and represent nature. As Linda Lear has emphasized, although women's voices were constricted by the domineering male culture, even so in their varied efforts they played a crucial part in the evolving discussion about the nature of the natural world.⁴ Stanwood was in the company of these female scientists and nature writers who influenced the progressive conservation movement in the early twentieth century, but she accomplished more than most. Stanwood can be counted as a female ornithologist who not only made concrete contributions to the advancement of ornithological science in her writing and photography, but also through her sway as a bird expert in her community, was able to influence government officials concerning conservation reform laws. At the same time, she sought to support herself through her bird work, but unfortunately her scientific career was short-lived.

This was a period in which club women led the fight for the feather ban, effectively setting in place an ironclad conservation ethic for the protection of birds. It was within this context that Stanwood was able to transcend the limits of her gender through her bird study and conservation activism. However, she was also confined by it. Disinclined toward being a "club lady," and socially marginal because of her single status, Stanwood eschewed the

⁴ Linda J. Lear, "Book Review" on Lorraine Anderson and Thomas S. Edwards, *At Home on This Earth: Two Centuries of Nature Writing*, (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2002), *Environmental History*, forthcoming.

social club through which many women were able to lay down paths to authority and power when they were without suffrage. Rather, Stanwood preferred to connect socially through her bird work, so that her interest in birds formed the basis for her professional, social, and reform alliances. She worked in the persona of the bird expert, volunteering for the Maine Ornithological and Audubon societies, writing letters, circulating petitions and corresponding with Maine's representatives to influence conservation-related votes. She wrote letters to the editors of newspapers, her signature recognized as one representing bird expertise. In this way, she performed her work from outside the middle social class club that was so well known in the bird conservation effort, making her influence felt without a service club or a husband to support her.

Stanwood's story does not fit either the strictly scientist or writer model, and in this she was not alone. Her bird work occurred at a time when many other women shared a love of scientific inquiry about the life of birds (and other creatures in the natural world). As we have seen, Stanwood disliked the domesticity she felt she was forced to embrace, even as she privately described the natural world in its terms. Importantly, because her house remained without electricity and indoor plumbing throughout her lifetime, she never escaped the drudgery of heavy housework as did many other women; her path to nature study did not spring from a desire to utilize leisure time, but rather from love of and curiosity about birds themselves. Although Stanwood learned natural history in high school (presumably as an appropriately genteel skill), as a teacher in the service of the manual arts, she had practiced nature study as tool for drawing instruction to children of varying social

classes. This meant that once in Ellsworth, she continued to approach nature from a serious perspective, utilizing it to practice her profession.

During her active conservation work when she was practicing scientific bird study, Stanwood aggressively promoted her work and sought payment for its publication. She depended on publication of her work in order to economically support not only herself but also her family. Evidence in the form of correspondence with editors and the resulting publication of her work in national magazines abounds. She even collected abandoned bird nests and sold them to collectors. Stanwood's reliance on bird work for economic support, even as she worked for their conservation, demonstrates that women's bird study and conservation worked to commodify the birds as did any other extractive activity, albeit in a low impact manner. Stanwood, like many female writers, was not at all shy about forwarding her own interests in the world of print and commerce.

When Stanwood returned to Ellsworth, foremost in her mind was her mental recovery. Having suffered a nervous breakdown as a teacher, she was loath to take up her profession of teaching again when she felt vulnerable to neurasthenia. Although she never used that term *per se*, she often complained in her field notes about having "ragged nerves."⁵ As she wrote in a short article, "Absolute rest...was the physician's prescription.... To me that meant a change of occupation."⁶ While in the Adams Nervine

⁵ Stanwood, "Bird Notebook," SWF, *passim*.

⁶ Cordelia J. Stanwood, "How to Earn Pin Money," SWF.

she had been taught that manual arts and exercise were the best prescription for mental health. In Eckstorm's letter to Stanwood, her reference to Stanwood's good fortune to be out in the woods illustrated how difficult it was for women to escape the widespread stricture that women should remain indoors. This was a value that they had either internalized themselves, or felt constrained to meet by their families, friends, and the larger community. Yet increasingly in the early twentieth century, women were becoming more physically active out of doors, whether in the service of mental health, nature study, or physical fitness.

Stanwood and her friends took advantage of these changing social conditions. They relished their outdoor outings, exploring together the delightful advent of spring. She recorded an outing as though the three women were little birds:

A brief resume of our day at Camp Iotsanonnia.

Mrs. Alexander entertained Miss Annie Robin Stockbridge, and Miss Cordelia Junco. Stanwood most delightfully at Camp Iotsanonnia. Tuesday May 23, 1916. The party came by automobile early in the morning, and visited the haunts of the Red-winged Blackbird. The Flicker was building. A little mother Song Sparrow flittered from her nest at the foot of a dead sapling, disclosing four exquisite pale blue eggs speckled with brown. The woods teased with migrating Warblers from the tropics. While the parties were doing justice to a delicious fish dinner, these tropical genus peered shyly in the windows. The wild laugh of the loons echoed from shore to shore of lake, and the Kingfishers called shrilly from some dead bushes.

The afternoon was spent on the lake. Part of the time was devoted to fishing.

Patten's pond on which Camp Iotsanonnia is situated reminds one of an exquisite impressionistic watercolor. It is surrounded by deciduous trees instead of dark, somber evergreens as are most Maine lakes. The day was slightly gray with fitful bursts of sunshine; the trunks of the trees gray-green, pearl gray, wood brown, and they furnished a splendid background for the delicate pastel coloring of the new leaves, soft yellow and emerald greens, pearl gray, old rose, dull violet reds; mosses of blooming shad bushes illuminated the hillside, and the candelabra of the hobble

bushes burned with a shady white flame among the trees. These were the few of the attractions with which the hostess held her guests but all felt that they had spent a rare day in communion with nature.⁷

Just as Stanwood herself enjoyed investigating birds, so her friends joined her in taking the pleasures of the woods. Although she was nearly middle-aged, Stanwood thoroughly enjoyed escaping the strictures of the earlier Victorian indoor womanhood to relish in the activities of the New Woman. This certainly improved her mental outlook.

When she returned to Ellsworth, Stanwood's initial determination to work outdoors as a cure for her neurasthenia was later reinforced by her success in ornithology. Her bird work gave her the means by which to stretch the boundaries set for her by the nineteenth-century domestic ideology in which she was raised; this dictated that women belonged only in domestic roles as wives, mothers, or nurturers of the family. Others believed that if women must have a professional life, then they belonged only in those professions associated with these roles, such as teaching or nursing, and then only until marriage. Despite this pervasive norm that Stanwood herself had internalized, she nonetheless persisted in her bird study work, in the process both adding to the body of ornithological knowledge and also contributing to the growing literature of popular ornithology. Moreover, her work is also appropriately framed in the context of the emerging twentieth-century professionalism, in particular the professionalism to which women younger than Stanwood often sought to lay claim.

⁷ Stanwood, "Bird Notebook," May 23, 1916, SWF.

During the period when Stanwood took up her bird work, women were increasingly caught between two cultural definitions of womanhood: the domestic Victorian ideal and the new professional woman. Stanwood's career in bird work reflects the paradoxical nature of this changing climate for women, one that often manifested itself in reform. Because some historians see Progressive era reform as rooted in women's self-concept as domestic conservator, they have viewed it as a movement that was essentially conservative in nature. But Stanwood's work grew from different motivations. For her, expertise and local knowledge were the basis of her reform impulse, and her inclination toward reform, previously manifested in her innovative teaching methods, reasserted itself upon her return to Ellsworth. In her career as a teacher, she had been recognized as a professional. When she returned to Ellsworth and began her ornithology and crafts work, she approached her work with similar professional zeal. This was rooted in her identity as a "new professional woman" rather than as domestic conservator. All of this she accomplished while living at her home in the presumably socially conservative role of the dutiful, unmarried daughter who cared for her aging parents. In this way, Stanwood presents the historian with a contradiction: bound by her gender to stay in the bosom of her family, she nonetheless maintained a professional identity, which, from her home base in Ellsworth, she projected via the printed page to public world beyond.

Initially, although her activities were informed by concern for her mental health, gradually her bird work took on a life of its own as she sought publication of her findings and increasingly depended on her work for economic support. Soon she became recognized

as a professional in these fields, also. Her growing influence can be limned through her emergence as a figure in ornithology. During the early period of the twentieth century, both men and women faced significant obstacles to success in ornithology as a career, not the least of which was earning sufficient income to make a living. Positions in ornithology were scarce, but they did exist. Men who sought careers in ornithology met with considerably more success in the endeavor than did women. Many men were able to find patronage and positions that allowed them to gain renown for their expertise, in spite of the fact that they, like female ornithologists, had received little formal academic training in ornithology. The study of birds relied upon careful field observation nearly as much as skills within the laboratory that were in demand later in the century. In this way, skill in ornithology had much in common with botany: both demanded a trained eye that could be exercised from behind the easel, camera lens or blind. Ornithologists, however, pursued a mobile subject, and this meant that those women who practiced it must necessarily be robust enough to pursue their work in the field, often in remote areas and rough terrain. It was in fieldwork that men had the advantage over women: they had the funds at their disposal and felt more free to travel to pursue their bird work in remote areas. They could also travel to ornithological association meetings at which only they were voting members. These “professional” men formed the early ornithological associations that either excluded women or marginalized them into the category of “associates” without regard to their credentials (with the Maine Ornithological Society and the Wilson Ornithological Society

being the notable exceptions).⁸ The men who defined and expanded the contours of ornithology during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also created new institutions and professional organizations, such as the early Nuttall Ornithological Club and the American Ornithological Union. Lynds Jones, whose patron was Althea Sherman; Francis Herrick, a biologist employed by Adelbert College (later part of Western Reserve University); and Frank Chapman of the American Natural History Museum are examples of men who struggled to support themselves, but who became known as some of the professionals who founded ornithology. Stanwood corresponded with each of these men: with Jones concerning her articles in the *Wilson Bulletin*, with Herrick who paid her for the bird nests she collected and sent to him, and with Frank Chapman who advised her on bird research and photography.⁹

Lynds Jones, of the Ornithology department (funded by Althea Sherman) at Oberlin College, was born in Jefferson, Ohio in 1865. He was an early teacher of ecology and an ornithologist with special interest in bird migration. He was one of the founders of the

⁸American Ornithologists' Union, *Fifty Years of American Ornithology* (Lancaster, PA: American Ornithologists' Union, 1933) Frank M. Chapman and T.S. Palmer, Editors, *Fifty Years' Progress of American Ornithology, 1883-1933, Revised Edition* (Lancaster: American Ornithologists' Union, 1933); Mark Barrow, *A Passion for Birds: American Ornithology After Audubon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); Paul Brooks "Birds and Men" *Audubon* 82 (1980); Paul Lawrence Farber, *Discovering Birds: The Emergence of Ornithology as a Scientific Discipline, 1760-1850* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); William E. Davis and Jerome A. Jackson, eds., *Contributions to the History of North American Ornithology* (Cambridge: Nuttall Ornithological Club, 1995); John K. Terres and National Audubon Society, *The Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds* (New York: Knopf, 1980).

⁹ Cordelia Stanwood to Frank Chapman, 1912, SWF.

Wilson Ornithological Society and was the editor of the *Wilson Bulletin* for 36 years, its president for 13 years, and a fellow of AOU. At first a professor of zoology, he taught the first course in ornithology ever offered in any American college or university, which he established with the generosity of Althea Sherman, and with whom he worked closely on the *Wilson Bulletin*.¹⁰ *Wilson Bulletin* was complimented by *Bird Lore* magazine as a popular publishing venue for the many fledging ornithologists during the first two decades of the twentieth century.

Stanwood first communicated with Frank Chapman, editor of *Bird Lore* magazine, about publication of an article she had written about birds, "How a Baby Vireo Came to Have His Picture Taken." Chapman's response was not encouraging. He replied that there were two kinds nature of articles: "One is literary and aims to arouse interest through the method of presentation, and the other finds its value through its contained facts, which are presented simply." He wrote that there was insufficient space in *Bird Lore* to warrant publishing her article, which he viewed as more literary than factual.¹¹ This criticism did not discourage Stanwood from continuing in her study, however. An article by the same name, probably considerably revised, appeared in 1910 in the *Journal of the Maine*

¹⁰ S.C. Kendeigh, "In Memoriam: Lynds Jones" *Auk* 69(3) 258-65; John K. Terres, *The Audubon Encyclopedia of North American Birds* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980), 562.

¹¹ Frank M. Chapman to Cordelia J. Stanwood, February 8, 1908, Frank M. Chapman Collection, Department of Ornithology, American Museum of Natural History, New York, NY.

Ornithological Society.¹² Chapman's harsh criticism was common; he was often critical in his assessment of articles for his magazine, and Stanwood found much more success in both the *Wilson Bulletin* and *Auk*.

Like many other early ornithologists, Chapman was not formally trained in ornithology, but rather was fortunate in pursuit of his passion. Originally a bank clerk, he found several patrons who supported his bird expeditions early in his career. He was considered the dean of American ornithologists in his time, and was a pioneer in bird photography, a writer, lecturer, and the Curator of Birds at the American Museum of Natural History (1908-42) in New York. He was author of 225 articles and 17 books, including *Autobiography of a Bird Lover* (1933), which was followed by *My Tropical Air Castle* and *Camps and Cruises of an Ornithologist*. Most widely used and possibly most important was his *Handbook of Birds of Eastern North America*, a popular reference work on birds. His museum reports of his studies of birds in South America were possibly his most important scientific publication. Builder of the most extensive ornithological collection in the world, he was founder, editor and owner of *Bird-Lore*, a fashionable, non-scientific bird journal later bought by the National Audubon society and re-titled *Audubon Magazine*.¹³

¹²Cordelia J. Stanwood, "How a Baby Vireo Came to Have His Picture Taken" *Journal of the Maine Ornithological Society* (September 1910), 45-47.

¹³ John K. Terres, *The Audubon Encyclopedia of North American Birds* (New York: Knopf, 1980), 88.

It was also Chapman whom Stanwood first contacted about advice for camera equipment suitable for photographing birds. Her questions led him to refer her to Francis Herrick, with whom she had a several years' long correspondence. Herrick was Western Reserve University's first professor of biology and later wrote the first definitive biography of John James Audubon. A life-long researcher on the habits, origins and development of instincts of wild birds, he was the first scientist to study the bald eagle in the wild. His work was not limited to birds: he pioneered a study on the life cycle of the lobster. In particular, he shared Stanwood's interest in the "home life" of birds. Their mutual interest in the nesting habits of birds, particularly nest construction, led Stanwood to collect nests and send them to him.

Stanwood found Herrick to be a sympathetic correspondent. They exchanged field notes and observation, particularly about birds' nests, from 1911 through 1914. He admired her work, commenting that he wished that he "had the time" to complete so many observations of the bird on the nest. Stanwood enthusiastically shared her observations and the nests she had collected once the nesting season was over. Herrick reimbursed her for the shipping charges and paid her \$15 for each collection. In this way, Stanwood commodified the birds' artifacts, earning money for the nests she had watched them build, raise their young in, and then abandon. Following the summer of Stanwood's father's death in 1914, she implored Herrick to purchase more nests and to help her with a manuscript for a book on birds. She also shared her frustration about her poverty and her desire to support

herself through her bird work. Herrick expressed regret that he could not help her with a bird manuscript because he was already over extended. He wrote what was to become a common refrain for Stanwood, "Birds books do not pay very well unless done in a popular and taking way.... I certainly hope that you will recover your health, and be able to continue your teaching as well as your study of birds, if these two things can be combined. It is sad to think that the things which we like most to do are often those that pay the least, but so it usually is."¹⁴ As we have seen, Fannie Hardy Eckstorm, with whom Stanwood corresponded and worked on bird conservation reform, had echoed this sentiment. Stanwood was not alone in her difficulty with receiving payment for her bird writing.

When she started her bird study, Stanwood's first efforts to establish ornithological connections began in Maine. Stanwood did not seek a place in purely social clubs, but later did participate in bird-related groups. Having been out of the state for over twenty years, it took her a while to establish herself. She wrote in her memoirs that in 1904, when she first arrived in Ellsworth, she formed "a club of one."¹⁵ In 1908 she joined the Maine Ornithological Society and by the following year was a regular contributor and sponsoring member. Membership was open to all those concerned about the declining bird populations in the state. The Maine Ornithological Society was unusual because unlike many other

¹⁴ Francis H. Herrick to Cordelia J. Stanwood, March 14, 1911, SWF; Cordelia Stanwood to Francis Herrick, January 6, 1911, October 25, 1911, April 5, 1912, May 25, 1912, June 1, 1912, Papers of Francis Hobart Herrick (1858-1940), Case Western Reserve University Archives.

¹⁵ Stanwood, "Autobiography," SWF.

emerging bird-related organizations, it did not automatically relegate women to lesser ranks within the organization.

Stanwood must have felt at home as a member of the group. It is likely that Stanwood was able to meet and talk with nationally known ornithologists through the Maine Ornithological Society if she chose to travel to Portland for its meetings. Maine was a magnet for birders: Arthur Chapman and William Brewster met in Portland and embarked on an extensive birding trip that was reported in *The Auk*. What began as a loosely organized group of those interested in birds took shape formally in 1898, and the Maine Ornithological Society enlarged rapidly both in size and popularity, reaching a wide audience. As a conservation organization that focused on saving birds, it actively sought to enlarge its membership, and its meeting reports regularly published membership nominations and lists. In 1902, William L. Powers of Gardiner, Maine wrote as editor of the *Journal of the Maine Ornithological Society*, that

perhaps the people who would be benefited most by active membership in the Society are the teachers and students of MaineThe annual and summer meetings would be to them a source of inspiration while the Journal and Bulletins would furnish throughout the year the very information needed by beginners . . . The Society stands today as [a] medium through which individual and working bodies of the State and Nation can exert an influence for the good . . . in stopping the ruthless slaughter of our shore birds for millinery purposes, or that...persecution known as egg collecting.¹⁶

¹⁶ William L. Powers, "The Maine Ornithological Society" *Journal of the Maine Ornithological Society* (1902).

It is likely that Stanwood's identity as a teacher was complimented by this attitude toward ornithology and conservation. She was quite active in the society and at least once presented a lanternslide report on her bird studies.¹⁷ For twelve years from 1898 to 1911, the Society published *The Journal of the Maine Ornithological Society*, a quarterly that contained bird censuses, reports on migratory patterns, and scientific reports of observations in the field by its members across the state, as well as updates on both state and national conservation efforts. Stanwood published seventeen articles in the *Journal*. Unfortunately, this outlet for information exchange ended with its last issue in December 1911. The Society did not dissolve, however, and continued as a social and scientific organization. It merged with and became the Portland Natural History Society, and then later became the independent Maine Audubon Society (it merged with the National Audubon Society in 2000). It actively campaigned for bird preservation throughout the state, but over time the organization also became increasingly interested in collecting bird behavior and population information from around the state. Many of its members were also state chapter members of the National Audubon Society. Arthur H. Norton was especially noted for his bird knowledge, which was later preserved, compiled and organized by Ralph S. Palmer of Maine. These two men formed the male leadership of ornithology in Maine. In Norton's 1913 report as chapter secretary and field agent to the National Audubon Society, he praised Stanwood: "In Hancock County, Miss Cordelia J. Stanwood has continued her

¹⁷ Cordelia J. Stanwood, "A Study of Two Chickadee Families," *Journal of the Maine Ornithological Society* 13 (June 1911): 25-32.

activity by publishing many attractive articles in the journals of the day, and by distributing leaflets, and laboring for bird-protection.”¹⁸ Stanwood kept up her association with Palmer when in 1949 he published a comprehensive list of bird observations under the title *Maine Birds*.¹⁹ Palmer solicited Stanwood’s field notes that are included in this seminal book.

Stanwood not only participated in the Maine Ornithological Society, but she also joined several other ornithological societies, even the noted American Ornithologist’s Union (AOU). Founded in 1883, the American Ornithologists’ Union is the oldest and largest organization in the New World devoted to the scientific study of birds. Although the AOU primarily is a professional organization, as it was in the early twentieth century, today its membership of about 4,000 includes many amateurs dedicated to the advancement of ornithological science. The major activity of the AOU is the publication of scientific information relating to birds in the *Auk*, which is a quarterly journal that contains the results of original scientific research and book reviews. Supplements provide proceedings of business meetings and committee reports of general interest. The early thrust of its mission was the annual updating and the publication of *Check-List of North American Birds*, an authoritative publication that gives scientific and English names, taxonomic status, and geographic ranges of all known species of birds in North America, Central America, Hawaii, and the West Indies.

¹⁸Arthur H. Norton, “Report of Arthur H. Norton; Field Agent for Maine,” *Annual Report of the National Association of Audubon Societies for 1914* (December 1914), 481.

¹⁹Ralph Palmer, *Maine Birds* (Cambridge, MA: Museum of Comparative Zoology, 1949).

Membership in the AOU was often controversial. When Stanwood wrote to Lynds Jones of the Wilson Society about becoming a member of that organization, he replied:

. . . I am much pleased to learn that you are to become a member of the Wilson Ornithological Club There is much dissatisfaction with the AOU because of its several classes of members, and because none but the Fellows have any voice in the conduct of the organization. The argument of those who favor one class of members in the Wilson club is that then everybody will have an equal share in determining the policy of the Club, provided only that he is in attendance at the meetings. For myself, I prefer a wholly democratic organization.²⁰

Stanwood likely understood Jones's reference because she was an associate member of the AOU. This meant that although she appeared on the membership rolls every year, she had no voting rights and could not speak at the annual meetings in Washington, D.C. The Wilson Ornithological Society, founded in 1888, is a world-wide organization of nearly 2500 people who share a curiosity about birds. Named in honor of Alexander Wilson, considered a father of American ornithology, the Society publishes a quarterly journal of ornithology, the *Wilson Bulletin*, and holds annual meetings. Because more than any other biological science, ornithology has been advanced by the contributions of persons in other professions, the Wilson Society especially recognizes the unique role of the serious amateur in ornithology. Fundamental to its mission, the Society distinguished itself with a long tradition of promoting a strong working relationship among all who study birds.²¹ As

²⁰ Lynds Jones to Cordelia Stanwood, 1914, SWF

²¹ "The Wilson Ornithological Society," <<http://www.ummz.lsa.umich.edu/birds/wos.html>> September 2002.

a member of both these organizations, in addition to the National Audubon Society, Stanwood became well connected to those in higher ornithological circles.

In the early twentieth century, birds faced a dismal future, with no laws to control the hunting of birds or animals. The birds were slaughtered by the millions, and their plumes were used for decorating hats, their nests robbed for eggs, and many species, even such birds as robins, were hunted for food. Entire species such as the passenger pigeon, Carolina parakeet, and great auk were being exterminated. George Bird Grinnell, the editor of *Forest and Stream*, is credited with being one of the first to speak up against this when in 1886 he encouraged his readers to join him in forming the country's first bird preservation organization, the Audubon Society. Teacher Florence Merriam Bailey formed its earliest chapter at Smith College, where she persuaded the young student Fannie Hardy (later Eckstorm) to join the movement. The society was named after the American naturalist and wildlife painter John James Audubon. In three short months more than 38,000 people joined the society. Overwhelmed by the response, Grinnell had to disband the group in 1888. In 1896 a group of women, led by Harriet Hemenway, were appalled by the slaughter of birds and formed the Massachusetts Audubon Society. They refused to buy or wear hats and clothing decorated with bird plumes or parts. They wrote letters to newspaper editors and spoke to politicians. By 1899, 15 other states had formed Audubon societies and incorporated themselves nationally. At that time, Frank Chapman, ornithologist with the American Museum of Natural History in New York, began publishing *Bird Lore* magazine, which became a unifying national forum for the Audubon

movement. Chapman sponsored the first national Christmas Bird Count in 1900. He felt it was “better to count birds than shoot them.”²²

The Audubon Society coordinated a national effort to encourage members to work to have important conservation laws passed. This included the New York State Audubon Plumage Law (1910), which banned the sales of plumes of all native birds in the state, the international feather trade ban in 1913; and in 1918 the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act. During the first quarter of this century, the association expanded local public education efforts and letter-writing campaigns to elected officials. In 1910, the Junior Audubon Club program formed. Children received leaflets on various birds and how they should be protected. Stanwood worked to write and circulate tracts for the schoolchildren in her area.

Long active in conservation beginning with her activism against feathered hats when she was Smith, an though less active than Stanwood in the Maine Ornithological Society, Fannie Hardy Eckstorm was a champion of nature study and took its values seriously. The daughter of the noted naturalist Manly Hardy and a student member of the Audubon Society founded by Florence Merriam Bailey at Smith in 1886, Eckstorm was active in conservation issues and nature study from an early age. Following her graduation from Smith, her father took her on the first of many long canoe trips through Maine’s wilderness areas. There she learned to love and respect the land and wildlife of Maine as well as its Native Americans, their culture and the myriad complexities of the backwoods

²² “A History of the National Audubon Society,”
<<http://www.audubon.org/nas/history.html>>, September 2002.

in the northern reaches of Maine. Her columns in the magazine *Forest and Stream* were familiar to Maine people. She served as supervisor of the Brewer, Maine school system from 1889 to 1891, and then spent several years in Boston reading scientific manuscripts for a publisher. In 1893, she married the Episcopalian clergyman Jacob A. Eckstorm in Portland, Oregon. They moved to Eastport, Maine and then to Providence, Rhode Island, where Jacob died a year later, followed by the death of their daughter. Eckstorm then published both of her bird books, *The Birds* and *The Woodpeckers*. When Eckstorm's father died in 1910, her obituary for him appeared in the same issue of *The Journal of the Maine Ornithological Society* in which Stanwood published an article about warblers. By the time she was active in supporting the feather ban in 1913, Eckstorm had founded a library in Brewer.²³ It is likely that they met at bird club meeting. Stanwood and Eckstorm had birds in common, and Eckstorm had long enjoyed a wide reputation for her expertise in ornithology and a number of other fields, but she did not rely on her bird work to support her financially. Eckstorm had not experienced great success in publishing her own bird articles. Eckstorm herself recognized Stanwood's expertise. Her summary on the state of ornithology in Maine reflects the status of the field generally during this period:

It surprises me you are able to sell bird articles anywhere. I have been begged by the better class of magazines to write for them, but never a hint of any pay for it.... Let me say that I think your article on the Red-Breasted Nuthatch an especially able life-study. I feel sure that it is the sort of thing which Mr. A. C. Bent of Taunton, Mass, who has taken up Major Bendire's Life Histories of N.A. Birds, to complete the book, would be glad to see... I feel sure that you are just such a person as he

²³ Lee Agger, *Women of Maine* (Portland, ME: Guy Gannett Publishing Company, 1982), 93-96.

would like to have for an observer and reporter, and that perhaps your published articles, on which have reaped your profit, might be of great use to him, particularly upon our northern birds. Do you realize how few such painstaking and competent observers there are in the most northern and eastern outpost of the land?²⁴

Eckstorm's observations described the obstacles Stanwood encountered; these were brought into relief by her correspondence with Francis Herrick. But Herrick and Eckstorm experienced success in ornithology early in their careers that Stanwood did not. Both Herrick and Eckstorm had already successfully published books on birds; Herrick went on to pursue a career in science and writing, while Eckstorm developed her considerable interest in Native Americans.

The diverse careers of Stanwood's contemporaries in ornithology point to the blurred lines between science and the arts that were expressed under the general term "natural history" when ornithology began to emerge as a science. As ornithology arose from the more general field of natural history, its contours can be delineated through tracking the progress of Stanwood's career. Her comprehensive field notes, which consist more of bird behavior than species lists, highlight that when Stanwood began observing birds, many taxonomic issues relating to eastern birds had been settled, and few if any new species were to be discovered in the geographic region in which Stanwood observed. For this reason, Stanwood declared that she deliberately chose to study bird-nesting behavior so that she could add to the scholarly body of knowledge in ornithology. As Eckstorm emphasized in her letter to Stanwood, there were few if any behavior observations of bird

²⁴ Fannie H. Eckstorm to Cordelia J. Stanwood, October 29, 1913, SWF.

species in Stanwood's area in Maine. Ornithologists were just beginning to understand the breeding habits and behavior of the birds of North America, and the trend at the time was to observe several nesting pairs of one species over time in order to create a typical portrait of the species. Over a period of years, Stanwood collected data and behavior observations from several nesting sites of each species and then compiled the information from her field notes in order to ascertain such things as egg clutch numbers, length of incubation, time to fledge, and the types of nourishment and the behavior of the parent birds. This was called a life history. The lives of families of birds such as the wood warblers, brown creeper, thrushes, woodpeckers and titmice were relatively unknown. These were the birds that Stanwood observed most often.

Stanwood's observations were valuable contributions to ornithology, yet they did little or nothing to advance her financially. Like many other women who conducted scientific work in areas such as botany, entomology, or pteridology during the early twentieth century, Stanwood contributed to knowledge in her field but this did not economically benefit her.

Stanwood's notes in the field, together with the scientific writing of life histories she produced beginning in 1910, reflect the trend toward the so-called "professionalization" of all of the sciences during the same period, in which men were able to pursue sanctioned careers, but women were not. In the early 1900s, when Stanwood first started her bird work, ornithology relied heavily on the highly skilled observer who did not require formal academic training in biology in order to make significant contributions to the ornithological

body of knowledge. This also outlines the trajectory of women in other sciences.

Gradually, ornithological fieldwork relied upon formal training in college level zoology and biology courses such as those Lynds Jones taught. The increasing standardization of ornithological writing, its formalization in the academy, and the limitation of opportunities for women both inside and outside the academy, meant that Stanwood was shut out of recognized ornithological writing by 1917. Field observations were useful only insofar as they answered questions posed by the academically trained biologist, who in most cases was a man.

Although ornithology has always been a field that has been enriched by the ranks of the amateur, or non-academically trained, bird enthusiast, the weight of their contributions gradually declined as the century wore on. Julian Huxley highlighted the early importance of the local bird watcher in his article to bird-watchers in the early twentieth century, and it continues to be true. To this day, ornithologists rely on sightings by backyard birders to provide information about the movement and activities of birds, but today behavioral studies are purely in the realm of the professional, scientific ornithologist.²⁵ But when Stanwood was observing, she was able to make significant scientific contributions to the understanding of bird behavior. Even so, many ornithologists with whom Stanwood first

²⁵ For a present day example of the contributions of amateur birders, see <http://birds.cornell.edu/>.

corresponded assumed that she observed birds as a pastime and thought that she could not approach her bird work from a professional perspective. Others assumed that because the bird expert was a woman, she was by definition an amateur. This attitude was reflected in the membership status of women in the AOU.

Stanwood did not pursue the model of some women scientists, who often (but not necessarily) taught in women's colleges, and who broadly contributed to the natural sciences in the early twentieth century. Yet gradually these women found themselves at a disadvantage. While at that time women were encouraged to pursue education in the sciences, as the century progressed women were increasingly shut out of the academy, even to the extent of holding positions (if they were very lucky) within the university setting without pay. At the same time in the field of ornithology, the widespread ethic of conservation worked to eliminate the earlier practice of harvesting birds for study skins or egg collecting in scientific work, substituting instead careful field observation as the criteria for professional study of birds. The use of study skins was predominant mainly up until the end of the nineteenth century, but as the feather ban made the practice difficult for anyone, male or female, in the early twentieth century, and the technology of the camera and binoculars made it possible to observe birds in the wild, science increasingly was conducted in the field. This meant that during this period, a window of opportunity in ornithology arose for women who were adept at fieldwork, but it did not last. Within ornithology, what began as observatory fieldwork conducted by both men and women gradually shut out women altogether by the early 1920s. As the professionalization and

specialization of natural history moved its divergent fields into the laboratory and academy, this meant that only men could receive credentials as ornithological scientists. Stanwood's specialty of field observations in bird nesting behavior was subject to this squeeze.

Stanwood's experience of being shut out of the professional ranks of ornithology associations and academies reflects the experience of many women in the sciences. Two trends account for the increasing invisibility of women in science: the rise of higher education and expanded employment in non-scientific fields for middle class women, and the growth, bureaucratization, and "professionalization" of science and technology in America. As Margaret Rossiter has highlighted, the initial justification for educating women had been that their expected roles of wife and mother would benefit. Rossiter describes the emergence of women in science as falling into three main periods in the United States: before 1880, 1880 to 1910, and after 1910.²⁶ Between 1880 and 1910 the acceptable conditions for women's presence in science were worked out. After 1910, however, this period of fluidity and innovation ended, and gradually disciplinary formalization from within the ranks of academic science took shape. Women were eased out of academic science departments, while at the same time these science departments were considered the center of professionalism in science. Some women remained within academic departments but were not paid for their labor there. As men increasingly swelled the ranks of academic science, they formed professional associations. As the earmarks of

²⁶ Margaret W Rossiter, *Women Scientists in America: Struggles and Strategies to 1940* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).

the professional, associations created formalized, certified university degree credentials that could only be earned by men.

In 1904, when Stanwood was beginning her bird studies, the boundaries of professional ornithology were still fluid, and her contributions to the field were welcomed. Professional training was just being defined, and credentializing was not yet totally set in place. This did not last, however. The increasing standardization of ornithological writing, its formalization in the academy, and Stanwood's distance from any academic center meant that she was eventually closed out of recognized ornithological writing. In spite of this, Stanwood's exceptionally expert local knowledge of birds was professionally recognized even though she was distant from any academic center. In the early twentieth century, local knowledge in ornithology remained a highly regarded, if not a financially remunerated, commodity that earned Stanwood a professional reputation.

Although women's membership status in the birding societies was usually marginalized, through social clubs other non-scientific women formed the central core of bird conservation work in the early twentieth century. Like many other women, while Stanwood was conducting her bird studies (1904-1919), she was also active in bird conservation reform, adding her professional voice to their social agenda. She was keenly aware of the issues surrounding the use of birds' feathers for women's hats:

I hid under a big pine and listened to the black-throated green warbler that sings and feeds among its branches.... I feel rested, soothed, delighted with the world and myself. To be sure, I did not put off that trip to [the] Milliners this morning but I have found my trip to the wood much more satisfactory. A hummingbird in the bush is much more to my taste than a dozen stuffed, wired hummingbirds, parrots

or a multitude of wings made of feathers. After all, our taste in millinery is more or less barbaric. We deck our heads in feathers just as did our Indian predecessors.²⁷

This passage reveals how Stanwood was influenced by the contemporary dialogue about the practice of women wearing bird feathers, or even whole birds, on their hats. Having gone to the woods to soothe her nerves following a morning of shopping, as she observed the birds she reflected on the contemporary controversy about feathers.

Like many other women, Stanwood had been actively pursuing bird conservation before those efforts were brought home to Maine and she joined efforts with Eckstorm in 1913. A 1912 letter from Maine's Senator Charles F. Johnson to Stanwood testifies that earlier international efforts to impose a tariff had been unsuccessful. He wrote:

We found great difficulty...in carrying out the provisions...prohibiting the importation of feathers and parts of birds for the reason that the foreign governments where these birds could be killed as game or pests filed remonstrances...as unjust commercial discrimination against them.... I do not believe, either, that such prohibition should be contained in a tariff bill but that the matter should be taken up by some international conference.²⁸

Stanwood had corresponded with Johnson before she began her work with Eckstorm. Bird conservation took many forms during that era, from social club activism, to education in the schools, tract writing for public circulation, to political lobbying.²⁹

²⁷Stanwood, "Bird Notebooks," May 11, 1913, SWF.

²⁸Senator Charles F. Johnson to Cordelia J. Stanwood, July 26, 1912, SWF.

²⁹Kathy S. Mason, "Out of Fashion: Harriet Hemenway and the Audubon Society, 1896-1905," *The Historian* 65 (Fall 2002): 1-14.

Stanwood undertook reform on issues that were professionally important to her, and worked with the Maine Ornithological and National Audubon Societies to write and circulate conservation tracts, editorial letters for newspapers, and legislative petitions in political lobbying.

Maine had been periodically swept by currents of reform led by the Republican Party that had included temperance, abolition of the death penalty, and women's suffrage.³⁰ For a time during the second decade of the twentieth century, Stanwood was involved in school curriculum reform in Ellsworth and in beautifying in the city, but the bird conservation fight was her most public venture. In Maine, conservation had spurred the formation of the Maine Ornithological Society in 1899, in which game laws and species preservation were an ongoing source of controversy. Yet despite the debate, Maine's reform zeal had earlier boosted the state's passage of the American Ornithological Union's (AOU) suggested Model Bird Conservation Law in 1901.³¹ The Maine Ornithological Society organized conservation efforts and made periodic reports to its members about legislation in Maine and in Washington. Prior national efforts by the AOU, joined by other organizations such as the Maine Ornithological Society to impose restrictions on the feather trade through international sanction had led to failure, and a measure to impose

³⁰R. Stanley Howe, "The Republican Ascendancy," *Maine: The Pine Tree State from Prehistory to the Present* (Orono: University of Maine Press, 1995).

³¹Frank J. Graham, *The Audubon Ark: A History of the National Audubon Society* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 25-31.

tariffs from within the U.S. against feather importation seemed the only avenue to conservation.

Joined by their common interest in ornithology, in the summer and fall of 1913 Stanwood and Eckstorm collaborated in their efforts to influence votes on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives to support an amendment that would ban the importation of feathers. This was part of the bill that would create taxes in accordance with the Underwood Tariff Act.³² During the summer of 1913 that preceded the September congressional election in Maine, overarching political influences were at work in the state when Stanwood and Eckstorm lobbied for the banning of feathers. At that time the specifics of the articles within the Underwood Tariff Act were under consideration in Washington. Because the act contained an amendment that would ban the importation of feathers, Maine's conservation politics and its September 1913 election were linked in a unique political relationship when Stanwood and Eckstorm together tested their political wings in support of bird conservation.

Also that same summer, the bird protection movement, under the National Audubon Society's president William Hornaday's leadership, was gaining popular support within the United States. The provision in the Underwood Tariff Act prohibiting the importation of feathers was the focus of national attention. Opposition efforts to amend the bill to strike out the feather ban, known as the Clapp Amendment, had gained support in

³²Robin Doughty, *Feather Fashions and Bird Protection: A Study in Nature Protection* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 54-55.

early July. A vote was scheduled for late July or early August, and feather ban advocates were feverishly attempting to defeat the Clapp amendment, entertained by Maine's Senator Johnson, in order to keep the proviso in its earliest form. It was a constant political tug of war that feather ban supporters were losing in July of 1913. This made Maine bird conservationists' efforts on behalf of the feather ban strategically important in the nationwide effort to ban the feather trade. In order to gain passage of the feather ban proviso, Audubon President Hornaday wrote to National Audubon members and urged them to write their representatives to vote for its support. Eckstorm was Hornaday's contact person in Maine during the effort, and she received numerous letters from Hornaday throughout the campaign, referring to them repeatedly in her correspondence with Stanwood. This correspondence points to a close relationship between Hornaday and Eckstorm that probably began with Eckstorm's early conservation activism, but that also rested on her ornithological expertise, and her earlier reform activism at Smith when she was a student.

Through their correspondence Eckstorm and Stanwood coordinated their efforts to drum up public support of the feather ban provision in the Tariff Bill. From their respective communities, they worked together to get signed editorial letters of support placed in as many Maine newspapers as possible. Stanwood and Eckstorm corresponded and coordinated their efforts of letter writing during the summer of 1913. Their correspondence illustrates political astuteness and keen attention to the issues.

Eckstorm wrote Stanwood that she had written two letters to the *Bangor Daily Commercial*. She described one as “moderate in tone, urging people to write their senators.” The second she described as a “fiery call to the clans to protest vigorously...after getting Dr. Hornaday’s letter, which [she] quoted in full.” Eckstorm went on to explain to Stanwood that she had argued “our Senator from Maine was not representing us but some Jewish feather dealers in New York.” Intuitively knowing that this sort of appeal would strike the hearts of Mainers, she was nonetheless self-conscious about making such an argument. “The fact that only a few Jewish dealers out of New York are interested in the amendment (and Germany) makes an appeal to all Maine people, who are clannish, if nothing else. Ordinarily I should not make use of ...these motives in an appeal; but the time is very short, the words must be few, and the object is to make as many as possible to take this matter up.” She also called on all the women who were members either of Audubon societies or of women’s clubs to “care for the humane features, to express their wishes to the senator.” Eckstorm then urged Stanwood to write to the other local papers, and adding that she had written to the *Portland Press*, the *Argus*, *Kennebec Journal*, and *Bangor Commercial and News*.³³

Stanwood immediately wrote to the editor of the *Ellsworth American* encouraging publication of her editorial in support of banning feather importation. A letter in support of

³³Fannie Hardy Eckstorm to Cordelia J. Stanwood, July 25, 1913, SWF.

the feather ban appeared in the center front page of *Ellsworth American* for the week of July 30, 1913 over Stanwood's signature. Titled "A Plea for the Birds," the letter opened by appealing to "persons of culture and benevolence, who have labored to make the world as beautiful, healthful and productive as possible" and then described the horrors necessary to obtain the feathers of the white heron for the millinery trade. Citing the benefits of sanctuaries in which bird numbers increase, she deployed a utilitarian argument, reminding readers that if insect-eating birds were "swept out of existence," then the earth would be a desert. These facts, she assured the reader, have led "intelligent and benevolent persons to formulate a bill for the protection of our wild birds." The only objection to this, Stanwood stated, came from the feather-importers. It was the less than thirty firms from New York and Germany whom she described as desiring open markets that influenced Maine's senator, rather than the desires of his constituency. For this reason, she explained, they must lobby Maine's Senator Johnson. Stanwood asked:

Are the wishes of the wisest, most cultured, most benevolent persons in America, millions of good Americans to be totally ignored while our representatives at Washington look out for the interests of Germany in South America, the interests of a handful of importers in New York, and the interests of a few lazy, lawless, poorest whites in the South?

She concluded the article by asking the reader to write to Senator Johnson to demand that he sustain and vote for the original form of paragraph 357 of schedule N of the Underwood Tariff Bill. "Will not every man who does not approve of having our country controlled by a lobby, and every woman who does not wish her milliner to carry in stock the plumage of wild birds for the decoration of her bonnet, write...at once? The time is at hand. The matter

may be decided by you.” As indicated by her editorial, Stanwood agreed with Eckstorm that all avenues of protest should be explored and all appeals resorted to, including regionalism, nationalism, and racism. From her perspective, all those “wise, cultured, benevolent persons” would share her view that feather trade people’s concerns were less important than her own.³⁴ Although we do not know how many people actually wrote Senator Johnson, the bid for feather ban was successful.

Eckstorm wrote to Stanwood on September 3, 1913 that the campaign was over. She congratulated Stanwood: “You have worked like a major over this bird business and I hope you will get a rest. We are all much obliged to you.” A week later, Eckstorm wrote Stanwood again and enlarged on the events that had occurred in Washington during the bird struggle. She wrote referring to a letter from Hornaday, “He speaks of an ‘unwritten chapter’ and ‘big surprises for many people’ in the recent caucus fight in Washington. He says the Caucus lasted five hours and three of the five were devoted to our bird clause.” She connected “this bird business” with Maine’s September election :

...when you made such a hullabaloo over this bird business...on the eve of an election telegraphed Senator Johnson that a petition was coming, it naturally set him...guessing what you were up to.... When you wrote me that you had wired, it seemed to me too late to do any good; but now it looks more... that wire was worth a troop of dragoons to the bird cause and that very likely it had...influence. upon. the election itself here at home.³⁵

³⁴ Cordelia J. Stanwood, “A Plea for the Birds,” *Ellsworth American*, July 30, 1913, 1.

³⁵ Fannie Hardy Eckstorm to Cordelia J. Stanwood, September 3, 1913; September 10, 1913, SWF.

According to Eckstorm, thanks to some last minute telegrams sent off by Stanwood, the supporters of the tariff had held sway against Maine's own senator's opposition to the bill. The feather ban was swept along in victory for the tariff. The following week Eckstorm again wrote to Stanwood, "I wish I could tell you how much I appreciate the labor you have expended upon this bird business and energy and skill in handling the business you have shown."³⁶

Because of the success of her work in support of the feather ban, Stanwood's public reputation as an expert ornithologist was expanded to that of conservation activist. "No one was more active in this section in bringing about the desired result than Miss C. J. Stanwood, the well-known ornithologist, of this city," wrote the *Ellsworth American* on October 8, 1913. This article supported Eckstorm's statement that "Our fight has been to arouse public opinion upon a legislation desired." The item titled "Birdlovers Rejoice" reflected the community's pride in Stanwood:

Those who are interested in the protection of bird life--and who are not? --are greatly rejoiced that the new tariff law contains the clause for which they have so strenuously contended providing for the prohibition of the importation of wild birds' plumage, and the abolition of the traffic in feathers and skins of slaughtered wild birds.³⁷

The newspaper's laudatory remarks reflect the widespread community support for

³⁶ Fannie Hardy Eckstorm to Cordelia J. Stanwood, September 18, 1913, SWF.

³⁷ Cordelia J. Stanwood, "Birdlovers Rejoice," *Ellsworth American* (October 8, 1913); Eckstorm to Stanwood, September 18, 1913, SWF.

conservation reform during this period, but in the use of the term “ornithologist,” the newspaper also reflected how those with scientific expertise supported reform.

Ornithology’s development was not just a story of increasing scientific professionalism; it was a story of science in service of reform. Not only did Stanwood the ornithologist actively support reform, but also ornithologists across the nation led the fight for the feather ban. In this case, Stanwood’s local knowledge proved to be influential in the successful reform effort.

Similarly, the line often drawn between experts and activists was not quite so hard and fast. Using the techniques of expertise, women organized and mobilized the public opinion about saving birds. This was also common strategy in the municipal housekeeping movement that was ongoing during the same period. Even with professionalizing within the sciences, ornithologists still needed reformers to get things done. In this case, Stanwood was the ornithologist, and as that expert she was also able take on the persona of reformer to mobilize reform support. While Merchant argues that the conservation reform movement was a socially conservative one, this movement can also be viewed as a reform of women themselves and their sartorial habits.³⁸ This means that while birds moved from being hats to once again becoming birds, at the same female ornithologists (and many other women)

³⁸ Carolyn Merchant, “Women of the Progressive Conservation Movement, 1900-1916,” *Environmental Review* 8, no. 1(Spring 1984): 5-6, 55-85; Mason, “Out of Fashion,” 9.

not only reformed their own dress habits, but they also became experts in the service of reform.

When it came to science, women scientists apparently did not see the need to organize in associations as professional, gender-defined groups of scientists. Rather, their expert knowledge led them to work together for conservation reform. Female scientists did not join together in forming professional scientific associations in the same ways that men did. Rather, they joined together in social reform. Their claim to expertise sprang from local knowledge that became universalized knowledge in the service of social reform.³⁹ Their bird study enriched their status as professional women, yet their authority as experts in the field, not social status, mobilized reform.

Bird study had further effects. Studying birds was for them an intellectual discipline, yet a measure of its significance, as evidenced by Eckstorm's letter about her own mental health, lay in the hygienic mental effects it offered these two intelligent women. Ornithology liberated Eckstorm and Stanwood from the stifling traditional woman's role to which they felt they were expected to conform once they returned to their home communities. It liberated them to forge new identities as reform leaders, not only in the woman's traditional role as teacher, as in Stanwood's case, but as experts in ornithology in their home communities, the state of Maine, and nationally. Their recognition by

³⁹ Sarah Stage, "Expertise and Professionalism: Gender and the Construction of Expert Knowledge," paper presented at Twelfth Berkshire Conference of Women's Historians June 6-9, 2002, Storrs, CT.

national conservation leaders reinforced this view of their professional status. It was their expert status in ornithology, bolstered by their feelings about the therapeutic benefits of nature, which energized them politically in 1913.

The figure of the female ornithologist was not uncommon during this period, but she was not in a paid professional position. This did not matter those women who could rely on independent sources of support. In spite of her poverty, Stanwood shared expert status with other women in ornithology, many of whom were free to pursue their interest in birds regardless of whether they were paid or not. Stanwood's need for money would eventually curb her research, but the longer careers of other women who did not require financial support for their work illustrate how women could become well-known ornithological experts.

The early career of Althea Sherman particularly resembles Stanwood's. Sherman, (1853-1943) from National Iowa, twelve years Stanwood's senior, was also a teacher, having gained her Bachelor of Arts from Oberlin in 1875.⁴⁰ Illustrating the gauzy qualities of the distinctions between the arts and sciences, Sherman studied also art before she took up bird study: first at the Chicago Art Institute and then at the Arts Student League in New York City. From 1882 to 1887 she was an instructor of drawing at Carleton College in Minnesota; from 1892 to 1895 she served as supervisor of drawing in the city schools of Tacoma, Washington. She was an accomplished avian portrait artist. After teaching for

⁴⁰ Deborah Strom, *Birdwatching with American Women* (New York: Norton & Co., 1986), 129-132.

twenty years, she returned to her home to care for her elderly parents (with her sister who was a physician). Once home, she determined to make a serious study of ornithology and she created many artificial nesting sites for birds. Also like Stanwood, she kept detailed field notes of her observations, many of which were later written up in journals of ornithology, animal behavior and natural history. Sherman, however, was fortunate to have inherited a legacy sufficient enough to allow her to travel. After a journey to Europe, the Middle East and Asia in 1914 she published a series of bird monographs that won her international acclaim.⁴¹ In 1915 she designed and created a 28-foot tall, 9-foot square wooden tower for the purpose of attracting and observing nesting Chimney Swifts. The tower enclosed a two foot square artificial chimney which proved inviting for the nesting swifts, while doors, windows and peep-holes allowed Sherman to be the first person to witness and record the entire nesting cycle of the swifts. Her journals, covering 18 years and over 400 pages, offer the most extensive study of this species in existence. Sherman's papers and her tower nearly met with destruction, but the Johnson County Songbird Project and the State Historical Society of Iowa have rescued Sherman's reputation from obscurity. Especially

⁴¹ Barbara Boyle, "Johnson County Songbird Project," Althea R Sherman Papers, Iowa State Historical Society, Iowa City, IA.; Oberlin College, "Oberlin College 75th Anniversary Catalogue of Former Students, 1908," Althea R Sherman Papers, Johnson County Songbird Project Inc, Iowa City, IA.

important, however, is her legacy of the ornithology department at Oberlin College, which she established with ornithologist Lynds Jones.

Single women were often stigmatized for pursuing independent bird study.

Sherman, like Stanwood, was often portrayed as an eccentric during the 1920s and further into the twentieth century, when women were no longer expected to become ornithologists or even public spokespersons, and much of her work still remains unpublished. But although she was single, Sherman possessed sufficient resources so that she did not rely on her bird work to support her.

Marriage often enabled women to pursue their bird work, but it raised other conflicts when children came into the picture. Margaret Morse Nice (1883-1974), friend of Sherman's and fifteen years Stanwood's junior, benefited from a marriage in which her husband not only supported her financially, but also encouraged her bird work. Like Sherman and Stanwood, Nice did not receive formal education in ornithology, but did earn a college degree. Her elite academic background also benefited her; her father was a professor of history at Amherst College, and she earned a Bachelor of Science from Mt. Holyoke College. Highly intelligent, Nice gained a degree in child psychology from the Clark Institute while simultaneously rearing five children. She was interested primarily in animal behavior, which may account for her devotion to child psychology while she was observing the development of her own family. As her children grew older, she returned to bird study and published *The Birds of Oklahoma*. Her later publication *A Watcher at the Nest* was revolutionary in two important ways. Her methodology of banding individual

birds and then observing them closely in the field over a period of years meant that she was able to gather rich detailed data that she synthesized into general principles of bird behavior. The most important avian behavioral phenomenon that she identified and defined in detail was the principle of territoriality in song sparrow breeding. In her autobiography, *Research is a Passion With Me*, Nice provided a portrait of her life-long struggle for recognition and her equally intense search for scientific truth. Like Sherman, however, she was able to travel to distant locations to maintain her connections with other ornithologists, in the process meeting other women interested in the study of birds. These associations encouraged her in her work and bolstered her sense of self-esteem even in the face of the obstacles that she faced as a woman working in the sciences.⁴² The careers of both Sherman and Nice illustrate how much women depended on private financial resources in order to pursue bird study; despite their important contributions to the field, only rarely were they able to receive remuneration for their work. Starwood, however, needed to earn money.

The careers of Sherman and Nice demonstrate how women who were able to pursue long careers in science depended on financial independence and social status in order to overcome the disadvantage of their gender. In an era in which women were rarely paid or patronized for their work, only those women wealthy and socially elite enough were

⁴² Margaret Nice, *The Watcher at the Nest* (New York: Dover Publications, 1967); *The Birds of Okalahoma*, revised ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1931); Strom, *Birdwatching with American Women*, 169-184.

able to keep on in their careers. Unlike Stanwood, who struggled to keep her head above the tide of poverty that constantly threatened to overtake her, because Sherman and Nice had financial resources to rely on, they enjoyed professional association, recognition, and in the case of Nice, the satisfaction of seeing her work in print.

Although she left ornithologically serious bird study after the early 1920s, Stanwood's bird work did transcend time and space. For twenty years prior to returning to Ellsworth, teaching had been the work through which Stanwood constructed her identity. Once in Ellsworth, she established an expert public voice not only as a nature study teacher, but also as an ornithologist. In the service of reform, her expert local knowledge exerted an even wider influence as she worked for conservation. Although her public role excluded widespread political activism, Stanwood's career demonstrates how women used nature to transcend domestic roles, in the process becoming scientists, photographers and writers who influenced public opinion. From their position as experts in these fields, women were able to exert their authority to reform society's laws before they held the legal the right to vote. Further, from Stanwood's case one can see how women outside the club venue took up conservation work. Stanwood's effectiveness in bird conservation sprang from her reputation as an expert ornithologist, rather than as a member of an elite social group. Therein lies the paradox of women whose work took place outside the women's club role. Although she contributed to ornithological science and influenced conservation reform, Stanwood's single, non-elite female status meant that she was often closed out of many of the other more well-worn paths to success—the paths of social and professional

status--that other men and some financially independent women were able to utilize in order to gain recognition in both professional ornithology and the larger world of popular ornithological writing.

Chapter Five

THE CENTS OF NATURE: WRITING AND PHOTOGRAPHY, 1910-1953

When I was in Poughkeepsie Miss Alliger secured Ernest Thompson Seton to lecture to the school and patrons.... One day at luncheon Prof. Bracq ... criticized his work very severely. He... decided that he [Seton] was having an injurious influence on nature study. Prof. Bracq said if a little child went out and saw a new bird or found a birds' nest, he thought nothing of it. Because the little birds didn't talk and their mother didn't answer, they thought occurrence insignificant to notice....It makes Mr. Burroughs furious to imply that the birds do or say more than they do.¹ *Cordelia Stanwood to Henry T. Bailey, July 12, 1907*

When Cordelia Stanwood returned to Ellsworth in 1904, she intended only to take a short rest from her teaching in order to recover from neurasthenia. Once home, she found that the woods, fields and swamps surrounding her home abounded with the birds with which she had recently become familiar during her nature study teaching. As the winter of 1904 passed into the spring of 1905, the landscape came alive with warblers. It seemed as though each foray into the outdoors contained new species with new behaviors to learn about and observe.

Stanwood relied on the nearby woods and fields as subject matter for her writing career while she remained at home with her family. Her dependence on this kind of writing was a typical gendered source of income; it was a conservative practice that dovetailed with

¹ Cordelia J. Stanwood to Henry Turner Bailey, April 2, 1921, HTB.

traditional women's literary practice. In a departure from traditional women's writing, however, Stanwood's early writing was not based on women's domestic life, but rather was the result of field observations that first became scientific writing. Her later commodification of birds meant that they were important not only for themselves, but also for the income they brought when Stanwood was able to transform their activities into a scientific report or a story.

Stanwood's writing and photography consisted of several types: the bird life history published in professional ornithological journals during the period 1910 through 1917; the popular ornithology articles published in national magazines during the period of 1914-1921; and the natural history advice article published in New England newspapers from 1922 intermittently through 1953. Non bird-oriented work included articles on the Arts and Crafts, local Maine histories, and pieces on colonial interior furnishings. Her published works on birds reflect the shifting patterns of women's general participation in science, and in ornithology in particular; further, her writing reflects the rise of the colonial revival and Stanwood's commodification of her local history and culture for the popular reading audience. Utilizing her trained eye and her aptitude with the camera, she wrote about and photographed crafts, the surrounding Maine villages, and the birds and flowers of down east Maine. Her crafts, bird writing and photography, along with other small-scale sales endeavors, were to sustain her economically for the remainder of her life at the home she called Birdsacre. Stanwood's bird work, however, was her continuing interest and if not a reliable source of income.

Most important to *her*, however, was her bird study work. This occupied most of her time and energy. Stanwood was to notate her bird observations, whether they were as simple as the first spring robin or the complex nesting behavior of the brown creeper, for the next forty years. Beginning in 1910 and lasting until about 1917, Stanwood published twenty bird life histories in the periodicals *Journal of the Maine Ornithological Society*, *Auk*, *Bird-Lore*, *Nature Magazine*, and the *Wilson Bulletin*. Photographs of birds accompanied some of these articles on the nest, illustrations of habitat and her blind or the parent birds feeding the young. The writing was mostly of a reportorial style, introduced with a narrative, and included facts on the length of time to create the brood, incubation duration, hatching, fledging, diet of the young, and the timing of the fledge. Stanwood wrote about the Canada, Nashville, Bay-Breasted, Magnolia, Black and White, and Black-throated Green Warblers, the Winter Wren, the Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Downy Woodpecker, Alder Flycatcher, Red-Eyed Vireos, Cedar Waxwing, Hermit Thrush, Veery, Swainson's (Olive-backed) Thrush, Chipping Sparrow, Ovenbird, and Goldfinch. The photographs accompanying the articles were straightforward shots of the birds in action and were not posed, except for silhouette-style pictures of nestlings before they fledged that illustrated the growth cycle of the nestling.

Stanwood's work contributed to the body of women's nature writing that was varied in perspective, both from the artistic and scientific point of view; it is a style of writing that has long vanished from the printed page, yet its content continues to inform the serious birder. Her writing reveals how the two traditions of natural history and

experimental science in American ornithology are not separate entities, but rather have arisen in conjunction with each other—one has influenced the other.

Soon after she returned to Ellsworth, her brother went off to earn his living in the realm of commerce rather than the farm or the sea like most men of their sort, and Stanwood and her aging parents were left at the farmhouse by themselves. The busy teacher who had so long been concerned with the pedagogy of art instruction soon became the eldest daughter at home, a handsome physically strong woman who, approaching her forties, sought her living practicing and writing bird watching, basket weaving, pyrography, dyeing, and weaving.

These pursuits dovetailed nicely with the wider Arts and Crafts and Nature Study movements. In the early twentieth century, national nostalgia for the rural life, combined with a growing understanding that the nation was quickly becoming an industrial urban country, sparked the widespread Back to the Land, Colonial Revival and Arts and Crafts movements. Stanwood's interests and her move to Maine coincided with these trends, and provided her with good opportunities to support herself through the traditionally genteel, gendered practice of domestic crafts and writing from within her home. Her rural location, traditional Yankee background, and considerable professional experience in observation as an art teacher equipped her with the tools to pursue writing about the birds, her cultural heritage, and the crafts and practices of the rural colonial era.

The changing landscape surrounding her home provided her with the habitat for bird study. In her travels in the territory around her home, Stanwood soon discovered that

the nearby “boiling spring” was a favorite spot for the birds. Whenever she passed it, she took a draught of its water in the company of thrushes, titmice, woodpeckers and warblers. Inspired by the variety of species so close to home, she began her careful life history studies of the birds. Launched as a quest for income, watching birds soon became Stanwood’s passion.

Throughout her teaching experiences during her early adult years, Stanwood had learned the various uses, beyond extraction such as lumbering or farming, to which nature could be put: as an object for teaching children, for intellectual understanding, for ornamentation (of landscape or of humans) and as the subject for art. For these reasons, when she returned home to Ellsworth, it was the result of education and experience when she turned to the outdoors and nature to find mental solace, physical exercise, intellectual study, as well as to look to it as a resource for writing and later, her photography.

As she ventured beyond the family's acreage, she discovered that the landscape further off had also altered considerably since her childhood. This was especially true beyond the meadow bars past the farmhouse. Although some of the pasture was active grazing land with a small herd of cattle, the family gradually let the further, more remote pastures revert to woodland. This was also true of their neighbors. The land that had been lumbered in Stanwood's childhood was also in the process of reforestation. These old pastures and cutovers were filled with secondary growth of meadowsweet, birch, and pine. Some areas were filled with fragrant balsam, a species especially favored by various types of warblers.

Stanwood found that the old woods that had been timbered decades before her birth now resembled cathedrals with their tall widely scattered pines and hemlocks. Abandoned woods roads stretched down the valley to the Union River beyond. In these cool glades the thrushes gathered for their evening chorus. Blowdowns were perfect nesting sites for wrens and creepers, and the forest floors and meadows were alive with a carpet of wildflowers that attracted seedeaters and warblers.

In the other direction, toward the north, lay the railroad tracks that were laid across a vast wetland of cutover hemlock. There, she found other warblers that preferred the brushy thickets and hummocks. Swamps contained the secretive warblers that few birders had the opportunity to observe.

Walked nearly three miles to get to the swamp where I found the yellow palm warbler last spring.... Certainly never saw such a dreadful place to visit. It was covered with quaking bogs, overgrown with bird wheat moss, in places with sphagnum, and cut up with musk holes, some of them overgrown with liverwort martyrsia. Trees had burned and fallen, many had been uprooted. The land had partly been cut over in frozen weather and the whole submerged in brush. I feared at any moment I might sink as I plunged from one insecure foothold to another. Talk of the swamps of Florida. I wondered this morning if they could be more inaccessible. This after a very long time led over to a swamp grown over with white birch, alder, witherod, black alder, and a few larches. The growth was not dense, and the dead swamp grass was knee-deep. The railroad runs along one side. Here I found the yellow palm warbler, the American Redstart, Chestnut-sided warbler, and the northern yellow-throat. All the meadow is very wet as yet. A horse would easily be mired.²

Stanwood went to great effort to study birds in these inaccessible habitats. Although she was within walking distance of ample material for bird life studies that would greatly

² Stanwood, "Bird Notebook," May 14, 1911, SWF.

enhance ornithologists' knowledge of the behavior of the migratory species, she also understood that little was known about the courtship and reproductive practices of those species familiar to northerners, yet inaccessible to the untrained eye, the year long. Inspired by the wide variety of interesting species within walking distance of her home, she began her careful life history studies of the birds.

Stanwood's plan to write about the birds surrounding her home made good economic sense in the context of the national nature mania. In 1904, the audience for books about nature was enormous, and bird books were numerous and popular. The nation was full of nature lovers by the end of the 19th century, and their numbers were still growing. Nature study was big business for authors and publishers. John Burroughs, whom Stanwood had met while teaching at the Quincy School, had a long and well-established reputation as a nature writer. He had written *Birds and Bees* in 1887, which was used in sixth, seventh, and eighth grade classrooms throughout the nation. Stanwood herself had embraced the nature study movement and was familiar with its widespread popularity. At the turn of the century, the nature study embraced by millions was a broad mixture of science, aesthetic appreciation, resource conservation, animal welfare, and more traditional pedagogic perspectives on animals' lives for children and adults.

The public's interest in nature was not entirely or even primarily in science. The popular meaning of the term *nature study* was wider than simply school studies of nature. It came to mean the general study of nature, regardless of whether it was studied in the schools or as a hobby, pursued individually or with friends, or engaged in as an

educational or recreational activity. Another kind of nature enthusiasm also became popular: the realistic wild animal story, which followed the lives, thoughts, and experiences of individual animals, often from the animals' own point of view. This writing was considered "Nature Faking" because it included inaccurate details of animal behavior in the service of telling a story. Because it was often sentimental, Burroughs decried these nature stories as unrealistic as well as scientifically false, thereby conflating sentiment with falsehood.

As she began her own work, Stanwood was mindful of the varying approaches that fell under the general label of nature study; she set about her fieldwork and writing thoughtfully. She was aware of Burroughs's admonition that the literary naturalist must combine both the facts and the human significance of nature. He used the honeybee as a metaphor to make his point. Just as nectar does not become honey until it has passed through the chemistry of the bee's body, Burroughs believed that observations of nature must be processed within the writer's mind. The final product, though, should still be true to the raw materials; that is, scientifically verifiable. In Burroughs's view, the task of the literary naturalist was twofold: to report both the objective facts of nature and also one's subjective feelings, but to avoid sentiment.³ The requirement that the writer combine and be faithful to both the scientist's and the poet's vision of nature provided an important part

³Ralph H. Lutts, *The Nature Fakers*.

of the creative challenge for a literary naturalist; this was a challenge that Stanwood constantly struggled with in her own writing.

After 1907, the nature story as a form, however, had undergone alteration as a result of the "Nature Fakers" controversy. Stanwood's work was influenced by this public debate. She had been first exposed to the issue when as a teacher at the Quincy School she heard Ernest Seton Thompson speak, and also as she accompanied John Burroughs on his nature walks. She understood that the reading public believed that the facts of a story should be true to life, and that wildlife should not be portrayed in a style that Burroughs would decry as "nonscientific." As this controversy intensified, it became a public debate in which even President Theodore Roosevelt participated within the pages of elite magazines such as the *Atlantic Monthly*. Within the editorial pages, its participants argued the merits of science as truth, sentiment as fabrication, as methods of understanding and appreciating the lives of the creatures of field, forest and the backyard. As he wrote in his editorials on the subject, Burroughs thought that good nature writing should be scientifically accurate, and that it should also present the writers' point of view without sentiment. Burroughs felt neither type of writing was complete in itself: good science often produced poor literature, but sentimental writing produced work that had little to do with the facts of the bird, flower, or landscape as it existed apart from the poet's emotions.

The Nature Fakers controversy can be read as part of a larger discussion concerned with the distinctions between science and literature, reason and emotion,

masculinity and femininity. Burroughs's essays in the controversy encouraged others to construct boundaries separating science and literature, which some historians believe was an endeavor intimately linked to a larger cultural project of polarizing gender differences. Within the context of women's literary nature writing, the debate had the effect of sharpening the distinctions between sentimental and scientific writing.⁴ This was a polarity that Stanwood later negotiated carefully but not always successfully.

The Nature Fakers debate set a new standard of accuracy for the responsible nature writer and lover. As a writer, Stanwood was self-conscious of finding a balance of her own between nature writing as education and the nature story as entertainment. She wrote to Henry Turner Bailey:

A number of times when I have been tempted to intentionally exaggerate... I...have...only put down what I saw or heard. [Mr. Burroughs's] suggestions have opened my eyes as none of the other nature writers have. I made some observations about the chickadee that perhaps it would be pleasing to record, but certainly, they would help a person to understand a great many things he couldn't otherwise. I have avoided giving little birds names or trying to write a story as I felt it wasn't quite legitimate if I truly wanted to study nature.⁵

After she stopped publishing scientific articles, Stanwood wrote Bailey that she worked from her notes to create a unique bird story format that involved telling intimate tales about bird life focused on their domestic lives, the nest, and even their behavior when

⁴ Elizabeth Donaldson, "The Egg and the Nest: Gender Politics, John Burroughs, and Popular Ornithology" in *Sharp Eyes: John Burroughs and American Nature Writing*, ed. Charlotte Zoë Walker (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 178-191.

⁵ Cordelia J. Stanwood to Henry Turner Bailey, July 12, 1907, HTB.

brought indoors into the house to be hand raised. She particularly focused on bird nest study in the wild, as opposed to birds in the dooryard, as a niche that she believed would serve to distinguish her from other nature writers. Burroughs's insistence on close observation, processed from the writer's unique point of view, is reflected in Stanwood's notes and published writing.

Stanwood's practice of nest study and writing avoided the controversy of bird or egg collecting. With the exception of her editorials on behalf of the feather ban in 1913, in her early writing she avoided projecting her voice into her articles. She wrote only straightforward bird life histories for the ornithological periodicals. Her first published articles were studies reporting on bird nesting data, growth and behavior; she did not write any popular literary ornithology articles until she had been studying birds for ten years.

When Stanwood wrote during the early twentieth century, traditional natural history writing changed, along with the character of natural history itself. Natural history split into various fields, one of them ornithology, and in the process, the writing associated with it specialized. At the same time, specialization of scientific discourse occurred with a resulting polarization between scientific and amateur writing. This worked so that studies in natural history, which focused on living things (nesting habits), and experimental science, which viewed all things as objects for study and manipulation (study skins), over time came to be seen as in direct opposition to one another. In ornithology, this was particularly true because of the controversy over the millinery trade;

the practice of scientific collection was strained by the collection of study skins and the controversial slaughter of birds for the millinery trade.⁶ With this split of ornithological discourse began the divergence of ornithology into professional and amateur camps; ornithological literature provides concrete evidence of the professionalization of science by specialization and exclusion. Another force fueling the break in types of writing was the rise of environmentalism, with the call for a return to nature and for the preservation of the natural world. This was an ethic with which amateurs, focused on nature and the natural history world, could easily identify.

From the context of the evolving character of ornithological science and research, Stanwood's writing can also be placed within the developing stream of scientific writing in the early twentieth century. Within the context of the history of ornithology, Stanwood's writing reflects the transitional development of the rhetoric of science as it is described in Battaglio's *The Rhetoric of Science in the Evolution of American Ornithological Discourse*.⁷ While Donaldson argues that the definition of sentiment transformed as American science formed, Battaglio's study of scientific writing argues that writing for scientific purposes itself changed.⁸

Battaglio's study is a useful tool for understanding Stanwood's work. Using the *Auk* (the journal of the American Ornithological Union), he found that by 1920, almost

⁶ Lutts, *Nature Fakers*, 167.

⁷ John T. Battaglio, *The Rhetoric of Science in the Evolution of American Ornithological Discourse* (Stamford, CT: Ablex Publishing Corp, 1998).

⁸ Donaldson, "The Egg and the Nest"; Battaglio, *Rhetoric of Science*.

half of the contributions were from amateur or unaffiliated writers. But by 1930, their style moved in a direction that included instrumentation, in addition to the binocular and ruler, as part of the ornithologist's toolkit. New rhetorical features such as increasing empiricism and attempts to standardize ornithology through statistical methodology accompanied this change.

When Stanwood wrote her scientific articles, ornithological writing was evolving so that a gradual change was at work; that is, scientific writing was in transition from natural history to experimental science discourse. Stanwood was writing in the context of this transition, and her writing reflects this trend. During this time, writing indicative of professional orientation and discussions of scientific methodology began to appear, but in the beginning of its development in the early twentieth century much of the writing remained narrative. The discourse changed as the science of ornithology advanced; four elements were excluded as it gradually moved toward experimental, scientific discourse. The first was the aesthetic, in that science does not deal with nature's beauty. The next was pathos, because science does not need to appeal to readers' emotions. Related to this element, polemics disappeared because science does not need to appeal to reader's emotions. With the disappearance of these elements, the author's presence was no longer evident in the writing. As the differences between scientific and popular writing widened and strengthened, any writing which contained any of these four elements was not

considered scientific writing.⁹ Although this trend would appear to be gender neutral, because women were closed out of the academy where ornithological science took place, over time scientific writing effectively became male writing.

During the transition to more scientific writing, a key genre in early American ornithologists' writing was the personal narrative such as Stanwood's. Stanwood's role in this transition is significant. Her narrative described the location, sighting, and physical descriptions of the birds she observed; this later came to be replaced with a single line, or a single line and a map in a field guide.

Stanwood's field notes and the published writing drawn from them are exemplary transitional discourse in ornithology; it is writing that reflects the shift from amateur to experimental science discourse, with the accompanying changes in the theoretical and methodological perspective. Among the most important elements are Stanwood's aesthetic descriptions in her bird life histories. Told from the first person, her bird life histories included eloquent prose and opened with a narrative recounting where she conducted her observations. These descriptions were derived from her field notes, in which juxtaposed with reports of birds in song, plants in leaf and bloom, discovery of nests, and the timed intervals of parental feeding of young birds. The notes included poetic landscape narrative that utilized vivid adjectives describing flora and fauna, the scent of the air, the feel of the ground underfoot, and the geography of the area. Upon first reading these notes, later transformed into published articles with the language

⁹ Battaglio, *Rhetoric of Science*, 152.

intact, it would appear that Stanwood saw the landscape romantically. But Stanwood's highly vivid prose descriptions of scenery were not meant to be poetic; rather they were intended to provide the birder with useful accurate descriptions helpful to locating birds nesting within their specific habitat. The currency of this accuracy was the inclusion of geographical, topographical, and biological detail.

There is scientific usefulness in her unique prose that is typical of this transitional scientific writing. In all of her scientific articles, the introduction is in a form of a story.

The following provides an example:

A hill wooded with gray birches and evergreens slopes down to a peat bog. Just above the swale grows the painted trillium that carries at its snowy heart the symbol of the Trinity in royal purple. One morning as I plucked a handful of these dainty blooms, I flushed a brooding Hermit from her eggs. A small fir shaded the nest. The three green-blue eggs made a charming bit of color against the dull orange lining of pine needles.

Twelve days later I visited the nest again. The woods were now sweet with linnea and three fascinating little Thrushes, about seven days old, welcomed me with a wide expanse of golden throat.¹⁰

The introduction to this article included not only Stanwood's sense of discovery, but it also provided the reader with useful information for reliably finding the bird and its young: she described the painted trillium that the birder would recognize, even if he or she did not know its name. The "charming bit of color" created by the contrast between the eggs and the nest linings signals to the birder that the nest is usually lined with pine

¹⁰ Cordelia J. Stanwood, "A Hermit Thrush Study," *Wilson Bulletin* 89 (1914): 180.

needles, and that the eggs, usually three in number, are of a green-blue color. While it accurately described the habitat, nest and egg, the prose vividly helped the birder identify the bird subject. The reader learned that the timing of egg laying synchronized with the flowering of the linnea, providing the birder with a timeframe for finding a nest with eggs.

Many of the passages in Stanwood's bird life histories are, in effect, more colorful prose renderings of the habitat line that are now the familiar observation keys to bird identification in contemporary field guides. In effect, they serve as prose, rather than graphical, maps for the distribution and habitat of the species. Several of Stanwood's earliest nest studies published in the *Wilson Bulletin* reflect this attractive blending of the two features. Another example of this approach, even more evocative, is from the following article titled "The Olive-Backed Thrush (*Hylocichla ustulata swainsoni*) At His Summer Home":

A more or less irregular line of woodland--evergreen, hardwood, mixed growth--stretches from Trenton, Maine, on Frenchman's Bay, opposite Bar Harbor, along the Union River, almost to the post office in the city of Ellsworth. When the Thrushes appear in the spring, they come from the direction of the river, through the cool, damp, mossy aisles of these woodlands. As the time draws near for the coming of the Thrushes, I take the overgrown footways that mark old wood roads, walk toward the river, and listen with bated breath for the first notes of the Thrushes: the Hermit, the Veery, the Olive-backed.

The Hermit (*Hylocichla guttata pallasii*) the first to arrive, usually announces his presence by an early morning hymn. He comes about the middle of April, when the ground is still slightly frozen at sunrise, when a thin coat of ice silvers every pool, when a white frost glistens on each sere field, and the city of Ellsworth slumbers in a thick, white mist, from the which the steeples and roofs just emerge....

At the time of [the Veery and the Olive-backed], the foliage is beginning to appear on the trees, the catkins of some of the alders, willows and birches are in

full bloom, and the hobble bush, wild pear, and arbutus cast upon the gentle breezes, the delicate, sweet odors that go to make up the bewitching, elusive essence of spring day, even yet the ground is sometimes frozen in the morning, and there are occasional flurries of hail and snow, and heavy white frosts.

The Veery (*Hylocichla fuscescens fuscescens*) is but locally common, choosing the swales and adjoining thickets for his habitat, but wherever there is an estate with wooded grounds, or a farm with pastures and woodlands, here the Olive-Backed Thrush and the Hermit erect their dwelling places.¹¹

It is interesting that title of this article included the popular term summer home to describe the location of the breeding bird. The use of popular terms in a scientific context was also typical rhetoric of transitional scientific discourse. This article was composed from data compiled over a three to five year period; from it Stanwood made conclusive descriptions of the locations and habitats in which one would find typical nests, their structure, size, shape and material composition, as well as the egg laying and incubation sequence peculiar to the species. Descriptions of place, season, and the emerging spring plants and their smells were included as clues to the reader about how to find the bird in time and space. Following this introduction, Stanwood's article described the complete nesting cycle of the Swainson's (Olive-backed) Thrush, including the clutch size, length of time to hatching, time to fledging, and the diet of the young birds. The article concluded with a summary report in the IMRaD (Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion) style. Also included in other of her life history studies, were phonetically

¹¹ Cordelia J. Stanwood, "The Olive-Backed Thrush (*Hylocichla ustulata* Swainson) At His Summer Home" *Wilson Bulletin* 84 (September 1913): 123.

accurate, picturesque accounts of the species' songs and calls, both during the courtship and reproductive periods.

Yet evocative as they are, Stanwood's life histories provided accurate information about birds. The life histories represent transitional scientific writing; as reportorial bird life history studies, they inform the serious ornithologist. As distinct from popular ornithology, they are not fiction or even scientifically truthful bird stories for the popular audience.

It is also useful to study Stanwood's field notes to trace the evolution of her scientific approach, thus revealing the contours of her work as she gradually moved away from scientific writing. Her work and ornithological science writing followed opposite trajectories. During the years 1910-1917, Stanwood's field notes reflect the use of careful methodology, measurement, and organization. She weighed and measured nestlings to determine their growth and reported the results in her articles. Her scientific measurements began well ahead of the time frame for scientific writing, but Stanwood's published writing, in opposition to the course of scientific ornithological writing, moved from the more scientific to the amateur, or popular style, during this period. Stanwood was a pioneer in the use of the IMRaD method during her early writing (1910-1917) when it only rarely appeared in emerging scientific writing between 1900 and 1940.

Typical of transitional science writing in the early twentieth century, the *Wilson Bulletin*, a serious ornithological journal, accepted articles about Stanwood's acquaintance with young birds. She described her experience with raising young thrushes

in the article "The Annals of Three Tame Hermit Thrushes." As she described the behavior, diet and growth of the birds, she emphasized that she always readied young birds for their return to a wild existence, where they belonged.¹² Stanwood was fascinated by the behavior and growth of young birds, and she capitalized on her own interest by making it the subject of her stories.

Stanwood published several articles in both scientific and popular magazines about her experiences with birds in her home. One of her earliest articles was "How a Baby Vireo Came to Have his Picture Taken."¹³ This is a good example of transitional science writing in an ornithological periodical. The article described Stanwood's experience of having dislodged a Red-eyed Vireo nestling, which she took to a studio to be photographed. In the process, Stanwood vividly described the song, nest, and habitat of the vireo; yet at the same time she described his behavior as bewitching and ingratiating.

Stanwood's pioneering role in the use of photography is also important to note. During the evolution of scientific writing, photographs also registered a large rise in popularity among ornithologists. Because of the limitations of the camera itself, habitat and nest sites were the most commonly chosen subjects for photographic display. Stanwood, however, pioneered the candid live nesting shot, one complete with the parent

¹² Cordelia J. Stanwood, "The Annals of Three Tame Hermit Thrushes," *Wilson Bulletin* 95 (1916): 64-69.

¹³ Cordelia J. Stanwood, "How A Baby Vireo Came to Have his Picture Taken," *Journal of the Maine Ornithological Society* (September 1910): 45-47.

birds feeding their young. Her nest photographs were the first to portray the nest types of species. It was not until Eliot Porter developed a new method for remote, high-speed shots in the later 1930s and early 1940s that action bird photographs improved and new technology for color photographs became the norm. The double plate from Bent's *Life Histories of Birds* included here illustrates how Stanwood's scientific photographs were paralleled with Porter's. (See Figure 3).

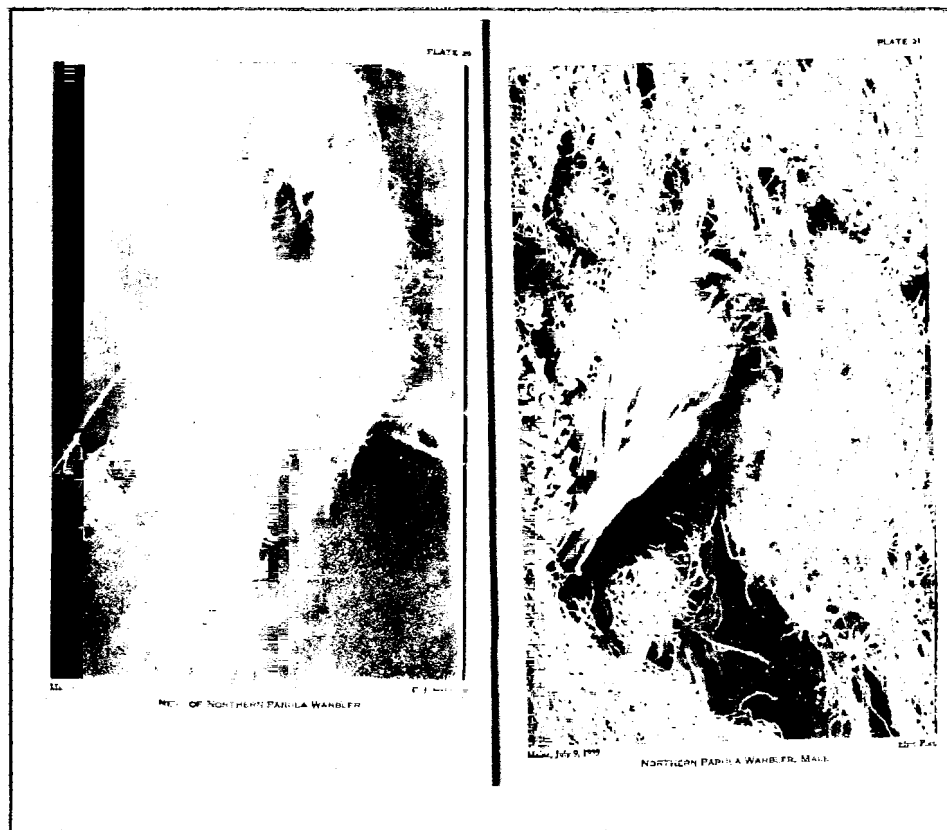


Figure 3. Parula Nests. Stanwood was well known for her photographs of unusual birds' nests. Note the pairing of Eliot Porter's (right) and Stanwood's photograph (left) in Bents' *Life Histories of North American Birds*.

Stanwood's ornithological knowledge collected in the field, and the writing and photography derived from it, was to serve the interest of both amateur (or popular) and professional ornithologists. At the same time as it increased recognition of Stanwood's ornithological expertise, her writing contributed to ornithologists' knowledge about the location, habits and behavior of birds. Through the dissemination of her popular newspaper and magazine articles, Stanwood's later writing and photography also increased the public's understanding and appreciation for birds.

Stanwood's role as a transitional writer in American ornithology reflects the importance of the continuing participation of the amateur bird watcher as a significant contributor to the field of ornithology. From the early twentieth century until the present day, the home birder has provided the professional ornithologist with information that has permitted a protracted association between the amateur and scientific ornithologist. Even though scientific ornithological writing came to largely depend on work done in the laboratory, ornithology nevertheless continues to rely on amateur bird observations in order to understand actual bird behavior, especially the distribution, migration, and eruption patterns of particular species. It continues to depend on amateur censuses to learn about unpredictable bird movements and population fluctuations.¹⁴ Similarly, Stanwood continued to provide data to the biological survey that ornithologists conducted

¹⁴ Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, "What We Do"
<<http://birds.cornell.edu/citsci/>> September 2002.

until she was nearly ninety years old; the observations reported in her articles provided the foundation for knowledge on many species.

Stanwood's importance as a writer of transitional scientific ornithological writing is singular. A pioneer in field observation, reporting, and photography, with her narrative field descriptions she not only innovated a new style of ornithological writing, but she also contributed valuable information that later ornithologists relied upon.

Stanwood needed money, however, and bird life histories published in ornithological journals paid little or nothing. Ever resourceful, Stanwood relied on both photography and writing to support herself. Stanwood found that she could sell her photographs to popular periodicals along with educational or entertaining articles on birds. She sold photographs of nests and young birds to *Suburban Life*, *Blue-Bird*, *Normal Instructor and Primary Plans*, and *Home Progress*. She also wrote brief articles on various species and the types of nests they produced.

For the remainder of her life Stanwood continued to keep field notes and develop them into articles published in an array of publications, from the scientific *Wilson Bulletin*, popular *Blue-Bird* (a periodical for members of the Burroughs Nature Club), to the style-conscious *House Beautiful*, and, later in her life, newspapers. Stanwood found that ornithology articles written for the popular audience provided a reasonable stipend. After she had purchased a camera in 1913, she set up blinds of her own invention and photographed the birds in the wild for her research, but she also photographed them for less serious reasons. From 1916 to around 1922, she focused on photographing birds for

illustrative rather than educational or scientific purposes. She tracked nesting chickadees, thrushes, woodpeckers and sparrows, tamed them, and with help from her friend Embert Osgood, posed them in his downtown Ellsworth studio for photographs. As a result, the photographs reflect a portrait style: the birds are posed, the lighting is soft and there is a halo effect around the subject. She also found that the events that took place in the process of photographing the birds made for a good story: then she wrote articles about her knowledge of the birds' idiosyncrasies and her experiences interacting with them.

In her writing for popular magazines, beauty in lowly places was a common theme of Stanwood's. The Maine landscape, which she described as desolate, often proffered excellent songsters that she described for the popular magazines. In her story "A Guest of a Night Who Had His Picture Taken and Was Fed on Beefsteak," She described her foray into the swamps and bogs in order to photograph her charming avian subject. Stanwood related how she captured, fed, and kept a young Blue Jay in order to photograph him. The glossy feathers of the young jay so impressed her that her admiration knew no bounds. Captivated by the bird, she brought him (she does not say how she carried the bird) to her large, airy chamber and "prepared a bill of fare to his liking. A peat bog furnished me earthworms, an ant hill provided me fresh ants eggs, a hayfield proffered sweet, wild strawberries, and a bubbling spring yielded cool, fresh water." This did not suit him, however, and she instead fed him ground beef. After he had posed for his photograph, she returned him to his swamp. Stanwood quoted Emerson when she concluded that the moral of the story was that "In the mud and scum of things,

There always, always something sings.”¹⁵ Stanwood's pursuit of beauty in the swamp produced not only a story, but also a picture of the bird for the article.

Another of Stanwood's favorites of the desolate landscape, illustrated by an unattributed photographer, is described in her article “The White-Throated Sparrow, Songster.” It was a bird that produced one of the “sweetest, wildest notes in nature from its surroundings of profound desolation...of [the] Maine landscape. The vast, somber, spire-like tracts of evergreens, vast deposits of trap and granite rocks, the bleached bones of ancient glaciers, vast cut-offs and burned tracts, all suggest an untamed land.”

Although Stanwood failed to mention that this desolation in large part was due to man's activity, the picture of desolation is vivid. From this place sings the White-throated Sparrow, whose nesting habitat she described, and then related how she captured the young in a basket to have them photographed. In the studio, “they were so gentle that they would pose in any position for any length of time,” confided Stanwood.¹⁶ After she returned them to the wild, they sat dazed for a while, but eventually recovered enough to scold her. In these articles of adventures with birds in the studio, Stanwood projected her persona into the story, describing the history of Maine and the land surrounding her home, as she commodified her landscape, the birds, and her talent for capturing, taming,

¹⁵ Cordelia J. Stanwood, “A Guest of a Night Who Had His Picture Taken and Was Fed on Beefsteak,” *House Beautiful* (June 1918): 39.

¹⁶ Cordelia J. Stanwood, “The White-throated Sparrow, Songster,” *Country Life in America* (March 1917):71.

feeding, and photographing them. Her encounters with wild birds were always a popular topic, and she cleverly wrote about many of her experiences.

Often, in her writing Stanwood projected her own ideas about human society onto the birds. This made for popular, high-priced articles that earned her good money. Early twentieth-century, urban industrial America hungered for images of nature, and Stanwood delivered them. Assisted by young boys in lugging her camera equipment and in setting up brush blinds in the fields and woods, she photographed the secretive birds on her property. She documented their behavior as they migrated, courted, nested and cared for their young. As she sought to entertain the general reader with her birding stories, Stanwood developed a nesting bird trope that illuminated the changing world of the early twentieth century. This was a world in which she, like many women of her era, strove to reconcile her traditional rural nineteenth-century upbringing with an increasingly industrial, urban national culture. Using images of birds and accompanying text, Stanwood appropriated and commodified nature to champion Arts and Crafts ideals, the suffrage agenda, the work ethic, and American domestic ideology. Her work reached a large public audience through articles published in popular magazines, notably *Country Life* and *House Beautiful*. The era's enlarging urban audience viewed her simultaneously intimate and public, domestic and universal photographs of birds and their nests. In this way, Stanwood made the nearby birds serve human interests and concerns during the early twentieth century period of rapid social change, in which getting to know bird neighbors through their pictures created a comfortable intimacy for urban folk.

During the suffrage campaign's war of images, Stanwood joined the picture parade with wild bird photographs and accompanying text that appealed to the nineteenth century ideology of women's moral superiority; mixed with it were textual analogies of progressive artistry and appeals to American patriotism. Stanwood's bird articles mirrored and adumbrated the larger cultural attitudes toward nature and the social changes of the Progressive era.

Country Life and *House Beautiful* reflected the views of their white, upper middle class audience. In *Country Life*, Stanwood's articles began appearing in 1914 and ran through March 1917. A handsome \$4.00 Boston monthly devoted to upscale houses and gardens, *Country Life* was clearly not designed for farmers. The first editor, Cornell's Liberty Hyde Bailey, evangelist of nature study, wrote of the magazine: "The growth of literature pertaining to plants and animals and the out-of-doors is one of the most empathic and significant movements of the times."¹⁷ Seeking to join that movement for her own benefit, Stanwood added her own literature to *Country Life*.

Stanwood's articles in *House Beautiful* were published from 1916 through 1921. Begun in 1896 by Eugene Klapp, a Chicago engineer with a flair for architecture and literature, *House Beautiful* was enjoying a growing circulation as it reflected the special interest of its well-to-do readers in the development of new art forms and the revival of old ones, in the era's framework of beauty and suitability. Her personal preference for

¹⁷ Liberty Hyde Bailey, "The Nature-Study Idea," *Country Life in America* (February 1901): 128-9.

the Arts and Crafts and the Colonial Revival, in combination with her enthusiasm for nature, made these magazines a suitable venue for her articles.

In articles for both magazines, Stanwood used her bird photographs to anchor text that mirrored evolving cultural attitudes toward nature. From her outpost in Ellsworth, Maine's down east coast, Stanwood was in a perfect position to inform well-to-do city folk about the mysterious ways of the bird and its nest. Because as a young girl she had moved from the countryside to the city, she understood how confusing the urban world could be. Her articles reminded her urban readers of their rural roots.

Stanwood's bird photographs and articles about their habits not only informed magazine readers about the birds themselves, but offered the urban, upscale audience a glimpse into bird social life, a life that Stanwood portrayed as closely resembling their own. Not only did she project her own perspective, but she also tailored her bird articles' message to her audience in order to sell articles. Stanwood's anthropomorphic writing about birds reflected popular ideas about the nobility of the Arts and Crafts ideals, the American worker and parent, and importance of the home in society. Her text countered hostile images of human suffragists by likening industrious female domestic birds to human women. In this way, Stanwood made birds serve human interests during the early twentieth century period when innovative artistic creativity, contested rights for women and laborers, and nostalgia for the bygone country life were highlighted in many upscale periodicals--a period in which getting to know birds, their nests and family life countered unsettling images of rapid social change.

Beginning in 1914, Stanwood's first popular ornithology articles were small, one-column pieces illustrated by a single photograph. In keeping with her own ideas about female independence, these early articles often emphasized the virtues of the female bird, especially her nest-building capabilities. The male birds she portrayed as ornamental and useful only insofar as they entertained the female bird while she went about the business of constructing the nest. The nest, Stanwood's metaphor for American domestic ideology, was the focus of her text and her photographs. Stanwood wisely chose birds that would be familiar to her audience: the brilliant migratory Redstart, the tame Red-Eyed Vireo, and the cosmopolitan Chipping Sparrow, in addition to the ubiquitous Black-Capped Chickadee, industrious Downy Woodpecker and the alluring Ruby-throated Hummingbird.

For example, an early article in *Country Life*, "The Nest of the Redstart," appropriated the Redstart as an example for women. In keeping with the theme of the magazine, which "constantly flaunts before us our highest ideals," Stanwood told the reader that the Redstart constructs an exquisite nest that is so well adapted to its surroundings that it is nearly completely concealed, yet is still attractive and serviceable. The Redstart, whose division of labor earned the female Stanwood's highest praise, also carried out important services to human beings in an artful manner. In appropriating nature as an ideal for human behavior, Stanwood's birds set the highest ideals for human

behavior. A beautiful yet serviceable home was constructed by the female, whose role was practical and worldly while still remaining feminine.¹⁸

Stanwood appropriated both bird sexes in the service of the Arts and Crafts ideals, in addition to early twentieth-century feminism, in "A Bird Craftsman." This article extolled the female Red-eyed Vireo, whose virtues of cheerful singing in and along the village streets, lovely green plumage, useful extermination of insects, and artful nest construction made her, according to Stanwood, worthy of our consideration. Stanwood emphasized that amid the growing debate over suffrage, this bird made all the decisions concerning nest building. Stanwood wrote, "Perhaps one reason that the abode of Mrs. Red-eye is such a success is due to the fact that although she always takes her husband with her when she selects the site for her home, she attends to the details of the building herself." Stanwood described the site selection process, but emphasized that Mrs. Red-eye selected the material to the accompaniment of Mr. Red-Eyed Vireo's song.¹⁹

Reflecting contemporary concern, the birds had traits in common with human women in early twentieth century United States; like the work of human women, this bird mother created a warm, strong durable cradle that was invisible to those outside. Reflecting her own views, Stanwood appropriated the Vireo as an example to show that females can both make good decisions and good homes. In this way, birds seemed similar to people.

¹⁸ *Country Life* (April 1914): Title page; Stanwood, "Nest of the Redstart," *Country Life in America* (April 1914):108-110.

¹⁹ Cordelia J. Stanwood, "A Bird Craftsman," *Country Life in America* (March 1916).

Bird homes resembled those of human women: private, intimate, yet valued for their contribution to American cultural life. Stanwood's vireos showed how a woman best makes a home: to the encouragement of her husband, she would construct a durable, lasting place to raise the family, yet she required independence in order to go about her delicate task. These were also women's traits that were extolled in the popular press. At the same time, Stanwood's birds emphasized that the value of usefulness, beauty, and artistry--the commonly held popular notions about the Arts and Crafts ideals--could also be combined with labor to create a useful product.

The Red-eyed Vireo was also Stanwood's romantic Arts and Crafts champion; Stanwood also wrote about them for *House Beautiful* in an article titled "The House Beautiful." Stanwood appropriated the vireo as a worthy romantic domestic example for humans: "Mrs. Vireo marries for love.... Mrs. Vireo is an architect....She is moved by no considerations of money, no considerations of style, no social ambitions. She loves Mr. Vireo, the musician; she wishes to make a beautiful cradle for their precious eggs." The bird builds her home of materials that are adapted to her purposes: strong, warm, and not noticeable. Reflecting the Arts and Crafts philosophy, Mrs. Red-eyed Vireo fashioned a house fitted to its purpose and adapted to its surroundings; a house so well built that other birds, and even mice, were known to use it on following years as a cradle for their young.

Adaptability, strength, with form following function, made of native materials; these were the qualities that encompassed the Arts and Crafts ideals.²⁰

Stanwood noted the advance of industrial modernity and suffrage when she published "The Tree Surgeon." As she walked down a city street noted for its elms, she heard the tattoo of the Downy Woodpecker and wondered that the bird could find a nesting site amidst such carefully pruned trees. "No matter how often the swift automobile or the lumbering cart traversed that busy street, Downy was oblivious to all that was happening...but persons who have not trained their eyes to see birds, or their ears to hear them, do not notice these sounds or signs, so that Downy is practically as safe from observation when excavating his nest on Main Street as he is in the orchard or the woods," she declared. Commenting on the division of labor which some believed would be changed by giving the women the vote, Stanwood opined, "Pretty Mrs. Downy must be a suffragist, because, contrary to the custom of most birds, she has Mr. Downy do his full share of the work; he helps excavate the nest, and takes his turn at keeping the eggs warm and at brooding and feeding the young.... Usually they spend about the same amount of time upon their domestic tasks, and come and go quite regularly." As evidenced by this article, however, Stanwood had an open mind. "From my studies of the Downy Woodpecker, I have learned that it is not well to pass judgment before looking at a matter from all sides." She explained that what had appeared to be lack of parental

²⁰ Cordelia J. Stanwood, "The House Beautiful," *House Beautiful* (February 1917): 193-195.

solicitude was revealed to her when she was lucky enough to have a little downy woodpecker for a pet. Stanwood learned that the birds gave their young a hard nest cavity because young downies will eat any lining placed inside of it, which would cause them to die; she also learned that downies will voraciously consume insects that are harmful to trees. At the conclusion of the article, Stanwood admonished her readers not to be alarmed if they hear a woodpecker on a tree or a telegraph or telephone pole; he is not an enemy, but a friend. "It could be that Mr. And Mrs. Downy Woodpecker would honor the readers by making their home in a dead limb on one of the trees on their lawn, where they will excavate the harmful insects that would mar the beauty of the trees."²¹ Usefulness, wisdom, and service were duties and attributes of these birds. These were qualities that were highly prized without regard to gender in the Progressive Era.

The Chipping Sparrow, described as a democratic bird by *Country Life*'s editor in its table of contents, shared a full-page spread with more nest illustrations in the article "Nesting Days." Stanwood described the Chipping Sparrow as "a product of civilization. He is very democratic in all his tendencies. He believes in a plain dwelling, an inconspicuous garb, healthy nestlings, and many of them, and a generous diet of weed seeds and insects taken from the garden, the fields, and the trees of the orchard and the street."²² Describing the Chipping Sparrow's nest and her encounter with a family of

²¹ Cordelia J. Stanwood, "The Tree Surgeon," *Country Life in America* (February 1917).

²² Cordelia J. Stanwood, "Nesting Days," *Country Life in America* (June 1916).

them, she extolled the virtues of the early twentieth century Back-to-the-Land movement: love of family life, plain dwellings, and usefulness, all within the setting of the rural landscape.

In commodifying the bird nest, Stanwood was able to create a clever article that also promoted her views on the division of labor between the sexes and female domesticity. She imparted her expert understanding of Redstart nests by describing the unusual characteristics of the nests in the illustrations in the article "A Skillful Architect." "The nest of the brooding Redstart in the illustration was differently situated from any of which I have a record. The little architect placed it but six inches from the ground in the crotch of a maple, and so well was it concealed that it is strange that it ever was discovered." That is, until Stanwood, in her remote Maine home, was able to find it with her trained eyes and get a photograph for the upscale *House Beautiful* readers. As in the *Country Life* article, the female performed her work supervised and accompanied by the song of her gaily-attired mate. According to Stanwood, this bird couple represented the best of variations in the division of labor: the male Redstart evidently understood architecture, but Mrs. Redstart was the craftsman who executed this unique bit of work. The photographs witnessed the nest's complexity. Continuing to praise the female bird, Stanwood described how the female also incubated the eggs and brooded the young, but that the father bird did assist in feeding and in caring for them both in and out of the nest. "The Redstarts are the most devoted parents," confided Stanwood. "These pretty deceptions, the expression of the mother instinct to defend her young, even at the expense

of her own life, seem to me very touching.”²³ In praising the female bird’s mother instinct, Stanwood underscored the importance of the family; evidently she also believed that the male should be the supervisory head of the household while at the same time he assisted in caring for the young.

Stanwood brought her home to the public eye when she emphasized the virtues of the female bird in her article about its denizens in “Tenants of Birdsacre,” in which both the photographs and the text bring the chickadee into intimate proximity to the urban reader. Richly photographed with appealing portraits of chickadees, the bird portraits are particularly soft, marked by a distinct artistry not found in her more scientific illustrations. Stanwood’s praise for the human characteristics of gentle manners, cheerful attitude, and steadfastness emerged in her anthropomorphic writing about these birds. Describing the black-capped chickadee, Stanwood told the reader that this bird was accessible for observation because he remained with people on the same territory year round, never changed his garb in summer or winter, and always announced himself in a gentle, confiding, cheerful way. The chickadee also rendered valuable service during the winter’s days: he ate the moths that would destroy fruit and foliage. In describing the domestic habits of chickadees, Stanwood gave the reader a bird that was virtuous in the age-old activity of child rearing, and was cute and gentle. The six little chickadees

²³ Cordelia J. Stanwood, “A Skilful Architect,” *House Beautiful* (February 1916): xl-xlii.

resembled stylish human family portraits; this served to heighten the intimacy of the bird portrait and lent it human qualities.²⁴

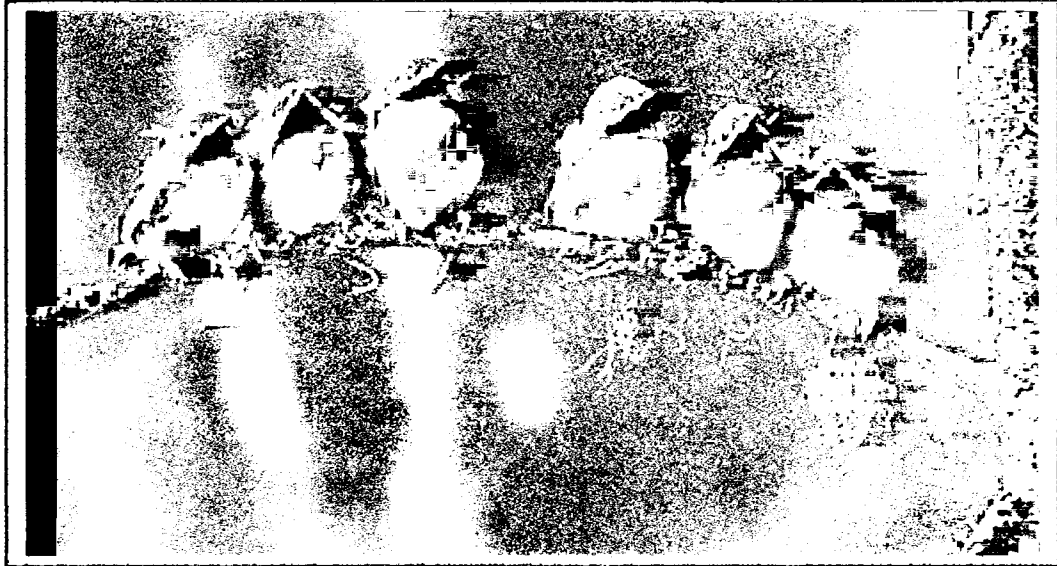


Figure 4. Stanwood's illustrated article "The Tenants of Birdsacre" featuring her well-known "Six Little Chickadees" combined the best features of her work: intimate photographs and interesting information, all observed and posed at her rural home. *Courtesy of the Stanwood Wildlife Foundation.*

Stanwood valued the chickadees most of all because they shared the duties of raising their young. Both male and female chickadees have the same plumage, but Stanwood made a distinction between the sexes, thereby revealing her own gender

²⁴ Cordelia J. Stanwood, "The Tenants of Birdsacre," *House Beautiful* (March 1920): 280-281.

assumptions. Describing the activities of a Black-capped Chickadee, Stanwood identified the bird as female because “the female bird is nearly always more gentle than the male bird, and rather more anxious to get the cradle ready for the pretty cream-white eggs with the minute brown freckles all over them.”²⁵ In making this distinction, Stanwood revealed that she, too, apparently believed in the virtues that women were reminded to cultivate: maternal gentleness, cheerfulness and artistry were the important feminine traits.

Stanwood appropriated Downy Woodpeckers and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds to promote intelligence and loyalty without regard to their appearance. These traits are described in the articles “The Downy Woodpecker” and in “Baby: The Children’s Tame Humming-Bird.” In the woodpecker article, when she described the birds, Stanwood also described the virtues required of the American worker. The Downy Woodpecker was a bird with versatile talents: “He is a bird intelligent enough to meet the demands of civilization, and ...he is a bird that is here to stay.” Stanwood again promoted her ideology of the division of labor; she elaborated that upon careful inspection, she was able to watch a pair of Downy Woodpeckers excavating the nest. She observed that the male did most of the heavy work until he was weary. At such times, he occasionally called for his mate to take his place. “Usually, she was on hand waiting for him to cease

²⁵ Ibid.

work, when she quickly showed how dexterous she could be with her beak, even though she wore no beautiful scarlet crown-patch.”²⁶

The Ruby-throated Hummingbird, on the other hand, was a sparkling jewel of a bird. Stanwood commodified the story of a migrating hummingbird to espouse American domestic ideology, while at the same time exemplifying how nature can create human community. In this story, Stanwood told the story of “Baby the Tame Hummingbird,” who returned to its natal area after migrating far away. Its loving human families had had its photograph taken, and these rested in positions of honor on the bureaus of children and mothers alike. The Hummingbird linked people together: during the winter, while the bird was absent, Stanwood explained that it was customary to “speak of Baby frequently, to wonder where he was, and [to] question his return. The following spring he returned, and fluttered about among the flowers all summer. The third season, the spring of 1919, again one of the children was in the garden, and again a little humming-bird came to talk to her.” Just as in a child’s fairy tale, so “Baby’s beautiful presence cast a spell over the hillside, and made all the friends of Baby rarely happy. He had not forgotten them.”²⁷ In the service of a good story that would sell well, and in this instance unmindful of Burroughs’s admonitions about truthfulness, Stanwood captured the story of a tiny bird

²⁶ Cordelia J. Stanwood, “Baby-The Children’s Tame Hummingbird,” *House Beautiful* (March 1920): 197; idem, “The Downy Woodpecker,” *House Beautiful* (January 1921): 24, 66.

²⁷ Stanwood, “Baby.”

and wrote it large into the imagination of urban readers, bringing the country community in close focus.

Stanwood also found that the built landscape surrounding her home to be a popular subject for those interested in the Colonial Revival. Her own community of Ellsworth, in addition to Blue Hill and Castine, was dotted with classic colonial and early Federalist buildings that reminded urban dwellers of their rural beginnings. Their interiors were filled with the furniture that magazine readers found desirable as they set about recreating an imagined simpler past. Accordingly, Stanwood photographed the buildings and furnishings of nearby colonial homes. She researched various homebuilders and town histories and learned about furniture styles and makes. On one assignment, she asked her photographer friend Embert Osgood to help her in setup while she photographed. The result was a series of articles in *House Beautiful*: “Glimpses of Old Blue Hill,” “The Story of Ellsworth,” and “Castine—A Village by the Sea.”²⁸

Stanwood was hampered financially because she did not develop her own prints, but she enjoyed researching the history of the towns and their leaders, buildings, and architecture. Her photographs captured the grace, simplicity and purity of the late colonial and early Federalist architecture. She used the natural light to accent the lines of the buildings; she captured the details of pediments on doorways, the fenestration of the

²⁸ Cordelia J. Stanwood, “Glimpses of Old Blue Hill,” *House Beautiful* (April 1919): 222-224; idem, “The Story of Ellsworth,” *House Beautiful* (December 1919): 374-375 ; “Castine—A Village by the Sea,” *House Beautiful* (August 1920): 92-94.

more formal homes, and the shutters of the Colonial Revival style. This close attention to detail was a manifestation of her well-trained eye in the service of history. Her interest in local history had grown naturally out of her interest in family history, so that even family, local history, and architecture became commodities to write about.

Yet all her projections about society onto the birds and research on old down east villages, homes and furnishings did not economically sustain her. Beginning in 1921, Stanwood faced acute economic problems. She had run through the inheritance her Aunt Cordelia had left her in 1914, her father had died, and her elderly mother was increasingly dependent on her for care, both economically and physically. Her siblings were far flung and did not help to meet expenses in supporting their mother.

Stanwood's other problem was that she was dependent on publication for her support, but the public's interest in nature was eclipsed by the mid-1920s, and she was unable to get away from home long enough to research more colonial revival subjects. Many readers were already familiar with the call of the wild, and did not wish to read any more about birds. By that time, *Country Life* and *House Beautiful* had both changed editors and no longer wished to publish her bird stories and photographs. Increasingly desperate, she sought a position in an institution where she could teach crafts. The newly opened Pineland Institution for the Mentally Ill in New Gloucester, Maine hired her for a year, and then she returned home to care for her mother. Some time after she lived and worked at Pineland, her Aunt Addie returned from Oregon where she had lived for fifty years. Stanwood agreed to help her aging aunt, and Aunt Addie paid board. Most of all,

Stanwood yearned to publish a fully-fledged book, both as a solution to her financial woes and to assure her a permanent place among ornithologists.

Her impulse to produce a full-length book based on her scientific observations in the field reflects the widespread trend of women to popularize science. As Nina Baym has pointed out, earlier in the nineteenth century, publication of popular science books was one way women found their public voice.²⁹ Stanwood, though a constant presence in the pages of magazines, had not found her voice in a full-length book, either for children or adults, as did many other women. She thought might interest a publisher in her bird stories if they were reworked into a book-length manuscript, but the type of sustained writing that a large manuscript required overwhelmed her. Accordingly, in 1919 she had begun a correspondence course with Dallas Sharpe of Boston University. An accomplished nature writer, Sharpe was a professor of writing at the university, as well as a friend of John Burroughs. The records are silent about how Stanwood was accepted for this course, but it did not seem to do her much good. She turned to her friend Henry Turner Bailey to find a publisher and asked him to read her manuscript. "It is a strange verity but Mr. Sharpe was not nearly so helpful in teaching English, although a Boston University instructor, as was Prof. Henry Bailey, a teacher of Drawing in various art schools," she wrote in her memoirs.³⁰ Bailey made extensive comments and corrected her

²⁹ Nina Baym, *American Women of Letters and the Nineteenth-Century Sciences: Styles of Affiliation* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002).

³⁰ Stanwood, "Autobiography," SWF.

writing style; upon his suggestion she also sent the manuscript to Western Reserve biologist Francis Herrick, but because of illness he was unable to help her. She doggedly worked on her manuscript for several more years.

At the same time she took a course on writing from the University of Maine. She reformatted her bird notes and published articles into a comprehensive manuscript, so that each bird species she had studied was the subject of a short illustrated chapter. The chapters were thematically tied together by the idea that nature holds many mysteries that all of us in common wish to discover. She mailed her manuscript to several publishing houses, but few would even consider it because they thought that the national appetite for nature writing had been satiated. Her manuscript was never published.

During the depression, many people, especially those in rural areas, fell back on small scale farming as a way to supplement their diet. Many planted gardens and raised fowl, bees, and livestock such as goats, sheep, and dairy cows. Stanwood's familiarity with tending dairy cows and bees was particularly helpful; as she went about her business tending to them, she was able to formulate ideas for articles that would be helpful to the novice. She also found that her bird observations often overlapped her livestock care: wild birds ate honeybees, hawks predated broody hens, and the overgrown meadows where the dairy cows grazed were filled with birds. Later, in the 1940s and late 1950s as bird feeding became more popular, those who wished to learn about the birds found an enthusiastic teacher in Stanwood's occasional articles.

Unable to find an interested publisher for the bird stories she had edited and compiled into a comprehensive book-length manuscript, Stanwood's bird work was once again transformed: this time into occasional newspaper articles about birds and their domestic habits. A few years later, when she inquired about selling her work to Maine and New England newspapers, she found that they would publish her work about once a month. Her writing style was more suitable to the casual newspaper-reading audience who wished to be entertained when they read the Sunday magazine section. Set in the style of the personal reminiscence about interesting birds she had encountered over her lifetime (she was by then over seventy), these were often accompanied by her earlier photographs. Their cachet lay in the pre-automotive era in which they were set. The stories were published in the *Lewiston [Maine] Sunday Journal* and sometimes Boston newspapers. At the same time, she continued to keep bird census materials, all the while acting as the natural history teaching resource for her community.

After World War II, when she was in her eighties, Stanwood sought more publication venues. Once again the *Lewiston Daily Sun* expressed interest in publishing her articles and photographs. This provided a small steady income for her; the *Lewiston Sun* editor wrote, "Six a year would be our limit in the main part of the magazine. It might be possible to utilize as many more annually for our children's pages, if you cared to write such articles on the written level that would appeal to youngsters eight years old

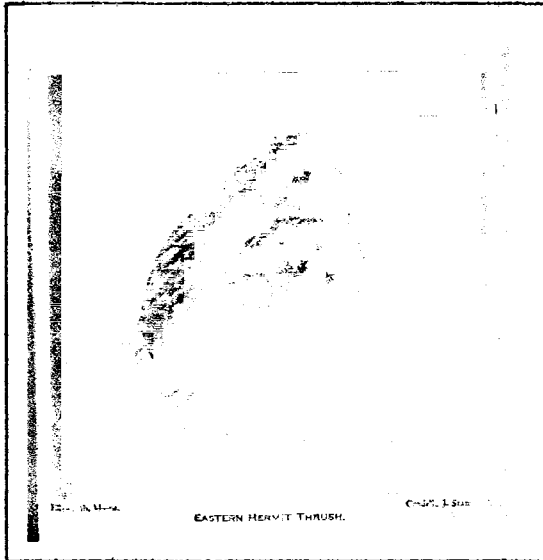
and up.”³¹ These newspaper pieces focused on tips for identifying the familiar birds of the dooryard as well as those in the fields and forests that most people would not ordinarily see. She also sold accompanying photographs of nests and bird families that she had taken twenty or thirty years earlier; their high quality made them acceptable for the newspaper reproduction that illustrated the articles.

The Sunday magazine supplement was a good venue for Stanwood. It accommodated her flair for writing short pieces, and she was able to include her photographs of birds, nests, and habitat as illustration. Yet as her mother aged and increasingly depended on her for care, Stanwood found less and less opportunity to observe birds and transform an idea into a “five dollar check.” Newspaper articles, sporadically published and poorly paid, did little to assuage her poverty. Following her mother’s death in the mid-1930s, as Stanwood herself aged, she was forced to curtail her activities. Gradually she resigned from contributing breeding bird survey biological material, but she was able to sell her photographs to the State of Maine for their collection, for which they paid her a monthly stipend.

But the landscape itself also curtailed her bird work. By the late 1940s, the birds that Stanwood studied when she first returned to Ellsworth were no longer plentiful in her home vicinity; over the intervening years from 1904 until the 1950s, the fields had entirely reforested, the state had moved the road closer to her home, and the area around

³¹Frances Pendexter to Cordelia J. Stanwood, June 1, 1948, SWF.

Figure 5. Eastern Hermit Thrush. *Bent's Life Histories of Birds*. Stanwood's baby bird



photographs were widely reprinted, especially for professional ornithological illustration.

Birdsacre became increasingly urban as the automobile changed the face of the countryside. The natural landscape was constantly changing, yet Stanwood had

been able to take advantage of all the birds that had found an ecological niche within its evolving features. Always interested in the wildlife outside, Stanwood kept notes on the dooryard birds until she was eighty-eight years old. She fed grain and suet to the winter birds, depriving her own appetite in favor of the birds' welfare. Once the busy teacher, and then "Ellsworth's Famous Birdwoman," a writer who both informed and entertained her readers about birds, Cordelia Stanwood became the axis of birding interest in her community.

Stanwood's field notes themselves found a place on the printed page. Her life-long field notes were not just a personal diary; invited by Arthur C. Bent to contribute to the Smithsonian series on *Birds of North America*, she generously contributed her notes on nuthatches, woodpeckers, and many species of warblers. These observations were

faithfully republished in detail.³² The Bent series publications remained as an unparalleled resource to the professional ornithologist until the *Life History* series update in process today.

In an era of limited occupational opportunities for women, Stanwood crafted a second vocation as a path-breaking nature photographer and writer. Although until recently many of her bird articles have been lost or overlooked, Stanwood's knowledge about birds, her interest in bird watching and her enthusiasm for spreading its popularity have left a lasting legacy, whose significance surpasses the economic benefit it brought to Stanwood. Stanwood maintained graceful balance in her writing following the Nature Fakers controversy, even as it informed her observations and subsequent writing. She stands as a figure in transitional scientific ornithological writing; her work contributed to the developing stream of scientific discourse as it matured and informed. Stanwood educated the serious ornithologist, yet her work retained the hallmarks of transitional narrative prose that was informative, intimate and vivid, popular and entertaining. Stanwood's fieldwork added to the scholarly body of ornithological knowledge and her publications contributed to the growing literature of popular ornithology. Within the genre of women's nature writing, Stanwood occupies a unique place as both a scientific

³² Arthur Cleveland Bent, *Life Histories of North American Wood Warblers*, (New York: Dover Publications, 1963); idem, *Life Histories of North American Nuthatches, Wrens, Thrashers and Their Allies*, (New York: Dover Publications, 1964); *Life Histories of North American Thrushes, Kinglets, and Their Allies*, (New York: Dover Publications, 1964); *Life Histories of North American Woodpeckers*, (New York: Dover Publications, 1964).

and popular writer whose work spanned four decades. Her work stands as an example of how women's nature writing contributed to a genre that was varied in perspective, both from the artistic and scientific point of view; it is a style of writing that has long vanished from the printed page, yet its content continues to inform the serious birder. Yet not only did Stanwood's writing make a unique mark on the history of the genre, her photography also informed and entertained the public while at the same time it inspired others to illustrate their work, thus leaving a lasting impression in the history of bird photography. In her quest for economic survival, Stanwood has left an enduring legacy that continues to inform the public about birds and their natural world.

EPILOGUE

I have worked hard here but people seem to appreciate all that I accomplish. That makes me feel like doing more. Anything but feeling that in a few weeks I shall get down to charity.

*Cordelia Stanwood to Henry T. Bailey, September 7, 1921*¹

As early as 1940, and later in the early 1950s, the Boston, Massachusetts and the Portland and Lewiston, Maine newspapers ran articles recognizing Stanwood's accomplishments. "Maine Woman Turns Her Farm Over to Her Friends the Birds," was the heading of a column in the *Christian Science Monitor* of August 14, 1940:

Perched high above the wide cement road between Ellsworth and Bar Harbor, Maine, over which traffic pours into and out of Mt. Desert all day long, there is a set of low gray buildings at the edge of an old farm. You may know that the farm is old because it is very evident the land has long been unworked. The fields are unmown and the forests that are creeping in upon them are untrimmed. In fact as a farm the place is pretty well gone by, but as a bird sanctuary it is in lively, thrifty condition, keeping its owner, Miss Cordelia J. Stanwood, busily engaged from morning to night.²

The article's author described how Birdsacre, situated as it is within a few miles of Acadia National Park on Mt. Desert Island is a wildlife sanctuary lying directly in the coast migration route of birds. "Miss Stanwood has kept for herself only the buildings and even these she shares with the hummingbirds that sip nectar out of little glass containers all around the ell door and with the collection of birds' nests that occupy so much room inside

¹ Cordelia J. Stanwood to Henry Turner Bailey, September 7, 1921, HTB.

² "Maine Woman Turns Her Farm Over to Her Friends the Birds" *Christian Science Monitor*, (August 14, 1940).

the house.” Stanwood toured the author around the grounds of her farm. The author expressed admiration for Stanwood as they walked.

down an old wood road over which lumber was hauled by ox team 60 years ago, now almost closed by the trees, to a park like growth of small firs to finish the trip with a look at the nest being built by a magnolia warbler....I think if John Burroughs could have seen Birdsacre and Miss Stanwood’s loving, painstaking work among her tenants who in the course of 30 years have come and gone in countless numbers, he would have been more than ever convinced that she was, as he said, a real bird woman.³

By the time of her old age, Birdsacre had changed dramatically. Her farmhouse and pasture suffered from neglect, but humanity’s technological innovations, social change, and the resulting habitat changes in nature barely provided shelter for the birds that she studied. She recognized how this evolving landscape affected the lives of the birds. “When the farmers used to tote home feed from town by horse and wagon, corn and oats would be spilled out on the mud roads. Birds used to go for the grains and there used to be more gray birches with their catkins along the roads. There are still plenty of alder catkins, but there isn’t the bird food around that there once was,” she was quoted in the *Bangor Sunday Commercial*’s article “Ellsworth’s Famous Birdwoman.”⁴ The article described how her farm’s land had changed. Stanwood prized the thick forests that had grown up close by her home that were the habitat for the then-rare golden-crowned kinglets.

³ Ibid.

⁴“Ellsworth’s Famous Birdwoman,” *Bangor Sunday Commercial*, 1 November 22, 1952.

While she was a teacher, she had learned to interact with nature through the lens of the artist, the pedagogy of the teacher, the lexis of the natural history student, and the narrative of the history aficionado. In her middle age, she studied birds to learn more about their behavior, but she also commodified them in pictures and stories to support herself. In her dotage, Stanwood worried about the birds' lack of habitat and feed. She fed them constantly throughout the year; they provided a center of interest for the growing community of birders in Ellsworth. Although nature had reclaimed the farms and cut over forests through reforestation, the landscape was threatened by ever increasing highways and commercial development in the form of strip malls, shopping centers, and housing developments. Even in the remote downeast town of Ellsworth, bird habitat was under siege from the creeping tarmac. The busy road filled with automobiles had been relocated only fifty feet from her home, so it rumbled from the noise of the traffic. Yet in the face of these changes, Stanwood's thoughts were for nature.

Until she was 89, Stanwood graciously hosted avid nature lovers who wanted to learn about the increasingly popular sport of birdwatching. Visitors flocked to Birdsacre where they toured the grounds, ate fresh honey with their biscuits and tea, and learned the ways of nature from her stories. They formed the Stanwood Birding Club in her honor. The leader of the club, Chandler Richmond, persuaded her to leave her home, acreage and field notes to the club in order to create a sanctuary and resource for the nature lover.

Shortly before her death on November 20, 1958, Cordelia Stanwood signed over her home, all her field notes, and the acreage surrounding Birdsacre to the Stanwood

Birding Club as a nature sanctuary. Ahead of her time, and with the help of forward-looking, environmentally concerned bird-lovers, Stanwood had made provisions for the birds even after her death, keeping the land free of development, creating a place for those who wished to observe the ways of the birds within the woods that she had loved.

Faithful instructor, careful mother, wise father, as the time approaches when friends, parents and children are to have more than the ordinary amount of leisure, choose some simple line of nature investigation to pursue together. It will fill waste moments, add a new zest to life, develop and quicken the powers of observation, and give health and strength "without money and without price." It will help the children to enter into their inheritance.⁵

Today, ecotourists on their way to Acadia pass the Stanwood Wildlife Sanctuary and House Museum. There, her papers, house contents, and woods are available for touring. Injured and disabled wild birds find permanent homes under the competent hands of Stanley Richmond, the son of Chandler Richmond, whose vision and forethought prompted him to help Stanwood achieve her wish that Birdacre remain undisturbed. From Cordelia Stanwood's work, scholars have learned how women have relied on nature to maintain their mental and physical health and transcend the limits of domesticity, in the process contributing to ornithological knowledge, developing new forms of scientific writing and photography, and inspiring others to include birds in their lives.

⁵ Cordelia Stanwood, "Nature Study as a Diversion," *Normal Instructor and Primary Plans* 24 (June 1916).

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