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Dr. Austin L. Rand: World-renowned ornithologist and long-time Lake Placid resident

When Richard Archbold established Archbold Biological Station on Red Hill in 1941 he brought a wealth of resources with him to Highlands County, Florida. One of these resources was the friendships he had made as he explored Madagascar and New Guinea in the 1930s. His close friendship with Dr. Austin L. Rand in particular was important to his life and would be impactful for the town of Lake Placid as well.

Dr. Rand was a “close personal friend of Archbold’s from the time they first met in 1929, until Archbold’s death. Rand probably had a greater influence on Archbold’s career than any other single individual.” according to Richard Archbold biographer Roger Morse. The two men went on four scientific expeditions together, one to Madagascar almost immediately after they were introduced, and three expeditions to New Guinea as well. “Rand was co-leader and often point man as the expeditions proceeded. He adapted well to camping and the rough living that takes place on an expedition and developed a mutual respect for Archbold.”

With the onset of WWII Pacific exploration was no longer possible and Rand wrote that Archbold and he, “were left with an organization for exploration and no place to explore,” and so it was time “to discover facts, not things.” Archbold turned his attention to Lake Placid where the offer of the Roebling Red Hill Estate created an opportunity and in 1941 Archbold Biological Station was established. Rand started here with Archbold, but shortly after returned to his native Canada which was engaged in fighting the Axis powers. He would not return to Lake Placid permanently for nearly 30 years, but his friendship with Richard Archbold remained strong.

Dr. Rand served as curator of birds for the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago beginning in 1947. “During his tenure as curator from 1947 to 1955, and then as Chief Curator of Zoology from 1955 to 1970, the bird collections increased by 132,000 specimens, and 103 papers were published based on his research at the Field Museum,” according to his obituary in the journal, *The Auk*. He wrote or co-authored several books about birds as well during this period.

In 1970, upon retirement, Rand and his wife Rheua moved to Lake Placid, living in a quiet lakeside home on Lake Huntley until his death in 1982 at the age of 76. He was appointed Vice-President of the Board of Archbold Expeditions in 1974. He was also appointed as a Research Associate at Archbold in 1970 and worked on several projects over the next decade, including the “Seasonal aspects of South Florida biota”, as well as work on the “Life History and Ecology of the Purple Gallinule”, a year round resident bird in Florida. As described in the wonderful obituary of Rand written by Miriam Beck and published in the *Lake Placid Journal* in 1982, Rand and his wife Rheua jointly wrote a weekly column “Nature Notes” for the *Lake Placid Journal*, which informed local residents about the natural world around them in an easy to understand format. Rand also had an obituary published in *the New York Times* which describes Archbold and his New Guinea expeditions and how, “the thousands of birds, mammals, fishes, reptiles and plants he sent back to New York were many never seen before.”

On November 7, 1996 the newly christened “Austin L. Rand” building was dedicated in a formal ceremony at Archbold. This is a lasting legacy to a man who was instrumental in the formative years of Richard Archbold’s life and helpful in the creation of Archbold Biological Station. The friendship these two men shared was of great benefit to scientific exploration in general, as well as contributing immensely to a better understanding of the natural world in the heartland of Florida.

Photo 1: Austin L. Rand (on right) with Richard Archbold (on left), departing New York City, for the first New Guinea Expedition, 1933. Photo by: Associated Press



Photo 2: Austin L. Rand (left), Richard Archbold (center), and W.B. Richardson (right) meet in Florida prior to the 3rd Archbold Expedition to New Guinea, 1938. Photo by Unknown, courtesy of Archbold Biological Station

