

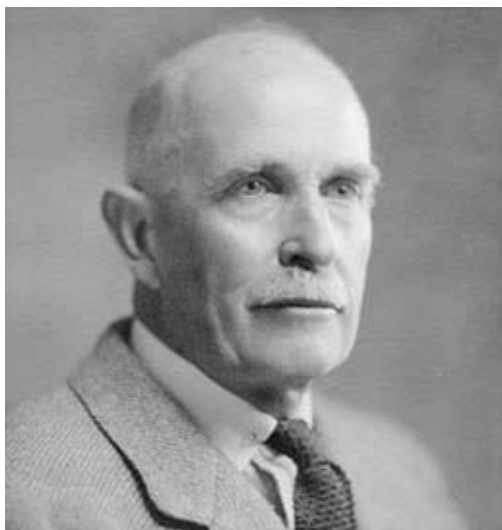
## From the Archives

### **Allan Brooks: Naturalist & Wildlife Illustrator (1869-1946)**

*Compiled by Ron Candy<sup>1</sup> and R. Wayne Campbell<sup>2</sup>*

The following article is a condensed overview of the life of an extraordinary individual in British Columbia natural history – Major Allan Brooks (Figure 8). Several memorials by colleagues and friends have already been published.<sup>1,2,3</sup> The following text, however, includes new insights into Allan's personal life as snippets extracted from his personal diaries. It is also the first time that his many publications have been listed in a single article.

The biographical text was originally researched by Ron Candy and posted on the Greater Vernon Museum & Archives webpage ([www.vernonmuseum.ca](http://www.vernonmuseum.ca)). Wayne Campbell compiled the bibliographic material.



**Figure 8.** Allan Brooks, *circa* 1930. Allan's early paintings and illustrations aroused an interest in identifying birds in North America in the late 1800s and early 1900s. His artwork contributed to the level that today recreational bird-watching is enjoyed. *Photo No. 376 courtesy Greater Vernon Museum & Archives.*

Allan Brooks was self-motivated and passionate about nature. It was remarkable that during his freelance lifestyle that he was able to contribute so much to our understanding of the province's wildlife without the benefit of a regular pay cheque although he was offered jobs with governments, museums, and taxidermists. In addition to travelling, sketching and painting, Allan devoted time to research, writing, and publishing his faunal and taxonomic discoveries in the technical and popular literature. It was a personal commitment too few naturalists and amateur ornithologists make.

It has been 68 years since the death of Allan Brooks and nearly three generations of birdwatchers and ornithologists have passed with faint knowledge of the significance of his contributions to ornithology and conservation in the province. We tend to live in the present and spend most of our time planning for the future. Knowing early natural history practitioners helps us understand and better appreciate changes in a dynamic natural world and better appreciate the personal commitment those individuals made to provide information on the province's wildlife resources. Oftentimes, what we think is new information actually was known, or predicted, many decades ago.

The following account is a timely reminder of one of British Columbia's most renowned artists and productive amateur ornithologists – all accomplished without ever driving a car!

Allan Brooks was born at Etawah, northern India, on February 16<sup>th</sup>, 1869.<sup>4</sup> Allan's father, William Edwin Brooks, was a civil engineer and amateur ornithologist. While stationed in India with the East Indian Railroad, William Brooks studied bird life with a passion and spent much of his spare time collecting bird specimens for the British Museum. William Brooks was good friends with Allan Octavian Hume (1829-1912), a civil servant in British India and one of the founders of the Indian National Congress, a political party that was later to prove instrumental in the Indian independence movement. Hume, like William Brooks, was an amateur ornithologist and was once referred to as "the Father of Indian Ornithology." William Brooks named his son Allan after Hume.<sup>4</sup>

William Brooks had hoped one of his sons (there were three boys and two girls in the family) would become an ornithologist and Allan showed promise

in the field early in his childhood. At the age of only two, Allan often handled his father's bird specimens (Figure 9) and was considered then to have a born talent for being a naturalist.



**Figure 9.** Allan Brooks, at age two, holding a bird specimen prepared by his father William, *circa* 1871. *Photo No. 25063 courtesy Greater Vernon Museum & Archives.*

In 1873, Allan was sent to England where he spent the next eight years living with his grandmother and maiden aunt while attending school in Northumberland.

A special friend of William Brooks, John Hancock (1808-1890), "considered to be the father of modern taxidermy," spent a lot of time with Allan and taught him about butterfly collecting, botany, and basic taxidermy. It was said that Allan considered such things as board games, or sports, a waste of time and he preferred taking walks in the moors and observing wildlife (Figure 10).



**Figure 10.** Allan Brooks, at age 8, in Northumberland, England, circa 1877. Photo No. 25064 courtesy Greater Vernon Museum & Archives.

In 1881, William Brooks retired from his work in India. Although he was still a young man, William's wife, Mary, was in poor health and it was recommended that she be taken to Canada where she could live in a healthier environment. Wanting only the best for his wife, William packed up his entire family and sailed for eastern Canada. Sadly, shortly after their arrival in Quebec, Mary Brooks passed away. She was only 44 years of age. Mary Brooks was buried in Quebec. William then moved on to Milton, Ontario, where he attempted to make a home for himself and his children on a 200-acre farm.<sup>3</sup>

William Brooks continued his studies in ornithology and, over the ensuing years, many leading naturalists, ornithologists, and taxidermists in the region and from Europe, came to visit and sometimes stay, for extended periods at the Brooks's farm. During these years, Allan spent much of his time preparing bird skins, sketching, reading numerous books on bird identification, and accompanying his father and visitors on field trips.

In 1887, William Brooks once again moved his family to a new location. This time, they settled on a farm near Chilliwack in British Columbia. Allan Brooks, who was now 18 years of age, had an entirely new region to explore. New species of birds and wildlife were available for the young ornithologist and his sketching and knowledge of birds and wildlife continued to grow.

In 1891, William Brooks and Allan's siblings returned to Ontario. Allan stayed in British Columbia for a year before following. For three years, Allan farmed on the Brooks's Ontario homestead and pursued his study of birds in his spare time. However, farming wasn't for him and by 1894 Allan Brooks, along with his brother Ted, returned to the Chilliwack area where he began what friend, Hamilton Laing, was to later write, "A stern apprenticeship to his life work."

From 1894 to 1896, Allan Brooks collected small bird and mammal specimens from the Chilliwack area (Figure 11) and sent them to ornithologists and natural history museums in eastern Canada and the United States.<sup>6</sup> William Brewster, Outram Bangs, and Gerrit Miller were three of the more famous ornithologists with whom Brooks was dealing with at the time. The prices Brooks received for his specimens were extremely low by today's standards. According to some of his original sales slips, Brooks received 25 to 30 cents for small mammals and birds. In one instance, he sold a Porcupine to Outram Bangs at Harvard University for \$3.00. Another entry reveals that Brooks received \$1.00 from John Fannin at the Provincial Museum in Victoria for a Coyote.



**Figure 11.** In 1910, the American Ornithologists' Union published their updated check-list of North American birds.<sup>25</sup> A few years later Allan Brooks noticed that Chilliwack was listed as being located in southeastern British Columbia rather than in the southwest. To correct this "delusion," he published a manuscript on the birds of the Chilliwack and the Sumas valley area in 1917<sup>6</sup>. During 11 years in the area during the late 1880s and early 1900s, Allan recorded 257 species of birds, only four of which, including Long-billed Curlew, were not collected.

Allan Brooks made his way to the Okanagan Valley in the late spring of 1897. He actually wrote to his father complaining about the heat. In 1897, Brooks was contributing sketches and articles to the journal known as "Recreation."<sup>7</sup> In a letter to his father in 1898 he wrote, "...I have an article or two in it every month for which I get \$6.00 a month."

In 1899, a short note in one of Brooks's diaries reads..."Left for Ontario February 10<sup>th</sup>. Returned April 8<sup>th</sup>." Although he didn't mention it, this date records the time of his father's death.

In the summer of 1900, Brooks left the Fraser Valley and travelled north to the Cariboo region in central British Columbia.<sup>8</sup> He reached Barkerville on July 20<sup>th</sup> and by the fall was collecting specimens around Quesnel and Cottonwood. He then teamed up with his friend Sidney Williams, a surveyor, and the two of them set up in a cabin six miles north of Cottonwood and trapped during the early fall. Williams left for Quesnel at the end of October and Brooks stayed to continue trapping (Figure 12).



**Figure 12.** Allan Brooks in the Cariboo region, circa 1900/01. Photo No. 25066 courtesy Greater Vernon Museum & Archives.

Brooks and Williams had first met sometime in 1897 or early 1888 shortly after the Brooks family had settled in the province. A year after their arrival, in 1888, Brooks began working on an illustrated manuscript, a field guide essentially, on British Columbia birds; the first of its kind ever to be written. Along with descriptive notes, the guide also included 173 original hand-drawn illustrations (Figure 13). Brooks then gave the guide to Williams for his personal use. The guide remained in the Williams family from 1889 until 2007 when it was purchased from the original owner's grandson by the Vernon Museum.



**Figure 13.** Allan Brooks was innovative and started the first field guide to British Columbia birds in 1888. It included a drawing of the bird along with its scientific and common name, a brief status, a detailed description of the plumage, and measurements. A feature, still lacking in most field guides today, was his inclusion of the colour of the bird's iris. The field guide was never published. *Catalogue No. 2007.046.001* courtesy Greater Vernon Museum & Archives Collection.

Brooks left the Cariboo in the fall of 1901 and headed south to Okanagan Landing where he met up with his brother, Ted. Brooks then purchased a small boat and the two of them made their way to Penticton and wintered there. In spring, the brothers returned to

Okanagan Landing. It was a significant trip in Brooks's life and one that would prompt him to consider where he wanted to live permanently.

In the spring of 1902, Brooks began collecting fleas for the British Museum. One species of flea, which he took from a weasel, was given the scientific name *Nearctopsylla brooksi*.<sup>9</sup> Brooks was paid six pence [six pennies] per specimen and was credited for discovering at least 15 new species of fleas.

During 1903 and through to 1904, Brooks travelled back down to the Fraser Valley. From there he ventured over to Vancouver Island and up to Campbell River and Comox, observing and sketching birds along the way. He spent the winter in Comox and in spring wound his way through the Gulf Islands, eventually landing in Victoria. However, by 1905 he was back in Okanagan Landing where he purchased an acre of land and proceeded to build himself a home. In time, Brooks's small acre also became a sanctuary and nesting site for over 34 species of small birds (Figure 14).



**Figure 14.** Western Meadowlark was one of Allan Brooks's favourite birds. The colourful songster arrived in late February or early March, as snow was receding, and in some years could still be heard singing into November. *Catalogue No. 1967.012.001* courtesy Greater Vernon Museum & Archives Collection.

A note in Brooks's diary for 1906 reads, "Sketches wanted by W. L. Dawson. Coloured at \$5.00 each; black and white at \$2.00." William Leon Dawson was born in Leon, Illinois in 1873. By 1896, Dawson was living in the State of Washington where he took a job as a missionary and Sunday school teacher in a sparsely populated area known as Okanogan County. Dawson had a deep interest in birds at this time and during his travels as a missionary he gathered information on 145 species of birds, information that he later used to complete his "Preliminary List of the Birds of Okanogan County, Washington."<sup>10</sup>

In 1897, Dawson moved to Oberlin, Ohio, where he studied both zoology and theology. A short time later, his list of Okanogan County, Washington birds was published in *The Auk*, a scholarly journal of the American Ornithologists' Union.<sup>10</sup> In 1899, Dawson was ordained as a Congregationalist minister and accepted a rural church position in Yakima County, Washington. A year later, he became a pastor of a large church in Columbus, Ohio. However, overwork led Dawson to a nervous breakdown in 1902 and he then decided to leave the ministry and devote his life to ornithology. In 1903, Dawson published "The Birds of Ohio."<sup>11</sup> In 1905, Dawson moved back to Washington where he, wildlife artist Allan Brooks, and ornithologist John Hopper Bowles founded the Occidental Publishing Company. A year later, Dawson commissioned Brooks to do the illustrations for "The Birds of Washington." The commission, which consisted of 52 species of birds to be illustrated, was Brooks' first big break as a wildlife illustrator. The two-volume set was published in 1909.<sup>12</sup>

During 1908/09, Brooks was again travelling to observe, sketch, and collect birds. He ventured to the coast and visited Vancouver Island and Victoria. He also went to the Seattle area and then on to Alberta to visit the regions around Edmonton and Calgary.

He returned to the Okanogan on November 20th, 1909 and wrote, "Home today. Beautiful day; no snow south of Vernon except on the mountains." Brooks did a bird census every December. His 1909 count included 24 species and 473 individual birds.<sup>13</sup>

In 1910, Brooks once again heard from his friend Leon Dawson. Dawson, who was now living in California, was preparing another book. It was a much bigger undertaking than "The Birds of Washington"

and he wanted Brooks to do the illustrations. Brooks accepted the commission and during the winter of 1910/11 he took a six-week trip to California to work on the illustrations for "The Birds of California." He returned in March of 1911 after having met with nearly every birdman and biologist in the state.

The four-volume set, "Birds of California," was published in 1923<sup>14</sup> and contains extensive text on 580 species of birds. Brooks contributed 48 full-colour drawings for the books along with 44 black-and-white sketches (Figure 15).



**Figure 15.** One of Allan Brooks's coloured drawings published in *The Birds of California* by Leon Dawson was of a pair of Western Bluebirds with a fledged young begging to be fed, circa 1912. *Catalogue No. 2009.099.001* courtesy Greater Vernon Museum & Archives Collection.

Allan Brooks had always been an excellent marksman and in July of 1911, he went to Vancouver for 10 days to compete in the British Columbia Rifle Association matches. The following month Brooks went to Kamloops to compete in shooting competitions there and to Armstrong in September for further matches. During 1912/13, Brooks devoted a lot of

his time to the local rifle ranges. During this time, he travelled to Vancouver to compete in an international rifle match then on to compete in shooting competitions held in Toronto. An entry in Brooks's diary for June 1914 simply reads, "Left for England via Montreal, leaving the latter place on the 21<sup>st</sup> with the Canadian Rifle Team." Brooks was off to Bisley, Surrey, and the rifle matches taking place there.

War broke out while Brooks was at Bisley. After the matches, he attempted to enlist in a Scottish regiment where it was discovered that he already held an officer's commission in the Canadian Militia (Lieutenant in the Rocky Mountain Rangers out of Armstrong). He was then sent back to Canada and the training camp of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian contingent at Valcartier, Quebec.

In the fall of 1914, at the age of 45, Lieutenant Brooks was off to England and the war in Europe. Upon his arrival in France, he was promoted to Captain and a month later reached the level of Major in the Canadian Expeditionary Force (Figure 16). Brooks' primary role in World War I was that of a sniper. His skills were such that he was mentioned in three dispatches and received the Distinguished Service Order. Brooks suffered some hearing loss while fighting and was eventually pulled from the trenches and put to the job of giving instructional courses on the rifle and on sniping.

During his time overseas, Brooks continued to observe and sketch wildlife even from the trenches. He sent many renderings to his friend, Percy Taverner, whom he corresponded with regularly.

Brooks arrived back at Okanagan Landing on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 1919. He quickly picked up where he left off five years previous and began observing and sketching birds. The war changed him and Brooks no longer desired to attend rifle matches or hunt big game. Instead, he devoted himself entirely to ornithology.

Brooks spent the winter of 1919/20 in Comox with Cyril Piercy, Postmaster at Comox, and set up a temporary studio above the post office. Brooks conducted a Christmas bird count at Comox and recorded 56 species and 7,156 individual sightings.<sup>15</sup> Later, in the spring, Brooks travelled up the coast to Prince Rupert and the Queen Charlotte Islands [now known as Haida Gwaii].



**Figure 16.** Allan Brooks left World War I as a major in the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Photo, circa 1917. Photo No. 16089 courtesy Greater Vernon Museum & Archives.

Brooks was off to eastern Canada in the fall of 1920 to visit his friend, Percy Taverner, at the National Museum in Ottawa. From Ottawa he went on to New York to meet with American artist and naturalist, Louis A. Fuertes. Fuertes was a world leader in his field and one of America's best bird and mammal illustrators.

Brooks notes in his journal a series of 42 full pictures for Dr. John Phillips and his book *A Natural History of Ducks*.<sup>16</sup> Other notes include illustrations for the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology in Berkeley, and the Audubon Society; thirty small pictures for the Geological Survey of Canada for use in Percy Taverner's *Birds of Western Canada*<sup>17</sup> as well as work for several other patrons.

Brooks was a traveller in every respect and it was during these trips that he took copious notes and made sketches of bird life; sketches that he would later take back to his studio at Okanagan Landing as a reference for his finished works.

In the spring of 1924, Brooks and Harry Swarth (Curator of Birds at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology in Berkeley) travelled up the B.C. coast on the C.P.R. boat *Princess Royal* stopping off in Prince Rupert, Ketchikan, Wrangell, Juneau, and eventually Skagway. From Skagway they took the White Pass and Yukon Railway to Carcross then on to Atlin by boat.<sup>18</sup> The trip lasted several months and led to the naming of a new subspecies, the “Timberline Sparrow.”<sup>19</sup> (Figure 17)



**Figure 17.** In 1924, Allan Brooks joined Harry Swarth on a collecting trip in the Atlin region of northwestern British Columbia<sup>18</sup> that was funded by the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology in California. Swarth noted that Allan “painted and collected specimens independently.” While together once, walking through patches of scrub birch in subalpine, they noticed a bird “whose appearance did not accord with anything we knew in the region, and Brooks started at once in pursuit. With some difficulty, for the birds were wary, he secured one of them.” Originally described as a species by Swarth, the Timberline Sparrow, *Spizella taverneri* specimen<sup>19</sup> was later determined to be a subspecies of the more widely distributed Brewer’s Sparrow, *S. b. taverneri*. They occur in mid-elevation willow and scrub birch habitats. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

On April 8<sup>th</sup>, 1926, the now 57-year-old Allan Brooks married 38-year old Marjorie Holmes of Arundel, England. An outdoors person and avid gardener, Marjorie created a splendid garden of colours at their home in Okanagan Landing. She maintained that the flowers attracted hummingbirds. One morning she caught her husband crouched in the middle of her flowers with a .410 shotgun across his knees. Brooks explained to Marjorie that he was attempting to collect a much needed hummingbird specimen for his collection. Marjorie lambasted him for using her flowerbed as a hummingbird blind. Brooks surrendered the gun to his wife with the promise that no more collecting would take place on the premises (Figure 18).



**Figure 18.** Allan and Marjorie Brooks at their home in Okanagan Landing, circa 1942. *Photo No. 25068 courtesy Greater Vernon Museum & Archives.*

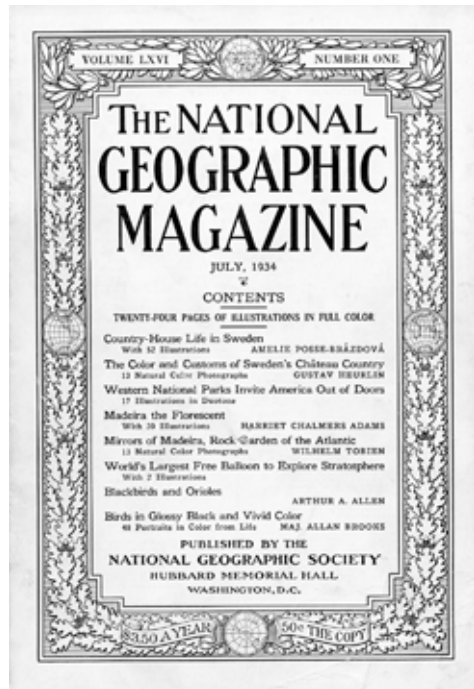


Although strongly debated among ornithologists, conservationists, and naturalists, for decades it was an accepted practice for ornithologists to actively collect and preserve actual bird specimens or “skins” for study. Brooks was no exception to this approach. He possessed a remarkable collection of bird skins that now reside at the University of California in Berkeley.

Allan and Marjorie Brooks announced the birth of a son, Allan Cecil Brooks, Jr., on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1926. In July of 1928, Brooks and Marjorie travelled to Comox and spent the summer with longtime friend and naturalist, Hamilton Laing (1883-1982). It was a notable period in time because the couple began building their summer home in Comox close to where Brooks had spent his first winter in 1910/11.

Another distinguished acquaintance in Brooks’ professional life was the noted American naturalist and ornithologist Edward Howe Forbush (1858-1929). In 1893, he was appointed ornithologist to the Massachusetts State Board of Agriculture and in 1908 became the Massachusetts State ornithologist. His noted work was a three-volume set of books entitled, *Birds of Massachusetts and Other New England States*.<sup>20</sup> Initially, Forbush commissioned renowned American wildlife illustrator and close friend to Allan Brooks, Louis Agassiz Fuertes (1874-1927), to supply the images for the books. Volume one of the set was published in 1925 followed by volume two in 1927. However, a tragic automobile accident prevented Fuertes from completing volume three. Forbush then contacted Allan Brooks to finish the commission. Brooks ended up supplying Edward Forbush with 130 drawings. Volume three was finally published in 1929. That same year, Forbush himself passed away.

In 1931, Brooks travelled to Washington, DC, to meet Gilbert Grosvenor, editor of the *National Geographic* magazine to discuss illustrations for an upcoming issue. This visit actually marked the beginning of a series of illustrations that would be included in 20 issues<sup>21</sup> (Figure 19).



**Figure 19.** In the July, 1934 issue of *National Geographic* magazine, 48 of Allan Brooks’s drawings were published under the title “Birds in Glossy Black and Vivid Color.” *Courtesy Greater Vernon Museum & Archives. Greater Vernon Museum & Archives Collection.*

In November 1931, Brooks, Marjorie, and Allan Jr. boarded the *S.S. Niagara* at Vancouver and sailed to New Zealand to spend the winter near Allan’s sister, Edith Swan, in Auckland. They stopped off in Hawaii and Australia and Brooks made several comments in his diary about the bird-life he had sighted. Naturally, upon arrival in New Zealand, their first stop was the natural history museum in Auckland.

In 1933, Brooks was prowling around New Mexico and California and in 1934 was making his way up the B.C. coast to Prince Rupert, Terrace, and through to Jasper, Alberta. According to Hamilton Laing, Brooks found it hard not to conduct at least one trip a year. Consequently, Brooks was constantly on the move collecting, sketching, and observing. It was in 1934 that Brooks contributed 35 illustrations

to Percy Taverner's book, *Birds of Canada*.<sup>22</sup>

In November of 1934, the Brooks family boarded the *M.S. Aorangi* to begin an around-the-world bird-watching and sketching tour. Brooks's field notes during this tour are extensive and his paintings depicting the sea are exquisite.

The Brooks family returned to Canada from their world tour in May of 1935. On their way home, they stopped off in Washington, DC, to consult with the *National Geographic* magazine on an upcoming issue. From there they went on to Toronto to visit the Royal Ontario Museum.

Brooks contributed a number of illustrations for John May's *Hawks of North America* in 1935.<sup>23</sup> However, what is interesting about this commission is that Brooks initially supplied several illustrations with hawks and their commonest forms of prey. John May, wanting to keep his book free of any death scenes, returned the paintings to Brooks with a note that read, "Paint out the prey...No hawk is to be shown with victims." Brooks grudgingly obliged.

Early in 1936, after being home for only a brief period, Marjorie and her husband were off again

to California while Allan Jr. attended the Vernon Preparatory School. By summer, Brooks was in the Queen Charlotte Islands.

From 1937 to November of 1938, Brooks stayed closer to home and hiked around the south Okanagan and Similkameen and Nicola regions. However, by December of 1938, the family was once again bound for California. As usual, they stayed with friends in Berkeley then travelled to various collecting grounds to observe and sketch. Father and son ran a bit of a trap-line at Morro Bay while they were in California. One morning, Allan senior noted, "Went to the south end of the bay to look at the traps yesterday. Only one Kangaroo Rat...A Burrowing Owl had robbed all the others. A clear case of the early bird and the worm."

By 1939, Allan Jr. was becoming a mammalogist in his own right. He had his own collections and, according to Hamilton Laing, "It seemed his father was steering him into this branch of biology rather than pure ornithology."<sup>23</sup>

Allan Brooks was 70 when war broke out in Europe in 1939. Naturally, the conflict put an end to some of his travelling plans abroad (Figure 20).



**Figure 20.** Allan Brooks touching up a painting of a Golden Eagle in his studio at Okanagan Landing, BC, circa 1939. Photo No. 18329 courtesy Greater Vernon Museum & Archives.

In May of 1943, Brooks went to Keremeos by bus to study the Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel. He collected some notes on the ground squirrel and he had a peculiar encounter with a Badger. Hamilton Laing recorded the incident and says, “A big badger was crossing the road with a groundhog crosswise in its mouth. The bus stopped while the badger crossed the road and proceed to climb a bank. Partway up the bank the badger dropped the groundhog and it rolled back down the bank. At this point, Brooks leaped from the bus and grabbed the badger’s intended lunch. Brooks and badger, only ten feet apart, had a bit of a staring off match.”<sup>3</sup>

In 1945, Brooks visited Oliver Wells at Edenbank near Sumas in the Fraser Valley. Wells was a naturalist, and collector of Brooks’s paintings. When Brooks stepped off the bus Oliver Wells recorded the following account... “At noon, February 14<sup>th</sup>, 1945, I met Allan Brooks as he stepped from the Pacific Stage at Cottonwood Corner. It was one of the happiest moments in my life to have the honor of meeting one of the country’s most famous naturalists and bringing him to Edenbank as our guest. Major Allan Brooks stepped from the stage in a manner to belie the fact he was in his 76<sup>th</sup> year. His strong erect carriage and his firm handshake made one forget that it was over fifty years since, as a young man, he had tramped the forests of the valley, haunted the Sumas Prairie, and climbed the mountain in search of new specimens for the collections of leading museums around the world.”

At least four major museums offered jobs to Brooks in his early years including the Provincial Museum in Victoria. He turned them all down. He was a free-lancer and a steady job would have driven him mad.

His bird skins and collections were on a scale of any major museum and they served as his library for reference to his illustrative work. Brooks paid attention to every detail and was very fastidious. He insisted identification labels should carry all pertinent information on the specimen and went so far as to publish a paper on the importance of these details.

In the field, Brooks usually wore knickerbockers along with a vest strapped around his middle with game pockets and the wide straps slung over his shoulders (Figure 21). He also packed binoculars around his

neck and sometimes a telescope. Hamilton Laing said Brooks brought an air of dignity while collecting his bird specimens and “He tramped about the Commonage [Vernon] with the stiff backed plodding gait of an old country gentleman.” Interestingly, despite all his travelling, Brooks never drove a car.



**Figure 21.** Allan’s standard collecting attire included a flat cap, baggy-kneed trousers (knickerbockers), game pockets in his vest for specimens, binoculars around his neck, and a shotgun in hand. This photo was taken in Nova Scotia, circa 1930. Image 1562 courtesy Greater Vernon Museum & Archives.

Hamilton Laing writes that Brooks was generous with his time and often instructed young naturalists when they came to visit him in his studio. He was in the habit of giving away his paintings as gifts to friends at Christmas, or as tokens of appreciation.

On the night of the annual banquet of the American Ornithologists' Union in Ottawa in 1926, Brooks was at the head of the table about to receive a gold medal for his bird paintings. He had just listened to a long summation of himself by friend and poet, Wallace Havelock Robb. Brooks was never one for speeches and, upon introduction by Robb, rose from his chair, took the medal from Robb's hand, stuffed it in his pocket and said, "Not Guilty!" and promptly sat down.

Brooks and Marjorie came down to Comox from Okanagan Landing for the winter of 1945/46. Brooks immediately began scouring the beaches for bird-life but he knew his health was failing. His notes in his journal are still detailed and accurate as ever during this time and he continued to paint and sketch. Hamilton Laing recorded. "When I visited him in his little studio a few days before Christmas, he was busily plying his brush, a commission of three paintings for the State University of Washington. A dozen fresh skins of waders and waterfowl were at hand on the drying tray. He was ill but made light of it. Next day he finished his last painting, a big cock interior Blue Grouse with a hen in their native Okanagan setting with Terrace Mountain, oft-mentioned in his diaries, in the background. Then he went to Comox hospital. To show how closely he lived to his work, when on his way in the driveway, he suddenly remembered his neglect in signing his Blue Grouse study, so he halted the taxi and returned. Could he have had a premonition of the importance of this, his last signature?"<sup>73</sup>

Allan Brooks passed away on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1946 at the age of 78.

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- <sup>23</sup>Taverner, P.A. 1934. Birds of Canada. National Museum of Canada Bulletin (Biological Series) No. 72, Ottawa, On. 445 pp.
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1. Brooks, A. 1895. Nesting of *Geocichla naevia* in British Columbia. Ibis 37 (4):512-513.
2. Brooks, A. 1898a. Notes of a naturalist in British Columbia. Ottawa Naturalist 12(1):21-23.
3. Brooks, A. 1898b. The Western Goshawk, *Accipiter atricapillus*. Ottawa Naturalist 11(11):205-206.
4. Brooks, A. 1898c. The Cackling Goose, *Branta minima*. Recreation 8:346-396.
5. Brooks, A. 1898d. The Green-winged Teal, *Anas carolinensis*. Recreation 8:348-394.
6. Brooks, A. 1898e. The American Goldeneye, *Glaucionetta c. americana*. Recreation 9:22-23.
7. Brooks, A. 1898f. Richardson's Grouse, *Dendragapus richardsoni*. Recreation 9:168-169.
8. Brooks, A. 1898g. The Ruddy Duck, *Erismatura a. rubida*. Recreation 9:235.
9. Brooks, A. 1898h. Barrow's Goldeneye, *Glaucionetta islandica*. Recreation 9:414.
10. Brooks, A. 1899a. The coot, *Fulica americana*. Recreation 10:58.
11. Brooks, A. 1899b. The Shoveller, *Anas clypeata*. Recreation 10:257.
12. Brooks, A. 1899c. Black-bellied Plover, *Charadrius squatarola*. Recreation 10:355. [Figure 22]



**Figure 22.** At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the distribution and life history of many shorebirds in British Columbia was poorly known. Allan used his popular column in the magazine “Recreation” to inform the public about the status of such birds, including Black-bellied Plover. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

13. Brooks, A. 1899d. The pintail. *Recreation* 11:19.
14. Brooks, A. 1899. The Gadwall, *Anas strepera*. *Recreation* 11:102.
15. Brooks, A. 1899e. The Cinnamon Teal, *Anas cyanoptera*. *Recreation* 11:181.
16. Brooks, A. 1899f. The Blue-winged Teal, *Anas discors*. *Recreation* 11:265.
17. Brooks, A. 1899g. The Ringbill Duck, *Aythya collaris*. *Recreation* 11:330.
18. Brooks, A. 1899h. White-tailed Ptarmigan, *Lagopus leucurus*. *Recreation* 11:357.
19. Brooks, A. 1899i. Winter birds of the Okanagan district, B.C. *Ottawa Naturalist* 13(6):145-146.
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21. Brooks, A. 1900b. Canadian Ruffed Grouse. *Recreation* 12:176.
22. Brooks, A. 1900c. American White-fronted Goose, *Anser albifrons gambeli*. *Recreation* 12:254.
23. Brooks, B. 1901. Notes on the winter birds of the Cariboo district, B.C. *Ottawa Naturalist* 15(6):152-154.
24. Brooks, A. 1902. Mammals of the Chilliwack district, British Columbia. *Ottawa Naturalist* 15 (4):239-244.
25. Brooks, A. 1903. Notes on the birds of the Cariboo district. *Auk* 20(3):277-284.
26. Brooks, A. 1904. British Columbia notes. *Auk* 21(2):289-291.
27. Brooks, A. 1905a. Clay-colored Sparrow in the Cariboo district. *British Columbia. Auk* 22(1):83.
28. Brooks, A. 1905b. Notes on the nesting of the Varied Thrush. *Auk* 22(2):214-215.
29. Brooks, A. 1906. Bird-Lore's sixth Christmas bird census – Okanagan Landing, B.C. *Bird-Lore* 8(1):25.
30. Brooks, A. 1907a. A hybrid grouse, Richardson's plus sharp-tail. *Auk* 24 (2):167-169.
31. Brooks, A. 1907b. Bird-Lore's seventh Christmas bird census – Okanagan Landing, B.C. *Bird-Lore* 9(1):31.
32. Brooks, A. 1907c. Bird-Lore's seventh Christmas bird census – Vernon, B.C. *Bird-Lore* 9(1):31.
33. Brooks, A. 1907d. The Wood Duck and Canvasback in British Columbia. *Bird-Lore* 9(3):127.
34. Brooks, A. 1909a. Some notes on the birds of Okanagan, British Columbia. *Auk* 26(1):60-63. [Figure 23]
35. Brooks, A. 1909b. Three records for British Columbia. *Auk* 26(3):313-314. [Figure 24]



**Figure 23.** During 20 years collecting in British Columbia, Allan had been on the lookout for American Avocet. On April 28, 1908, he “secured” six birds from a flock of 15 at the north end of Okanagan Lake. This was the first record for the province. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*



**Figure 24.** Short notes, published in recognized bird journals, are an important source of reliable information. In this article, Allan documented the earliest record (April 7, 1909) for Barn Owl in British Columbia. Today, the species is present year-round in the lower Fraser River valley. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

36. Brooks, A. 1909c. British Columbia supplement. Pages 963-978 in W.L. Dawson and J.H. Bowles. The birds of Washington: A complete, scientific and popular account of the 372 species of birds found in the State. Occidental Publishing Company, Seattle, WA.
37. Brooks, A. 1910. Bird-Lore's tenth Christmas census – Okanagan Landing, BC. Bird-Lore 12(1):36.
38. Brooks, A. 1911. Bird-Lore's eleventh bird census – Okanagan Landing, BC. Bird-Lore 13(1):43.
39. Brooks, A. 1912. Some British Columbia records. Auk 29 (2):252-253.
40. Brooks, A. 1914. Three races of *Branta canadensis*. Condor 16(3):123-124.
41. Brooks, A. 1917. Birds of the Chilliwack district, B.C. Auk 34(1):28-50.
42. Brooks, A. 1918. Brief notes on the prevalence of certain birds in British Columbia. Ottawa Naturalist 31(11):139-141.
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44. Brooks, A. 1920a. Notes on the Limicolae of southern British Columbia. Condor 22(1):26-32.
45. Brooks, A. 1920b. Notes on some American ducks. Auk 37(3):353-367.
46. Brooks, A. 1920c. Bird-Lore's twentieth Christmas census – Comox, B.C. Bird-Lore 22(1):42-43.
47. Brooks, A. 1921. A twelvemonth with the shorebirds. Condor 23(5):151-156.
48. Brooks, A. 1922a. Notes on the abundance and habits of the Bald Eagle in British Columbia. Auk 39(4):556-559. [Figure 25]
49. Brooks, A. 1922. Notes on the American Pine Grosbeak with the description of a new subspecies. Condor 24(3):86-88.
50. Brooks, A. 1922b. Notes on the mammals and birds of the Hudsonian zone, Cascade Mt., 49<sup>th</sup> parallel. Murrelet 3(2):8-9.
51. Brooks, A. 1922c. Bird-Lore's twenty-second Christmas census – Okanagan Landing, B.C. Bird-Lore 24(1):39.
52. Brooks, A. 1922d. What color are the feet of the Western Goshawk? Condor 24(3):94-95.
53. Brooks, A. 1922e. Winter notes for Okanagan, British Columbia. Murrelet 3(1):13.
54. Brooks, A. 1923a. A comment on the alleged occurrence of *Mesophoyx intermedia* in North America. Condor 25(5):180-181.



**Figure 25.** In the late 1800s and early 1900s, birds of prey were regularly persecuted and frequently shot. One of the purposes of this paper was to highlight the “destructiveness” of the Bald Eagle to “game and waterfowl” in British Columbia. Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.

55. Brooks, A. 1923b. Notes on the birds of Porcher Island, B.C. *Auk* 40(2):217-224.
56. Brooks, A. 1923. Some recent records for British Columbia. *Auk* 40(4):700-701.
57. Brooks, A. 1924. Two new sandpiper records for California. *Condor* 26(1):37-38.
58. Brooks, A. 1925a. Observations on the Spotted Sandpiper. *Condor* 27(5):208.
59. Brooks, A. 1925b. Three noteworthy records for British Columbia. *Condor* 27(5):211-212.
60. Brooks, A. 1925c. Winter notes from Okanagan, British Columbia. *Murrelet* 6(1):3-4.
61. Brooks, A. 1925d. The solution of the problem. *Bird-Lore* 27(4):237-239. [Figure 26]
62. Brooks, A. 1926a. The display of Richardson's Grouse, with some notes on the species and subspecies of the Genus *Dendragopus*. *Auk* 43(3):281-287.
63. Brooks, A. 1926b. The mystery of the Marbled Murrelet. *Murrelet* 7(1):1-2.
64. Brooks, A. 1926c. Notes on the geese of the *Branta canadensis* group. *Ibis* (Series 12) 2(2):339-345.
65. Brooks, A. 1926d. Notes on the status of the Peale Falcon. *Condor* 28(2):77-79.
66. Brooks, A. 1926e. The present status of the Trumpeter Swan. *Condor* 28(3):129. [Figure 27]



**Figure 26.** To maintain a sanctuary for birds at his home in Okanagan Landing, Allan killed all predators, from crows to snakes. He soon realized that the nesting habits of the House Wren severely restricted breeding success for other cavity-nesting birds. He also believed that the House Wren would “account each year for a greater loss to small bird-life in North America than the entire efforts of all collecting ornithologists from the times of Wilson and Audubon to the present day.” *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*



**Figure 27.** Brooks closely followed the scientific literature on birds and when information was published in error, he was quick to reply. In his article on Trumpeter Swan, he noted that “The accounts of its former abundance (as by Audubon) are almost certainly greatly exaggerated, and in many recent statements as to its extermination are in absolute error. It is not to be counted with the extinct birds.” He further stated “In British Columbia, we have at least five wintering colonies...” *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*



67. Brooks, A. 1926f. Scarcity of the Marbled Murrelet. Murrelet 7(2):39.
68. Brooks, A. 1927a. Breeding of immature hawks. Condor 29(5):245-246.
69. Brooks, A. 1927. British Columbia notes. Murrelet 8(2):43-44.
70. Brooks, A. 1927b. Notes on Swarth's report on a collection of birds and mammals from the Atlin region. Condor 29(2):112-114.
71. Brooks, A. 1927c. The status of certain sandpipers on the Pacific slope. Murrelet 8(3):75.
72. Brooks, A. 1928. Does the Marbled Murrelet nest inland. Murrelet 9(3):68.
73. Brooks, A. 1929a. On *Dendragapus obscurus obscurus*. Auk 46(1):111-113.
74. Brooks, A. 1929b. On pellets of hawks and owls. Condor 31(5):222-223.
75. Brooks, A. 1930a. The food of the Great Horned Owl. Canadian Field-Naturalist 44(2):50.
76. Brooks, A. 1930b. In memoriam: Charles De B. Green. Condor 32(1):9-11.
77. Brooks, A. 1930c. A gull with feathered feet. Condor 32(1):64-65.
78. Brooks, A. 1930d. The pygmy owl. Murrelet 11(1):7-9.
79. Brooks, A. 1930e. Early big-game conditions in the Mt. Baker District, Washington. Murrelet 11(2): 65-67.
80. Brooks, A. 1931. The relationship of American magpies. Auk 48(2):271-272.
81. Brooks, A. 1932a. The color of the iris in the American Merganser and Holboell's Grebe. Auk 49(4):462-463.
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83. Brooks, A. 1932c. Hummingbirds, swifts, and goatsuckers. National Geographic 62(1):74-89.
84. Brooks, A. 1932d. Ibises, herons, and flamingos. National Geographic 62(4):454-469.
85. Brooks, A. 1933a. Crows, magpies, and jays. National Geographic 63(1):64-79.
86. Brooks, A. 1933b. North American woodpeckers. National Geographic 63 (4):464-479.
87. Brooks, A. 1933c. Eagles, hawks, and vultures. National Geographic 64(1):64-95.

88. Brooks, A. 1934a. The increasing scarcity of small birds. Murrelet 15(1):78-79.
89. Brooks, A. 1934b. The juvenile plumage of Townsend's Warbler (*Dendroica townsendi*). Auk 51(2):243-244.
90. Brooks, A. 1934c. The status of the dowitchers of the Pacific slope. Murrelet 15(1):23. [Figure 28]



**Figure 28.** In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Long-billed and Short-billed dowitcher were considered the same species with the former race considered the only one appearing on the Pacific slope of North America. In his 1934 paper, Allan noted that the “short-billed” form was the more common bird in the far west not the “long-billed” subspecies. He also supported the notion of colleague Dr. William Rowan, that *scolopaceus* [Long-billed] should be recognized as a full species. While two species are accepted today, taxonomic affinities are still being questioned. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

91. Brooks, A. 1934d. Birds of lake and lagoon, marsh and seacoast. National Geographic 65(3):313-328.
92. Brooks, A. 1934e. Blithe birds of dooryard, bush, and brake. National Geographic 65(5):578-596.
93. Brooks, A. 1934f. Birds in glossy black and vivid color. National Geographic 66(1):115-130.
94. Brooks, A. 1934g. Wild geese, ducks, and swans. National Geographic 66(4):493-528.
95. Brooks, A. 1935a. Are small birds decreasing. Bird-Lore 37(3):199-200.
96. Brooks, A. 1935b. Silent-winged owls of North America. National Geographic 67(2):224-240.

97. Brooks, A. 1935c. Bird beauties of the tanager and finch families. *National Geographic* 67(4):511-532.
98. Brooks, A. 1936a. Auks and their northern neighbours. *National Geographic* 69(1):99-122.
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100. Brooks, A. 1936c. Flycatchers and other friends in feathers. *National Geographic* 69(6):807-828.
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104. Brooks, A. 1937c. Feathered foragers of swamp and shore. *National Geographic* 72(2):191-222.
105. Brooks, A. 1937d. Thayer's Gull (*Larus argentatus thayeri*) on the Pacific coast. *Murrelet* 18(1-2):19-21. [Figure 29]
106. Brooks, A. 1938. Wings over the bounding main. *National Geographic* 74(2):236-251.
107. Brooks, A. 1939a. The downy young of some Nearctic Limicolines. *Ibis (Series 14)* 3(3):450-453.
108. Brooks, A. 1939b. Juvenal plumage of the Evening Grosbeak. *Auk* 56(2):191-192.
109. Brooks, A. 1939c. Migrations of the Skua family. *Ibis (Series 14)* 3(2):324-328.
110. Brooks, A. 1939d. The Pine Grosbeak of southwestern British Columbia. *Murrelet* 20(3):57-59.
111. Brooks, A. 1939e. Sparrows, towhees and longspurs. *National Geographic* 75(3):360-376.
112. Brooks, A. 1942a. Additions to the distributional list of the birds of British Columbia. *Condor* 44(1):33-34. [Figure 30]



**Figure 29.** The systematic status of Thayer's Gull has changed over time. From 1917 to 1972 it was considered a subspecies of the Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus thayeri*) and in 1973 was given full species status by the American Ornithologists' Union.<sup>25</sup> In his 1937 paper, perceptive Brooks stated "...personally I am inclined to the belief that it will prove to be a full species when further life observations are available." *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*



**Figure 30.** Eighteen years after his classic work with Harry Swarth on the birds of British Columbia in 1925, Allan updated the status for 21 species, most of them very rare. Forster's Tern, taken at Okanagan Lake on June 24, 1938, was the first record for the province. By the mid-1970s, the species was breeding in the province. Photo by Linda M. van Damme.

113. Brooks, A. 1942b. The extension of range of two northwestern finches. *Murrelet* 23(3):78-79.
114. Brooks, A. 1942c. The status of the Northwestern Crow. *Condor* 44(4):166-167.
115. Brooks, A. 1943. The status of the California Gull. *Auk* 60(1):15-20.
116. Brooks, A. 1944. A deplumed Pileated Woodpecker. *Condor* 46(3):124.
117. Brooks, A. 1945. The underwater actions of diving ducks. *Auk* 62(4):517-523.
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