

OBITUARY

FREDERICK NUTTER CHASEN

Frederick Nutter Chasen lost his life at the age of forty-five as a result of enemy action, which sank the ship on which he was leaving Singapore, together with a number of other non-combatants, shortly before the fall of the city.

He was born in Norfolk and served with the Norfolk Yeomanry during the Great War of 1914-18. His early association with Frank Leney, of the Norwich Museum, where he worked first as an articulated pupil (1912-1915) and later on the staff (1919-1921), bred the love of ornithology and museum work which determined his career. His earliest published work is a note in *The Zoologist* of April 1916 on the Whimbrel. In January, 1921, he was appointed Assistant Curator of Raffles Museum, Singapore; he became Director in March, 1932, and held the appointment until his death.

Association with H. C. Robinson and C. Boden Kloss confirmed his early love of birds and provided him with an introduction to the study of mammals, with the result that his knowledge of the natural history and taxonomy of this group eventually equalled that of the birds. Years of collecting followed his appointment at Singapore—in the mountains and lowlands of the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra, Java, North Borneo and the islands of the South China Sea, Gulf of Siam and Malacca Strait, almost everywhere in fact in the zoological province of Malaysia comprised by Malaya and the islands standing on the Sunda shelf.

At the time of his appointment as Director, Chasen had already become the most reliable and accurate authority on Malaysian birds and mammals, and almost every collection made in this region, by expeditions of whatever nationality, was sent to him as a matter of course to identify and describe.

He was the author of a host of papers, many of the earlier ones written in collaboration with Boden Kloss. In 1936 he published, in posthumous collaboration with H. C. Robinson, the third volume of "The Birds of the Malay Peninsula", describing the sporting birds. The fourth volume, of which Chasen was the sole author, appeared in 1939. Both in its mode of treatment of the subject and in the quantity of clear and useful information it conveys, this volume greatly surpasses any of the preceding ones.

Perhaps his most important contributions to science are, however, his Handlists of Malaysian Birds and Mammals, the former published as No. 11 of the 'Bulletin of the Raffles Museum' in 1935, and the latter, in 1940, as No. 15 of the same periodical.

Only one who is himself acquainted with the enormously rich faunas of the far-eastern rain forest, with their extraordinary degree of regional differentiation, can appreciate the magnitude of the task that Chasen set himself when he undertook the production of these Handlists. Nor are they mere compilations: many questions of classification and taxonomy remained until the decision rested on the writer's own authority.

As Director of the Museum and Library, no less than as a systematic zoologist, he showed great energy and ability, and by far the greater part of the more attractive and informative exhibits in the galleries were arranged under his supervision, and form a fitting memorial to his directorship. He was always ready with help and advice for amateur naturalists, and through his encouragement a number of observers made valuable contributions to our still scanty knowledge of the nidification, ecology and other aspects of the biology of Malayan birds.

He voluntarily added to his duties as Director, those of Honorary Secretary of the Malayan Branch, Royal Asiatic Society, a position which he filled for many years. His loss will be no less deeply regretted by his numerous friends in Singapore than by the world-wide circle of his scientific colleagues.

M. W. F. TWEEDIE.

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Abbreviations

- B.R.M.* = Bulletin of the Raffles Museum, Singapore.
- Bull. Brit. Orn. Club* = Bulletin of the British Ornithological Club.
- J.F.M.S.M.* = Journal of the Federated Malay States Museums.
- J.M.B.R.A.S.* = Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society.
- Journ. Siam. Soc., N.H.* = Journal of the Siam Society (Natural History), Bangkok.