

IN MEMORIAM

Blanche Evans Dean--May 31, 1974

AOS lost one of its most instrumental founders, first presidents and avid supporters in the passing of Blanche Evans Dean in May of this year. Biologist, conservationist and teacher, Blanche was renowned as Alabama's most prolific and one of her foremost authors of works on natural history, having recently co-authored the widely acclaimed Wildflowers of Alabama published last fall. Her other books include Let's Learn the Birds of Alabama, Trees and Shrubs in the Heart of Dixie, Ferns of Alabama and Happy Trails, works designed for students and lovers of birds, plants and the out-of-doors of all ages. Many are used as texts and reference works in schools and colleges for study both by amateurs and professionals.

Throughout her lifetime, Blanche urged all to discover and increase their knowledge of the wonders of the natural world about us. Who will forget the traditional early morning field trip to the Shell Mounds led by Blanche Dean at our spring meetings at Dauphin Island? This is but an illustration of her active interest that stimulated teachers, students and all who knew her to learn of the myriad facets of nature. As she had said, "The only way to learn anything is to go out there and see it," and of nature study, "It's the most contagious thing there is." Long before the need for nature education became known as it is today, Blanche was sounding the call in her books and classes for preservation of natural areas and the development of nature centers.

In 1967, she was cited by the National Audubon Society "for distinguished service in the field of conservation education," an award that at that time had been given to fewer than 20 persons and was presented to her by National Audubon's President Emeritus. She also gave generously of her time and many talents to and was honored by the Birmingham Audubon Society, The Alabama Conservancy, the Alabama Wildflower Society and many other groups. Having taught biology for over 30 years in the Birmingham City School System, she also conducted the Alabama State Outdoor Nature Camp for over 12 years, participated in marking numerous nature trails and promoting conservation projects, and served with the American Youth Foundation for over a decade and as Assistant Director of Camp Burgiss Glenn in North Carolina.

The flyleaf of one of her books states, "She sees in every tree, shrub, bird and flower an expression of God." To paraphrase some of her philosophy, "For the experiences of beauty and the joy of the open road, field and sky, bird and flower and tree, one needs only an open heart and eye and the interest to go a-roaming. . . . The joys are never-ending as the seasons and are as infinite as the stars; but as Thoreau says, 'Only that day dawns to which we are awake.'" Blanche gave a lifetime to awaken both her friends and others to an appreciation of the world around us; and, although she will be sorely missed, her active influence, through her works and her stimulating interest and enthusiasm, will long extend for the benefit of future generations. AOS is proud to have had her as one of its guiding lights. We know she will be greatly missed and extend our deepest sympathy to her family.