
Finding aid to the Allan C. Brooks papers MVZA.MSS.0304

Finding aid prepared by Joi K Misenti

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Museum of Vertebrate Zoology Archives

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Allan C. Brooks papers

Identifier/Call Number: MVZA.MSS.0304

Contributing Institution: Museum of Vertebrate Zoology Archives

Language of Material: English

Physical Description: 5.0 Cubic feet

Date (inclusive): 1867-1946

Abstract: The Allan C. Brooks papers contain paintings, field notes, artwork, correspondence, personalia, and publications spanning 1867 to 1946. The artwork and paintings include originals commissioned for publication in Grinnell's *Wildlife of the Yosemite* released in 1924 and *Fur-bearing Mammals of California* published in 1937. Correspondence provides details of commissions, arrangements, specimen collection and transfer, as well as personal exchange. These materials offer insight into the logistics of wildlife illustration and naturalist livelihood in the early 20th century.

Creator: Brooks, Allan, 1869-1946

Conditions Governing Access

The collection is open for research.

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Allan C. Brooks papers, MVZA.MSS.0304, Museum of Vertebrate Zoology Archives, University of California, Berkeley.

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Biographical note

Allan Brooks was born in northern India at Etawah as the son of an Englishman on February 16, 1869. Though Brooks' father was a civil engineer, he was also an ardent avian aficionado and inculcated this love of ornithology in his son. Under his father's tutelage, Allan partook in natural history endeavors and wildlife pastimes early on from childhood through adolescence. At the age of four, Allan Brooks was sent to England for schooling, where he resided for eight years before the family uprooted in 1881 to Canada. There, the Brooks family participated in a pastoral lifestyle on their farm and both father and son continued their ornithological recreation, whereupon Allan Brooks sketched, prepared bird skins, and ventured into the nearby regions. Brooks began to seriously invest in his passion in 1894, harvesting local specimens to send to experts and museum collections in the United States and Canada.

Constantly busied and engrossed in his work, Brooks' career emerged on a more renowned scale with wildlife illustrations in "The Birds of Washington," published in 1909. This led to further work in a massive undertaking in late 1910 to illustrate for "The Birds of California," whose work was temporarily suspended with the advent of the First World War. From hunting and collecting specimens, Brooks was already adept with a firearm as a competitive rifle shooter before he enlisted for the war in 1914. He quickly ascended in the ranks to Lieutenant Colonel and distinguished himself as an exemplary sniper. Upon his return five years later, unharmed and in good health, Brooks found himself disenchanted with shooting for sport and immediately resumed his life's work, committing himself wholly to his natural historical and zoological efforts. Projects flooded in with Phillips' book "A Natural History of Ducks," submissions for the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology in Berkeley, pictures for Percy Taverner's "Birds of Western Canada," and requests from a plethora of other sponsors. "The Birds of California" also completed following the war and became published in 1923 bound in four volumes. Moreover, Brooks was a close compatriot of Louis Agassiz Fuertes (1874-1927), who is widely regarded even today as one of the most premier wildlife artists of that time. When Fuertes's death in 1927 prevented completion of the third volume of "Birds of Massachusetts and other New England States," Brooks was commissioned for the remaining drawings, and the book was published in 1929. Periodically, Brooks provided articles in editions of the *Condor*, a Cooper Ornithological Club publication, where he was widely commemorated and celebrated. Later on, Brooks was even commissioned beginning in 1931 to illustrate for *National Geographic Magazine*, to which he would submit a series of illustrations for 20 following issues.

Throughout his life, Allan Brooks demonstrated an indomitable spirit and enthusiasm for his work. He possessed a strong desire to contribute, educate, and spread knowledge. Truly dedicated to the integrity of his craft, he came into the association and respect of many highly regarded naturalists of the time. Throughout the 1920's, with Brooks' consistently immaculate additions to the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, he found friendship and longtime correspondence in the museum's first director, Joseph Grinnell. Notably, though Grinnell tried, Brooks, demure by nature, turned down a proposition by Grinnell to pursue an autobiography. Brooks also corresponded with the museum's curator of birds, Harry Swarth. Brooks and Swarth are prominently remembered for an expedition that became instrumental in its breadth and

findings. In 1924, they embarked on a trip of several months to Atlin and travelled together by boat along the British Columbia coastline up to Alaska, making stops to collect specimens and record observations, until Skagway. With a railway detour from Skagway to Carcross, the pair resumed seafaring to their ultimate destination of Atlin.

Amongst extensive travels, Brooks sustained detailed observations and notes of species in North America abroad, even during wartime (as evidenced by sketches drawn while immersed in the trenches). Brooks continuously identified species and reported his observations, even in casual correspondence, simply due to an ever-present awe-inspired fascination. He met with experts and contemporaries in the field exhaustively, presumably sharing methods, research, and observations. Meticulous and punctilious for detail, with a penchant for creative liberties where appropriate, particularly evident in his artwork, Brooks devoted himself to accurate depictions and representation. Accordingly, he was often called upon to peer-review articles and academic work. In contrast to other contributors from the field of his time such as Fuertes, who focused on the primary subject of the painting, Brooks was lauded for the specific attention he paid to the background milieu and environment in addition to the foreground specimens. True to form, Brooks turned down numerous job offers throughout his life in favor of a more freeform lifestyle, which he found more gratifying than a rigid occupation. Evidently, Allan Brooks is set apart from the many naturalists of his time as a staunch advocate for precision in two arenas that significantly interconnected--one that upholds artistic integrity as epitomized in his paintings and the other that represents a well-founded reverence for scientific discipline.

References: Brooks, Allan, Museum of Vertebrate Zoology historical correspondence, MVZA.MSS.0117, Museum of Vertebrate Zoology Archives, University of California, Berkeley.

Brooks, Marjorie. "Allan Brooks—A Biography." *The Condor*. Vol. XL, Jan.-Feb. 1938: 12-17. 5 Mar. 2014. <http://sora.unm.edu/sites/default/files/journals/condor/v040n01/p0012-p0017.pdf>.

Candy, Ron. "Allan Brooks: Naturalist & Wildlife Illustrator." *The Greater Vernon Museum & Archives*. 25 Feb. 2014. http://www.vernonmuseum.ca/cr_allan_brooks.html.

Harris, Harry. "An Appreciation of Allan Brooks, Zoological Artist: 1869-1946." *The Condor*. Vol. 48, Jul.-Aug. 1946: 145-153. 5 Mar. 2014. <http://sora.unm.edu/sites/default/files/journals/condor/v048n04/p0145-p0153.pdf>.

Dawson, William Leon. "Allan Brooks-An Appreciation." *The Condor*. Vol. 15, Mar.-Apr. 1913: 69-76. 19 Mar. 2014. <http://sora.unm.edu/node/95452>.

"Major Allan Brooks (1869-1946)." *Allan Brooks Nature Centre*. 25 Feb. 2014. <http://www.abnc.ca/index.php/about/major-allan-brooks/>.

Webber, Jean. "Major Allan Brooks of Okanagan Landing." *Royal BC Museum*. 5 Mar. 2014. http://142.36.5.21/thomp-ok/allan_books/major-allan.html.

Scope and Contents

The Allan C. Brooks papers include one bound volume of field notes and two bound volumes of bird catalogues that list the specimens collected over the course of Brooks' career. Furthermore, the collection houses 42 original paintings, 38 of which are definitively attributed to Brooks and 4 that are possibly his work. The majority of the paintings are commissions requested by Grinnell for his publications: 17 paintings for plates in *Wildlife of the Yosemite* published in 1924 and 16 paintings for the two volumes of Grinnell's 1937 work *Fur-bearing Mammals of California*. The remaining artwork was involved in various other publications by Grinnell and his colleagues. In addition to field notes and artwork, there is a series of correspondence between Brooks and colleagues of the MVZ. Correspondence generally describes transactional logistics, such as commissions and transfer of specimens. Topics discussed also detail specimen observation, collection, scientific taxonomy, and article consultation. Personal anecdotes, biographical descriptions, and travel experiences are also transcribed. The bulk of correspondence involves Brooks exchanging with Grinnell, Swarth, or Dixon. Some correspondence is also exchanged between other members of the Brooks family and the MVZ.

Related Archival Materials

Correspondence by and to Allan Brooks dating before 1930 can be found in the [Museum of Vertebrate Zoology historical correspondence 1908-1930 collection](#) (MVZA.MSS.0117).

Subjects and Indexing Terms

Biological specimens--Identification
Birds--California--Identification
Birds--Canada, Western--Identification
Correspondence
Field notes
Scientific illustrations (images)

Correspondence

Box 2, Folder 1 **Correspondence 1931-1933**
Box 2, Folder 2 **Correspondence 1934-1937**
Box 2, Folder 3 **Correspondence 1938-1941**
Box 2, Folder 4 **Correspondence 1942-1946**
Box 2, Folder 5 **Allan C. Brooks and Allan C. Brooks Jr. Correspondence 1939-1946**
Box 2, Folder 6 **Allan C. Brooks Jr. Correspondence 1955-1966**
Box 2, Folder 7 **Marjorie Brooks (Mrs. Allan Brooks) Correspondence 1946-1955**

Research

Box 1, Folder 1 **Allan Brooks field notes 1867-1944**
 Language of Material: English
 Physical Description: 1.0 Folder

Oversize 1,
Folder 1 **Allan Brooks bird catalogue 1877-1945**
 Language of Material: English
 Physical Description: 1.0 Folder

Oversize 1,
Folder 2 **Allan Brooks bird catalogue 2 1873-1945**
 Language of Material: English
 Physical Description: 1.0 Folder

Paintings

Oversize 5

Quail Hybrids 3 1911

Dimensions note: 8" x 11 15/16" (HxW)

Oversize 2

Young Bohemian Waxwings 5 1922

Dimensions note: 12 1/2" x 8 1/8" (HxW)

Publications note

Swarth, Harry S., "Birds and Mammals of the Stikine River Region of Northern British Columbia and Southeastern Alaska." *UC Publications in Zoology*. Vol. 24, No. 2 (July 1926): 125-314. Plate 8.

Frame 1

8 Pocket Gophers 6 1926

Dimensions note: 14 1/2" x 10 1/16" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, Joseph, "Geography and Evolution in the Pocket Gopher." *University of California Chronicle* July (1926): 247-262. 252: 1 plate.

Oversize 5

Foot of Trumpeter Swan 11 undated

Dimensions note: 7 1/16" x 10 1/8" (HxW)

Oversize 5

California Quail, Male and Female 12 undated

Dimensions note: 7 1/16" x 10 3/16" (HxW)

Oversize 5

Short-eared Owl 13 undated

Dimensions note: 7 1/16" x 10 3/16" (HxW)

Oversize 5

Young Gray Plover 14 1931

Dimensions note: 7 1/16" x 10 1/16" (HxW)

Frame 2

Song Sparrows of California 15 1923

Dimensions note: 14 3/8" x 10 1/8" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J. and Alden Miller. The Distribution of the Birds of California. University of California, Berkeley: Cooper Ornithological Club, 1944. Frontispiece.

Oversize 2

Golden-crowned Sparrows 17 1926

Dimensions note: 14 9/10" x 9 15/16" (HxW)

Publications note

Swarth, Harry S. "Report on a Collection of Birds and Mammals from the Atlin Region, Northern British Columbia." *UC Publications in Zoology* Vol. 30, No. 4 (1926): 51-162. Plate 4.

Oversize 4

California Spotted Skunk and San Diego Spotted Skunk 18 1937

Dimensions note: 15" x 11" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J., Joseph Dixon, Jean M. Linsdale. *Fur-bearing Mammals of California*. University of California, Berkeley: U.C. Press, 1937. Vol 1. 293: fig 110.

Oversize 2

Water Ouzel 19 1924

Dimensions note: 7 3/8" x 11 1/16" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J. and Tracy I. Storer: *Animal Life in in the Yosemite*. U.C. Press, Berkeley. 1924. 729: pl 52.

Oversize 2

Band-tailed Pigeon 20 1924

Dimensions note: 14 1/4" x 9 7/8" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J. and Tracy I. Storer: *Animal Life in in the Yosemite*. U.C. Press, Berkeley. 1924. 278: pl 4.

Frame 3

Sierra Nevada Rosy Finch 21 1920

Dimensions note: 11 5/16" x 9" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J. and Tracy I. Storer: *Animal Life in in the Yosemite*. U.C. Press, Berkeley. 1924. ii: pl 1.

Frame 4

Townsend Solitaire, Russet-backed Thrush, and Sierra Hermit Thrush 22 1920

Dimensions note: 13 13/16" x 9 1/4" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J. and Tracy I. Storer: *Animal Life in in the Yosemite*. U.C. Press, Berkeley. 1924. 598: pl 11.

Frame 5

Warblers of the Yosemite Section 23 1920

Dimensions note: 11 5/8" x 8 13/16" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J. and Tracy I. Storer: *Animal Life in in the Yosemite*. U.C. Press, Berkeley. 1924. 518: pl 9.

Frame 6

Some Small Birds of the Yosemite Forests 24 1920

Dimensions note: 13 7/8" x 9 3/8" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J. and Tracy I. Storer: Animal Life in in the Yosemite. U.C. Press, Berkeley. 1924. 566: pl 10.

Frame 7

Family Group of Williamson Sapsuckers 25 1920

Dimensions note: 14 3/16" x 9 15/16" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J. and Tracy I. Storer: Animal Life in in the Yosemite. U.C. Press, Berkeley. 1924. 334: pl 6.

Oversize 3

Sierra Golden-mantled and Belding Ground Squirrels 26 1924

Dimensions note: 6 1/2" x 8 5/8" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J. and Tracy I. Storer: Animal Life in in the Yosemite. U.C. Press, Berkeley. 1924. 158: pl 2.

Oversize 3

Southern Sierra Marmot 27 1924

Dimensions note: 6 1/4" x 9 1/16" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J. and Tracy I. Storer: Animal Life in in the Yosemite. U.C. Press, Berkeley. 1924. 158: pl 2.

Frame 8

Chipmunks of the Yosemite Section 28 1924

Dimensions note: 15" x 11" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J. and Tracy I. Storer: Animal Life in in the Yosemite. U.C. Press, Berkeley. 1924. 182: pl 3.

Frame 9

Woodpeckers of the Yosemite Section 29 1920

Dimensions note: 14 1/8" x 9" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J. and Tracy I. Storer: Animal Life in in the Yosemite. U.C. Press, Berkeley. 1924. 326: pl 5.

Frame 10

Coral King Snake 30 1924

Dimensions note: 9 1/8" x 13 1/8" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J. and Tracy I. Storer: Animal Life in in the Yosemite. U.C. Press, Berkeley. 1924. 630: pl 12.

Frame 19

Some Sparrows of the Yosemite Region 31 1924

Dimensions note: 11 3/8" x 9" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J. and Tracy I. Storer: Animal Life in in the Yosemite. U.C. Press, Berkeley. 1924. 454: pl 8.

Frame 11

Adult and Young Western Skink 32 1924

Dimensions note: 8 3/16" x 9" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J. and Tracy I. Storer: Animal Life in in the Yosemite. U.C. Press, Berkeley. 1924. 630: pl 12.

Frame 12

Cassin and California Purple Finches and California Linnet 33 1919

Dimensions note: 12 1/4" x 9 3/8" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J. and Tracy I. Storer: Animal Life in in the Yosemite. U.C. Press, Berkeley. 1924. 422: pl 7.

Oversize 5

The Principal Diurnal Birds of Prey of the Yosemite Region, as seen overhead in flight 34 1924

Dimensions note: 12 1/16" x 8 7/8" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J. and Tracy I. Storer: Animal Life in in the Yosemite. U.C. Press, Berkeley. 1924. 720: pl 44.

Oversize 5

The Principal Diurnal Birds of Prey of the Yosemite Region, as seen overhead in flight 35 1924

Dimensions note: 12 1/8" x 9 5/16" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J. and Tracy I. Storer: Animal Life in in the Yosemite. U.C. Press, Berkeley. 1924. 720: pl 44.

Frame 13

California River Otter and California Mink 37 1937

Dimensions note: 14 1/2" x 10 7/8" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J., Joseph Dixon, Jean M. Linsdale. Fur-bearing Mammals of California. University of California, Berkeley: U.C. Press, 1937. Vol 1. iv: pl 1.

Frame 14

3 Skunks: Arizona striped skunk, Great Basin striped skunk, Northern California striped skunk 38 1937

Dimensions note: 14" x 11 1/16" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J., Joseph Dixon, Jean M. Linsdale. Fur-bearing Mammals of California. University of California, Berkeley: U.C. Press, 1937. Vol 1. 312: fig 115.

Frame 15

Badger 39 1937

Dimensions note: 9 7/8" x 12 3/8" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J., Joseph Dixon, Jean M. Linsdale. Fur-bearing Mammals of California. University of California, Berkeley: U.C. Press, 1937. Vol 1. 358: fig 127.

Oversize 3

Sierra Nevada Black Bear 40 1937

Dimensions note: 15 3/4" x 11 5/8" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J., Joseph Dixon, Jean M. Linsdale. Fur-bearing Mammals of California. University of California, Berkeley: U.C. Press, 1937. Vol 1. 100: pl 2.

Oversize 3

California Ring-tailed Cat and California Raccoon 41 1937

Dimensions note: 14 1/8" x 9 11/16" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J., Joseph Dixon, Jean M. Linsdale. Fur-bearing Mammals of California. University of California, Berkeley: U.C. Press, 1937. Vol 1. 148: pl 3.

Frame 16

Sierra Nevada Pine Marten, Mountain Weasel in Winter, Mountain Weasel in Summer 42 1937

Dimensions note: 15" x 11 3/4" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J., Joseph Dixon, Jean M. Linsdale. Fur-bearing Mammals of California. University of California, Berkeley: U.C. Press, 1937. Vol 1. 196: pl 4.

Oversize 3

Fisher 43 1937

Dimensions note: 14 1/4" x 10 1/8" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J., Joseph Dixon, Jean M. Linsdale. Fur-bearing Mammals of California. University of California, Berkeley: U.C. Press, 1937. Vol 1. 228: pl 5.

Oversize 3

Southern Wolverine 44 1937

Dimensions note: 14 1/2" x 10 5/8" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J., Joseph Dixon, Jean M. Linsdale. Fur-bearing Mammals of California. University of California, Berkeley: U.C. Press, 1937. Vol 1. 260: pl 6.

Oversize 4

Southern Sea Otter 45 1937

Dimensions note: 10 5/8" x 14 1/2" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J., Joseph Dixon, Jean M. Linsdale. Fur-bearing Mammals of California. University of California, Berkeley: U.C. Press, 1937. Vol 1. 292: pl 7.

Frame 17

Golden Beaver 46 1937

Dimensions note: 15 7/8" x 12" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J., Joseph Dixon, Jean M. Linsdale. Fur-bearing Mammals of California. University of California, Berkeley: U.C. Press, 1937. Vol 2. iv: pl 8.

Frame 20

California Grey Fox, Sierra Nevada Red Fox, Desert Kit Fox 47 1937

Dimensions note: 14 1/16" x 10 1/8" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J., Joseph Dixon, Jean M. Linsdale. Fur-bearing Mammals of California. University of California, Berkeley: U.C. Press, 1937. Vol 2. 440: pl 9.

Oversize 4

California Valley Coyote, Mountain Coyote 48 1937

Dimensions note: 16" x 11 1/2" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J., Joseph Dixon, Jean M. Linsdale. Fur-bearing Mammals of California. University of California, Berkeley: U.C. Press, 1937. Vol 2. 488: pl 10.

Oversize 3

California Mountain Lion 49 1937

Dimensions note: 15 1/4" x 12" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J., Joseph Dixon, Jean M. Linsdale. Fur-bearing Mammals of California. University of California, Berkeley: U.C. Press, 1937. Vol 2. 536: pl 11.

Oversize 3

California Wildcat (Bobcat) 50 1937

Dimensions note: 14 7/8" x 11" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J., Joseph Dixon, Jean M. Linsdale. Fur-bearing Mammals of California. University of California, Berkeley: U.C. Press, 1937. Vol 2. 616: pl 12.

Frame 18

Colorado River Muskrat 51 1937

Dimensions note: 15" x 10 7/8" (HxW)

Publications note

Grinnell, J., Joseph Dixon, Jean M. Linsdale. Fur-bearing Mammals of California. University of California, Berkeley: U.C. Press, 1937. Vol 2. 728: pl 13.