BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH AND BIBLIOGRAPHY
OF
WILFRED T. NEILL

ERNEST LINER¹, C. J. MCCOY²
& DAVID L. AUTH³

¹Houma, Louisiana
²Carnegie Museum of Natural History
³Florida Museum of Natural History

SMITHSONIAN
HERPETOLOGICAL INFORMATION
SERVICE
NO. 95

1993
The SHIS series publishes and distributes translations, bibliographies, indices, and similar items judged useful to individuals interested in the biology of amphibians and reptiles, but unlikely to be published in the normal technical journals. Single copies are distributed free to interested individuals. Libraries, herpetological associations, and research laboratories are invited to exchange their publications with the Division of Amphibians and Reptiles.

We wish to encourage individuals to share their bibliographies, translations, etc. with other herpetologists through the SHIS series. If you have such items please contact George Zug for instructions on preparation and submission. Contributors receive 50 free copies.

Please address all requests for copies and inquiries to George Zug, Division of Amphibians and Reptiles, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC 20560 USA. Please include a self-addressed mailing label with requests.
INTRODUCTION

Although his last scientific publication in a herpetological journal appeared more than 25 years ago, the name of Wilfred T. Neill will be familiar to students of amphibians and reptiles. Over a span of twenty-six years (1940-1966), Neill was a voluminous contributor to the major herpetological journals (Copeia, Herpetologica), to many regional journals, and to his "own" Publications of the Research Division of Ross Allen’s Reptile Institute. Moreover, Neill published many works in anthropology, mainly dealing with the native Indians of southeastern United States. In addition to this flood of scholarly writing, which included several books, Neill wrote hundreds of nature notes for a wide variety of popular outlets including the magazine Florida Wildlife and many newspapers.

This massive publication record has never been completely chronicled. The authors of this bibliography independently started compiling bibliographies of Neill’s writings. When we discovered our mutual interest we pooled our respective lists and learned to our surprise that Neill was more prolific than any of us suspected. As a result, we decided to prepare a complete bibliography, not just a herpetological bibliography. In an earlier list prepared by Neill he included abstracts of his works from Biological Abstracts; these are not included. Also we have not included the various reprints of booklets for Ross Allen’s Reptile Institute, unless they were revised editions.

Neill wrote a weekly column for the 38th Bomb Group Newspaper, 5th Air Force called "Know Your Guinea" in 1943-1944 and "Around the Philippines" in 1945, while he was in military service. In 1950, 1951, and 1952, he supplied weekly drawings with captions called "Creatures in the Wild", which according to him ran in 120 Florida newspapers. Some articles included in "Creatures in the Wild" are articles on the diamondback rattlesnake, coral snake, cottonmouth, canebrake rattlesnake, copperhead, pigmy rattlesnake, alligators, American crocodile, wildcat, armadillo, blind lizard, Florida panther, black widow spider, ivory billed woodpecker, jaguarundi, king snake, alligator snapping turtle, Audubon’s caracara, soft-shelled turtle, saltwater snakes, Key deer, Florida manatee, coachwhip, black snake, garter snake, Everglades ratsnake, red ratsnake, boa constrictor, woodchuck, tegu lizard, Allen secures rare specimens, Allen milks deadly bushmaster, raccoon, fox squirrel, toucan, bats, horned toads, jerboa marsupial, porcupine, tiger salamander, and horned owl. Possibly Neill got his artistic talent from his uncle, John R. Neill, a famous illustrator of books and magazines from the first half of this century, who is probably best known for having illustrated 35 of the Oz books beginning with the second in 1904.
In 1974, he wrote a weekly column on early life in Florida called "Pioneer Past" for the Pasco-Hernando edition of the St. Petersburg Times. Although these are noteworthy, and a credit to his productivity, they are not included in this bibliography and no effort has been made to trace them.

From what we have learned in gathering this bibliography Neill authored or co-authored about 272 papers and books, not including the numerous newspaper articles. He authored 165 papers and books alone, another 98 with E. Ross Allen and ten with other authors. Herpetological articles (186) account for the major part of this total followed by anthropology (35), mammalogy (25), ornithology (7), ichthyology (4), biogeography (2), invertebrates (2), botany (2), book reviews (2), and general (7). Some of these publications could be classified into two or more categories but for simplicity we have placed them only in one so as not to distort the figures. In the herpetological area, he published 127 papers and books alone, 56 with Allen, and 3 with other authors for a total of 186.

A diligent search of libraries and standard bibliographic sources including the interlibrary loan system has failed to produce any information on whether three historical novels, Wildcat in the West, Birdwoman's Real Story, Quanna Parker's Magic Button, he supposedly had written were published or copyrighted. In the absence of any hard evidence that they actually were published, they are not included in this bibliography.

During the National Library week of April 16-22, 1967 Neill was honored along with five other authors in New Port Richey, Florida. In October, 1974, The Pasco Times had a week-long series on the history of the New Port Richey area in celebration of the city's 50th birthday, written by Neill, and concluded the series with a special edition of The Pasco Times.

Neill described twelve taxa alone and two with E. Ross Allen. Of these fourteen taxa five are still recognized, the other seven being placed in synonymy (see Table I). Of the five taxa still recognized three have been listed by Florida (Rare and Endangered Biota of Florida Volume III. Amphibians and Reptiles, ed. by Paul E. Moler, 1992) as threatened, rare (Amphiuma pholeter); status undetermined and a candidate for listing at the Federal level (Pseudobranchus striatus lustricolus); and status undetermined (Farancia erytrogramma seminola). Two taxa were named for him and are still recognized (see Table II).
TABLE I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Taxa named by Neill and their present status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hyla phaeocrypta oqechiensis Neill, 1948 = Hyla avivoca Viosca, 1928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lampropeltis getulus goini Neill &amp; Allen, 1949 = Lampropeltis g. getula (Linnaeus, 1766) X Lampropeltis g. floridana Blanchard, 1919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaphe obsoleta rossalleni Neill, 1949 = Elaphe o. rossalleni Neill, 1949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desmognathus perlapsus Neill, 1950 = Desmognathus ochrophaeus Cope, 1859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desmognathus fuscus carri Neill, 1951 = Desmognathus auriculatus (Holbrook, 1838)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudobranchus striatus lustricolus Neill, 1951 = Pseudobranchus s. lustricolus Neill, 1951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyctimystes loveridgei Neill, 1954 = Litoria genimaculata (Horst, 1883)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natrix septemvittata mabila Neill, 1963 = Regina septemvittata (Say, 1825)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farancia erytrogramma seminola Neill, 1964 = Farancia e. seminola Neill, 1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syrrhophus leprus cholorum Neill, 1965 = Eleutherodactylus leprus (Cope, 1879)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ficimia publia wolffsohni Neill, 1965 = Ficimia publia Cope, 1866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinosternon mopanum Neill, 1965 = Kinosternon l. leucostomum (Dumeril &amp; Bibron, in Dumeril &amp; Dumeril, 1851)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In 1991 a very appropriate paper by one of the authors (Auth) was published in the Gainesville Herpetological Society Newsletter, VII (8): 9-15. It is reproduced here in its entirety with slight changes.

**WILFRED T. NEILL - FLORIDA’S PREMIER HERPETOLOGIST**

by David L. Auth

One could get into quite a lively discussion trying to decide who has contributed most to our knowledge of Florida amphibians and reptiles. Some people who come to mind, Archie Carr, Coleman Goin, and Walter Auffenberg, have contributed mightily, but entered other areas of major interest: sea turtles, Colombian amphibians and textbook writing, and tortoises and varanid lizards, respectively. Ross Allen certainly educated and entertained thousands of people with his showmanship, lectures, and publications (he published over 130 articles and papers as author or coauthor). Nonetheless, I believe Wilfred T. Neill qualifies for the title of Florida’s premier herpetologist, contributing 143 papers and articles on Southeastern U. S. herpetology, with emphasis on Florida and Georgia. Overall, he wrote over 235 papers and articles, five scientific books, several historical novels, and approximately 800 newspaper articles.

Wilfred T. Neill was born in Augusta, Georgia on January 12, 1922. A true Georgia native, he did not really leave the state until the age of 28. He went to high school in Augusta and received his Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Georgia in Athens in May, 1941, at the age of 19. His first herpetological note, on Eumeces
egregius in Georgia, was published in Copeia in 1940. One of his first jobs was teaching German and zoology at Augusta Junior College. He traveled to Indonesia during summer break, learning one of the local languages. This early interest eventually resulted in his book 20th Century Indonesia, published by Columbia University Press in 1973. In it Neill discussed the natural, political, social, and religious history of the country.

World War II interrupted Neill’s teaching responsibilities. He joined the Army Air Corps and served from 1942 to 1945, in Indonesia, Luzon, New Guinea, and Okinawa. "I really enjoyed myself during the war!" Wilfred said recently in an interview. He managed to do some collecting, as the herps from Lingayan, Luzon, in the Florida Museum of Natural History’s collection attest. The ERA-WTN Collection of Ensil Ross Allen and Wilfred Trammel Neill, assembled mostly by Neill over many years, was sold in part to Rutgers University and later transferred to the American Museum of Natural History (Gloyd & Conant, 1990). Although he was based in Florida from 1949 until now, Neill’s experiences during military service greatly broadened his perspective, as foreign travel has done for many biologists.

Neill returned to Augusta after the war, teaching at Richmond Academy during 1946 and 1947. This military school was allied both physically and administratively with Augusta Junior College, to which Neill returned during 1947 to 1949, rising to the rank of professor of zoology. By the time he was hired by Ross Allen in 1949, Neill had already published thirty papers, in Copeia and Herpetologica, the two major herpetological journals in the United States.

In 1929, Ross Allen moved to Silver Springs, Florida, from Winter Haven and in 1931, with two partners, started a "reptile institute" at one of the most beautiful and biologically alive places on earth, the head springs of the Silver River east of Ocala. Allen was a handsome, muscular, energetic 24 years old (Neill was 10 at the time). By 1933, Allen became the sole manager of the business, but he continued to lease the land from one of his partners and never owned the institute which bore his name. Before World War II, Allen made his money through collecting and selling amphibians and reptiles and extracting snake venom. Although the public was admitted for a token fee, the institute was for many years a working affair rather than a tourist attraction. During World War
II, 72,000 poisonous snakes of twenty-seven different varieties were milked at "Ross Allen's Reptile Institute, Inc.," supplying 90 percent of all the venom used to produce antivenin for U. S. troops (Neill, 1950). To keep pace with changing times after the war, Allen converted part of the institute into a tourist attraction, with caged reptile exhibits, venom extraction shows, alligator shows, a mock-up of a Seminole Indian village, and a gift shop. He became a showman, lecturer, movie actor, and technical adviser to movie makers. The product-oriented work of the institute, including the venom extraction and the research, went on behind the scenes. The sale of the venom and gift shop curios, the admission fees, and Allen's other pursuits paid for the research effort.

Wilfred began buying reptiles from Ross Allen in 1932 and later, still a boy, "accompanied him on expeditions" (Neill, 1950). In 1949 Allen formed a research division at the institute. Always worrying about his lack of formal education, he hired the 28-year old Neill to be his research director. Neill brought an academic scientific expertise and additional writing and artistic skills to the operation, freeing Allen from some of his responsibilities. It was a professional relationship which would last fourteen years and have a profound impact on Florida herpetology.

Neill stayed mainly behind the scenes at the institute, maintaining the research animals, many at his home, collecting, writing, and developing academic ties, first with faculty and graduate students at the University of Florida and then more broadly, as President of the S. E. Division of the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists. He married in 1951, and his wife and he had one son, but the marriage soon ended in divorce. Wilfred never remarried. He published at least 91 articles and papers with Ross Allen from 1949 to 1962, an additional 91 on his own, and six with other authors, making this his most productive period herpetologically. Many young people visited, worked, and studied at the reptile institute. Neill instituted a seminar program with faculty and graduate students from the Biology Department at the University of Florida, including Archie Carr, Coleman Goin, and James Oliver. Interested parties would alternate seminars at the Biology Department in Gainesville and at Silver Springs. Partially as a result of these experiences at the institute, academic interest in herpetology blossomed. Neill became a mentor for many people during these years and for some time afterward.
In 1950, Neill started drawing wildlife cartoons for a local newspaper. Telling the story of Florida's reptiles and other life forms, these cartoons were quickly picked up by another 54 newspapers. Starting in 1950 and ending in 1968, Allen and Neill wrote over 60 articles on Florida's vertebrates in Florida Wildlife, the popular magazine of the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission. These two men did more to educate Floridians about reptiles than anyone to this day. No one has adequately filled the void since Allen's death and Neill's retirement (Wilfred now lives at the Lakeland Health Care Center in Lakeland, Florida), to the great detriment of Florida's herpetofauna.

Soon after arriving at the institute, Neill developed an additional academic interest in anthropology, sparked by the Seminole Indians and their village re-creation and enhanced by Wilfred's friendship with Ripley P. Bullen, Curator of Anthropology at the Florida State Museum. Starting in 1952, Neill wrote 20 anthropological papers and later, two books: Reptiles and Amphibians in the Service of Man (1974) and Archeology and a Science of Man (1978). He also became President of the Florida Anthropological society and organized anthropology and herpetology conferences at Silver Springs and Rainbow Springs.

Ross Allen first visited British Honduras (Belize) in 1937. Something about the country must have intrigued him, for in 1957 he initiated a series of five collecting trips to Belize, resulting in over 1,500 specimens added to the ERA-WTN Collection and another 12 papers written primarily by Neill between 1959 and 1965. The crew on the 1959 trip included ten people in addition to Allen and Neill. K. P. Schmidt's 1941 herptile list for the country was considerably expanded. The process continues to this day, with C. J. McCoy, Curator of Herpetology at the Carnegie Museum, working on revisions to the known herpetofauna of Belize.

Neill was the classic field naturalist and collector. He knew Florida habitats better than anyone in the state, and remembered where he found each specimen, as well as each individual's color pattern and external morphology. (He had a "photographic memory"). He described at least four new species and ten new subspecies of amphibians and reptiles, some of which are still considered valid. He carried a mattock (a heavy, pick-like hand tool with flattened blades), which he used to tear apart fallen logs.
Wilfred had quite a droll sense of humor. On field trips he would sometimes predict the presence of a specific species under a specific log, and find the species after a bit of ripping with his mattock. Some of his companions wondered whether he salted the site beforehand. During his graduate school days (see below), he would hand a fellow student a pickled *Crotalis durissus* or whatever from British Guiana (Guyana) and say "Look what I found in Polk County!" He fooled quite a few members of the younger generation with the ERA-WTN Collection. During his anthropological studies, Neill learned how to quickly fashion fluted points by the same method the native peoples used, by hitting one rock against another (Neill, 1952). One time a member of the Anthropology Department at the Florida State Museum had to perform a "patina test" on some Neill finds, to prove their antiquity was not quite what the discoverer professed!

Allen and Neill had a falling out in 1962 during the Belize period, resulting in Neill's permanently leaving Silver Springs and moving to New Port Richey, where he cared for his retired parents. Neill's financial status has been rather poor ever since. He worked in a gas station, but still managed to publish five papers in 1963.

In January of 1964 at the urging of Walter Auffenberg, the new Curator of Herpetology at the Florida State Museum, Wilfred, then 43 years old, moved to Gainesville to work in the Seagle Building in downtown Gainesville, identifying and cataloguing amphibians and reptiles. He soon decided to enter graduate school at the University of Florida, enrolling in the spring term to start work on his doctorate in zoology. 1964 was to be another productive year, with nine papers published, including the still standard work, "Taxonomy, Natural History, and Zoogeography of the Rainbow Snake, *Farancia erytrogramma* (Palisot de Beauvois)."

One day in the fall of 1964, after working in the Ichthyology Collection with Dr. Carter Gilbert, Wilfred abruptly disappeared and returned to New Port Richey. By the end of 1964, he had written or coauthored 228 articles and papers and had a long-standing regional reputation. Forced to take the standard class schedule of a beginning graduate student, Neill simply could not tolerate the major demotion in status. The zoology department waived the requirement for a research project for the Ph.D., but demanded Wilfred take the usual classes. In addition, Neill chose Pierce Brodkorb, with whom he had copublished a paper back in 1956, as his major professor. Neill and
Brodkorb soon developed a significant personality clash. In the view of Carl Gans, who was doing postdoctoral work at the Florida State Museum at the time and who presently is one of the most renowned herpetologists in the United States, it is a great sorrow that Neill was not quickly awarded his doctorate based on his proven productivity and obvious contributions to herpetology, rather than being forced to temporarily bottle up more than twenty years of independent thought. He could have secured a decent academic position, rather than returning to New Port Richey. Whether Wilfred would have fit into the quickly changing academic scene, with its new requirements for statistical data analysis and decreasing emphasis on descriptive biology, will never be known.

I will not detail Neill’s life after leaving Gainesville, other than to briefly describe his continued productivity. During the years between 1965 and 1978, he wrote five books, including the classic *The Last of the Ruling Reptiles: Alligators, Crocodiles, and Their Kin* (1971). One book he wanted to write but never got to was "David in China," about the discoverer of the Chinese giant salamander, *Andrias davidianus*. Although his writing of scientific papers declined after 1966, he started writing for the Pasco-Hernando Edition of the St. Petersburg Times, creating a weekly column about early life in Florida called "Pioneer Past." He taught night classes at Pasco-Hernando Junior College in New Port Richey. And for a change of pace, he wrote several historical novels about the lives of western Indians, including *Wildcat in the West*, *Birdwoman's Real Story*, and *Quanna Parker's Magic Button*.

Wilfred T. Neill’s contributions to Southeastern herpetology have been recognized by the scientific community, most recently in the introductions of Ray and Pat Ashton’s three books on Florida’s amphibians and reptiles. Kraig Adler plans to include Wilfred in his second volume on Contributions to the History of Herpetology, to be published eventually by the Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles. But, to my knowledge, this present article, only a thumbnail sketch, represents the most extensive description of the breadth of Neill’s accomplishments. In the public’s memory, he was largely overshadowed by Ross Allen. His scientific contributions have not been fully recognized, both because of his personality and because Ross Allen’s Reptile Institute was a tourist attraction as well as a research facility. Neill’s longer papers, especially “Historical
Biogeography of Present-day Florida" (1957) and "The Occurrence of Amphibians and Reptiles in Saltwater Areas, and a Bibliography" (1958), are still cited extensively and represent synthetic works ahead of their time.

Since I discovered last year that, contrary to a rumor circulated among herpetologists for many years, Wilfred was not dead, he has had visits by myself, Fred Antonio, Ray Ashton, and Paul Moler and would like to talk with others interested in Florida herpetology. Call first to let him know you are coming.

Bibliography


March 8, 1991
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our appreciation to Kraig Adler, Ronn Altig, Ray Ashton, I. Lehr Brisbin, Jr., Charles C. Carpenter, C. Kenneth Dodd, Jr., William H. Gleason, Victor H. Hutchinson, Roy McDiarmid, Paul E. Moler, Douglas A. Rossman and Francis Rose for discussing this project, looking up references and other courtesies. "Bill" Gleason worked with E. Ross Allen and Neill and supplied Liner with much material on them. Ms. Joyce Allyn of Great Outdoors Publishing Co. of St. Petersburg, Fla. contributed in clarifying some dates and titles published by them. Drs. James B. Richardson III and David R. Watters provided access to library materials in the Division of Anthropology, Carnegie Museum of Natural History. Dr. William T. Hagen of the History Department, University of Oklahoma was consulted regarding the historical novels. Ms. Melissa Tuttle provided access to the facilities of the Western History Collection of the University of Oklahoma. Ms. Melissa Kramer and Ms. Margaret Shaffer of the Terrebonne Parish Public Library system, Houma, La. was helpful in checking some library sources. The St. Petersburg Times, St. Petersburg, Fla. provided some helpful information. The Gainesville Herpetological Society granted permission to reproduce Auth's paper.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WILFRED T. NEILL


----- 1941. Notes on pine snakes from Georgia and South Carolina. Copeia 1941: 56.


1951. The eyes of the worm lizard, and notes on the habits of the species. Copeia 1951: 177-178.


1952. The manufacture of fluted points. Florida Anthropol. 5: 9-16.


1953. Dugouts of the Mikasuki Seminole. Florida Anthropol. 6: 77-84.


1954. A new species of frog, genus *Nyctimystes*, from

----. 1954. Records and taxonomic allocations of amphibians and reptiles in the southeastern United States. Publ. Research Div., Ross Allen’s Reptile Inst., Silver Springs, Florida 1: 75-96. (Note: Cover on this article says Ranges and..., whereas the title over the article says Records and...).

----. 1955. Deadly cottonmouth or harmless water snake? Florida Wildl. 9 (2): 22-23, 44.
----. 1955. The site of Osceola’s village in Marion County, Florida. Florida Historical Quart. 33: 240-246.


1957. The vanished sea wolves. Florida Wildl. 10 (9): 16-17, 38.


---. 1965. Florida’s Seminole Indians. Foreward by E. Ross Allen. 2nd ed. Great Outdoors Publ. Co., St. Petersburg, Florida iv + 128 pp. (This edition is the same as the 1956 edition except that it was reset and divided into chapters. In a later reprint it was changed to a perfect-bound book with a new cover painting by Guy Labree).


N.Y. 413 pp.


Colubrid snakes (Tantilla, Thamnophis, Tropidodipsas) from British Honduras and nearby areas. Herpetologica 17: 90-98.


Muskrat remains from a prehistoric Indian site in Jackson County, Florida. J. Mammal. 36: 138.

Spanish trade pipes from Marion County, Florida. Florida Anthropol. 29: 126-128.


Nest and eggs of the southern dusky salamander, Desmognathus fuscus auriculatus. Copeia 1949: 234.


Increasing abundance of the alligator in the eastern portion of its range. Herpetologica 5: 109-112.


Keep them alive! How to keep snakes, lizards, turtles, alligators, and crocodiles in captivity.


1951. The gopher. Florida Wildl. 5 (7): 10, 32.


1952. The Florida crocodile. Florida Wildl. 6
(2): 6, 33.
---- and ----. 1952. The indigo snake. Florida Wildl. 6 (3): 44-47.
---- and ----. 1952. The American alligator. Florida Wildl. 6 (5): 8-9, 44.
---- and ----. 1952. The diamondback terrapin. Florida Wildl. 6 (6): 8, 42.
---- and ----. 1952. The garter snake. Florida Wildl. 6 (7): 8-9.
---- and ----. 1953. The yellow rat snake. Florida Wildl. 6 (8): 6-7.
---- and ----. 1953. The red rat snake. Florida Wildl. 6 (9): 8-9.
---- and ----. 1953. The race-runner lizard. Florida Wildl. 6 (12): 46-47.
---- and ----. 1953. The Florida brown snake. Florida Wildl. 7 (2): 5.
---- and ----. 1953. The Florida soft-shelled turtle. Florida Wildl. 7 (3): 4-5.
---- and ----. 1953. The green turtle. Florida Wildl. 7 (4): 19, 32.
---- and ----. 1954. Giant shrimp of the fresh water. Florida Wildl. 7 (8): 23, 27.
---- and ----. 1954. The Florida deer. Florida Wildl. 7 (9): 21, 37.
---- and ----. 1954. Bullfrogs of Florida. Florida Wildl. 7
(10): 20-21, 40.

---- and ----. 1954. The Florida otter. Florida Wildl. 7 (11): 19, 44.
---- and ----. 1954. The Florida worm lizard. Florida Wildl. 7 (12): 21, 34.

---- and ----. 1955. Spanish moss. Florida Wildl. 8 (8): 19, 47.
---- and ----. 1955. The striped skunk. Florida Wildl. 9(4): 6, 42.
---- and ----. 1955. The eastern gray squirrel. Florida Wildl. 9(5): 7, 49.


