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Alexander Sprunt, Jr

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OBITUARY

Alexander Sprunt, Jr.

Alexander Sprunt Jr., was probably as well known ornithologically in Florida as in his native state of South Carolina. He was born on 16 January 1898 at Rock Hill, in north-central South Carolina, but lived all except the first two years of his life in Charleston, where he passed away on 3 January 1973.

Sprunt was in Florida frequently from the mid-1930's, when he was appointed Supervisor of Southern Sanctuaries of the National Audubon Society, through the 1960's. He was the first Audubon Screen Tour lecturer to visit our state. His enthusiasm in this work has never been excelled. Floridians will also remember him well for his revision of Arthur Howell's Florida Bird Life. Sprunt was a prolific and versatile writer. He did a weekly nature column for many years for the *Charleston News and Courier*, contributed numerous notes and articles to ornithological and other journals, and was author of several outstanding books on birds. The principal ones are South Carolina Bird Life (with E. Burnham Chamberlain), The Warblers of America (with Ludlow Griscom), and North American Birds of Prey. It was my pleasure to join with him in the publishing of An Album of Southern Birds.

It was also my good fortune to be with Alex on several unforgettable excursions to south Florida – to the Keys, Lake Okeechobee, the south-west coast, and various parts of the Everglades. Once when we hired an old Seminole guide and had gone deep into the 'Glades our guide stayed away from camp and got lost, but we found him after considerable searching in our rented jeep. On another stay in the 'Glades we sat one afternoon with several Indians in a chickee – a little open structure of cypress poles with a thatched roof of palmetto fronds. The weather was warm and the biting flies were fierce. While Alex and I were swatting in all directions, we noticed that the Indians were not bothered at all. Later I asked Alex why this strange situation, and he just shook his head. I don't think Alex ever figured it out, and neither have I.

Alex Sprunt was at his best as a story teller. This was revealed to me first and most impressively at the 1937 AOU convention in Charleston, where I was among guests at his home and at private gatherings of small groups of mutual friends. The mood was always jovial when he was on hand.

Sprunt joined the American Ornithologists' Union in 1923, became an Elective Member in 1936, and a Fellow in 1950. In 1954 he was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Science by Davidson College, having attended that institution just short of four years before he enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1918.

Alexander Sprunt, Jr., is survived by his wife, Margaret, a daughter, Jean, and a son, Alexander Sprunt, IV, who is following in his illustrious father's footsteps. "Sandy" is particularly well known to Floridians interested in ornithology and in conservation in general, having made his home in the Keys for many years.

Conservationists in the Southeast have lost a staunch standard bearer with the passing of Alexander Sprunt, Jr. *Samuel A. Grimes, 4627 Peachtree Circle, E., Jacksonville, Florida 32207.*