

Chicago Academy of Sciences / Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum
ARCHIVES – FINDING AID

Collection Title: William I. Lyon Papers

Creator: Lyon, William Isaac (1874-1938)

Dates: 1913-1938, undated, (bulk) 1928-1938

Language: English

Extent: 3.4 Linear Feet (6 manuscript box, 1 flat storage box, 1 folder in Oversize Box 1)

Level of Description: Folder Level

Repository: Museum Collections and Archives, Chicago Academy of Sciences /Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, Chicago, Illinois.

Access Conditions: Open for research.

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Citation: Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [item], [folder], [box], William I. Lyon Papers, Chicago Academy of Sciences / Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum.

Acquisition Information: Accession 4519. Received from the Estate of William I. Lyon, February 193.

Processor and Date: Amber K. King, September 2010

Processing Note: Original order was not maintained as the papers had been moved and re-arranged previously. Some materials related to another collection, Stephen S. Gregory, were found within the Lyon papers, pulled, and transferred to the Gregory Brothers Papers.

Biographical Sketch: William I. Lyon (1874-1938) was born in Waukegan, Illinois. He attended various public schools in Illinois and then graduated from the Riverview Military Academy, Poughkeepsie, N.Y. He served as a Major in the Spanish-American War for one of the Illinois Provisional Regiments. His father, George Reed Lyon, ran a local mercantile business in Waukegan, which he and his brother helped

to run. Later he became a real estate broker. He married Mary Cantine and they had one child, George Reed Lyon, Jr. in 1903.

He was an avid ornithologist and naturalist, with his primary interest in bird banding. He was one of the founders of the Inland Bird Banding Association started in 1922. He first served as secretary of that organization and then as president. He was a dedicated believer in bird banding and used his research to develop a section entitled the "Bird Banding Department" for the *Wilson Bulletin* from March 1922-June 1928. He continued this kind of report work and study in the newsletter association with the Inland Bird Banding Association, *Inland Bird Banding News*, beginning June of 1929. His banding work sparked an interest in migratory instincts and he conducted regular experiments testing the homing ability of wild birds until his death in 1938. He particularly focused on the Cowbird, *Molothrus ater*, shipping crates of birds to various locations in the United States, Canada and even one shipment to Mexico. In a publicity stunt conducted in May of 1938, one of three of his "trained" Cowbirds beat three Homing Pigeons in a race from the airport to Waukegan, arriving to the home destination in 50 minutes, while the pigeons arrived home in 1 hour 15 minutes. His ultimate goal was to help with the war effort by providing a more common species of bird to act as a messenger.

In addition to his banding pursuits, Lyon was also a member of the American Ornithologists Union (AOU), the Wilson Ornithological Club, and the Kennicott Club. Outside of his Ornithological pursuits he was a member of the Waukegan Chapter of the Rotary Club of America and a member of the Waukegan Lodge of the Antient Free & Accepted Masons.

Scope and Content: The collection mostly encompasses Lyon's work with birds, either as a bander or his efforts to study homing instincts in wild bird species. There is a variety of materials: notes, scrapbooks, correspondence, and field books.

Series Description:

Series 1: Bird Banding (1913-1938, undated)

This series contains materials related to Lyon's efforts and interests in bird banding. It is divided into two sub-series: Record Books and Records. The majority of the materials are made up of record books that list numbers and species of birds banded in a given year. Also included are banding notes made by Lyon and other bird banders regarding certain species and their behavior as well as a small number of materials related to Lyon's association with the American Bird Banding Association.

Series 2: Wild Bird Homing Research (1913-1938, undated)

This series contains materials related to Lyon's efforts to research the possibility of certain wild bird species, particularly the Cowbird, being utilized as messenger birds. It is divided into two sub-series: Bird Records and Scrapbook. "Bird Records" contains notes, writings, shipping receipts, a few photographs and newspaper clippings related to Lyon's homing research, including notations of when and where certain birds were shipped, released and if and when they returned to their home location. "Scrapbook" contains a scrapbook made up of correspondence in the form of letters and telegrams and newspaper clippings related to the homing experiments.

Series 3: Correspondence (1936-1938, undated)

This series contains letters and telegrams to and from Lyon. Most of the materials are related to his experiments with wild bird homing, but some letters related directly to his bird banding.

Correspondents of note are Alfred M. Bailey, director of the Chicago Academy of Sciences and late the Colorado Museum of Natural History as well as Burt Gresham, a correspondent in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. There are also letters to various newspapers in both the United States and Canada asking for publicity and telling them of various shipments and what he was trying to gain by shipping and then releasing the birds. There is even one letter written to Jack Benny asking him to help with the publicity with a response telegram respectfully declining the request.

Container List:

Box 1		
Series 1: Bird Banding (1913-1938, undated)		
<i>Sub-series 1: Record Books (1915-1938, undated)</i>		
1	Size 0: F93001-F94000, 34/2001-34/3000, 34/21401-34/21500, 36/27001-36/28000, 38/9001-38/10000	1932-1938
2	Size 1: 27111-27112, 7101-7300, 21036-21085, 22401-22700, 32001-32050, 33441-33640, 38201-38300, 57341-57640, 86001-86200, 90001-90500, A11026-A11525, A27001-A27500, A46676-A47000, A48029-A48205, A80471-A80670, A60001-A60800, A91001-A91475	1915, 1921-1928
3	Size 1: A91476-92000, B18001-B18500, B67001-B68000, B92001-B93000, C13001-C13500, C34501-C35000, C73001-C74000	1928-1933
4	Size 1, Vol. 2, Cover	undated
5	Size 1, Vol. 2: H40001-H41000, L5001-L6000, L26001-L27000, 34/55001-34/56000, 35/46001-35/47000	1932-1936
6	Size 1, Vol. 2: 36/74001-36/75000, 37/76001-37/76821	1936-1938
Box 2		
Series 1: Bird Banding (1913-1938, undated)		
<i>Sub-series 1: Record Books (1915-1938, undated)</i>		
1	Size 1A – Cover	undated
2	Size 1A: 29111-29135, 50101-50150, 50501-50600, 52401-52800, 13001-14200, 60091-60390, 61001-61100, 66301-66500, 120001-120300, 126196-126695, 144351-144850, 172001-172100, 170602-171000, 177001-177800	1915-1917, 1920-1927
3	Size 1A: 472001-473000, 607801-610000, 681001-682000, A112001-A112800, A139001-A139500, A157001-A158000, B106001-B106200	1927-1930
4	Size 1A: B106201-B107000, B134001-B135000, B153001-B154000, C109501-C110400	1930-1932

	5	Size 1A, Vol. 2 – Cover	undated
	6	Size 1A, Vol. 2: C153001-C154001, C170001-C171000, F124001-F125000, 34/123001-34/124000, 34/159001-34/159150	1932-1935
	7	Size 1A, Vol. 2: 34/159151-34/160000, 35/113001-35/114000, 37/119001-37/120000, 38/119001-38/120000, 38/170001-38/170151	1935-1938
Box 3			
Series 1: Bird Banding (1913-1938, undated)			
<i>Sub-series 1: Record Books (1915-1938, undated)</i>			
	1	Size 2: 17001-17200, 31121-31145, 53621-53645, 54101-54150, 54301-54400, 55401-55500, 70206-70405, 390231-390330, 484526-484725, 633001-633300, A277301-A277500, B202001-B202500, B258001-B258500, 34/248026-34/249000, 37/229001-37/229741	1916-1917, 1920-1938
	2	Size 3: 310, 321, 1733-1735, 34056-34074, 41101-41150, 19722-19730, 13440-13447, 20626-20640, 42766-42800, 21461-21470, 20919-20940, 18001-18050, 18301-18400, 23501-23600, 8681-8882, 107001-107175, 319451-319650, 410681-410780, 438001-438500, 509001-510000, A302501-A303000, A344001-A345000	1915-1930
	3	Size 3: A371001-A372000, A397001-A397300, A398001-A400000, B300001-B301000, B359001-B359450, B359501-B359901, B359951-B359953	1930-1932
	4	Size 3, Vol. 2: B360001-B360500, C300001-C300500, 34/301001-34/302000, 34/366001-34/367000, 37/342001-37/343000	1933-1938
Box 4			
Series 1: Bird Banding (1913-1938, undated)			
<i>Sub-series 1: Record Books (1915-1938, undated)</i>			
	1	Size 5: 22766-22780, 114031-114055, 20051-20100, 220976-221075, A546001-A546700, A563001-A566300, 34/528501-34/531000, 34/541101-34/541200, 34/545501-34/546000, 35/533001-35/539000, 36/505901-36/506000, 36/510501-36/512200, 37/516001-37/517157, 37/517201-37/517250	1923-1938
	2	Size 6 – Cover	undated
	3	Size 6: 24270-24274, 35206-35215, 24696-24700, 26021-26025, 308016, C208016-C208040, 325101-325300, 377001-378000, 368131-368140, 336051-336055, 336057-336058, 336061-336062, 336065-336075, 336101-336500, 203127-203134, 368051-368075, 421101-421200, 457001-457421,	1917-1918, 1920, 1922-1927

		457432, 458001-459000, 564001-564850	
	4	Size 6: 564851-567000, 706001-708275	1927-1928
	5	Size 6: 708276-709000, A637501-640000, A679001-A680000, B607001-B607797, B607801-B607807, A607848-A609200, B669501-B671000, C620001-C620050	1928-1934
	6	Size 6, Vol. 2: 34/633001-34/634000, 34/648301-34/648400, 34/669501-34/669600, 36/629701-36/629800, 36/658001-36/658872, 36/659157-36/661000, 37/639001-37/641197	1934-1938
	7	Size 7: 26021-26025, 200001-200100, 320001-320500, 204001-204200, A717301-A717500, 34/700501-34/700600, 36/711726-36/711750	1916, 1922-1937
	8	Size 8: 36/806501-36/806600, 36/808001-36/808251, 37/803701-37/803851	1936-1937
	9	Total Birds Banded (by year)	1913-1925
	10	Field Book Summary Sheet	undated
Box 5			
Series 1: Bird Banding (1913-1938, undated)			
<i>Sub-series 2: Records (1913-1937, undated)</i>			
	1	American Bird Banding Association	1915, 1917, 1919-1920, undated
	2	Banding Observation Notes	1921-1924, undated
	3	Banding Observation Notes - Summaries	1913-1937
<i>Sub-series 3: Writings (1924)</i>			
	4	Writings	1924
Series 2: Wild Bird Homing Research (1913-1938, undated)			
<i>Sub-series 1: Bird Records (1913-1938, undated)</i>			
	5	General	1934-1938, undated
	6	General – Cards –“Report of Released Birds”	1935-1938
	7	General – Notes	undated
	8	General – Notes (by trip/lot #s)	1934-1938
	9	Blue Jay	1935-1936, undated
	10	Bronzed Grackle	1913-1937, undated
	11	Cowbird – Banding Notes	1921-1937
	12	Cowbird – Maps (see Oversize Box 1 for oversize maps)	1935-1938, undated
	13	Cowbird – Observation Notes	1929-1930, 1933-1938, undated
	14	Cowbird – Observation Notes – Shipped/ Release/Return Notes	1923-1938, undated
	15	Red-winged Blackbird	1917-1937
	16	Newspaper Clippings (Copies)	1936-1938
	17	Photographs	undated

	18	Shipping Receipts	1937, undated
	19	Writings	1935, undated
Box 6			
Series 2: Wild Bird Homing Research (1913-1938, undated) (
<i>Sub-series 2: Scrapbook (1936-1938, undated)</i>			
	1	“Homing Instinct” – Correspondence, newspaper clippings, printed materials related to work with wild birds and homing instinct	1936-1938
Box 7			
Series 3: Correspondence (1936-1938, undated)			
	1	Miscellaneous	1936-1938
	2	Robert P. Allam	1937
	3	Alfred M. Bailey	1937
	4	Fred G. Bard	1938
	5	Bob Becker	1937
	6	W. Lee Chambers	1938
	7	Lester B. Colby	undated
	8	F.A. Dunk	1937
	9	F. Fennell	1938
	10	James L. Fleming	1937
	11	Dr. Herbert Friedman	1937
	12	Burt Gresham	1937-1938, undated
	13	A. Haak	1938
	14	Dr. J.E. Horning	1937
	15	Frederick C. Lincoln	1937
	16	Hoyes Lloyd	1937-1938
	17	E.A. McIlhenny	1937
	18	D.M. McManus	1937
	19	Harry C. Oberholser	1938
	20	Kenneth Racey	1938
	21	W.S. Thompson	1937
	22	Publicity – Newspapers	1937-1938
Manuscript Oversize Box 1 (stored separately, Unit 3.Shelf D, with other oversize materials from other manuscript collections)			
Series 2: Wild Bird Homing Research (1913-1938, undated) (see Lyon Boxes 5 and 6 for rest of series)			
	1	Cowbird Maps –Oversize (see Lyon Box 5 for regular sized maps)	1935-1938, undated