

**Finding Aid to the Ivan  
Rexford Tomkins Photographs  
MS 2194**

**Finding aid prepared by Emily Stamper, 2010. Revised L. Sheldon, 2015.**

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This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	Georgia Historical Society
<b>Creator</b>	Tomkins, Ivan Rexford, 1893-1966.
<b>Title</b>	Ivan Rexford Tomkins photographs
<b>Date</b>	circa 1950s
<b>Extent</b>	1.0 cubic feet (2 boxes)
<b>Language</b>	English

## Biographical Information

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Ivan Rexford Tomkins (1893-1966) was born in Ellington, Pennsylvania. He served in World War I, first in the Infantry (1917), and later with the 56th Engineers (1918). He moved to Georgia in 1922 to work with the Public Health Service and was assigned to the U.S. Quarantine Station on Cockspar Island, Savannah River. Soon after, around the year 1925, he accepted the position as Dredging Inspector with the Corps of Engineers. He rose to the position as Chief of the projects Branch of the Savannah District until his retirement in 1956. His work at the Quarantine Station and on the dredges gave him ample opportunities to develop his interest in the life of the salt marshes, beach, and waters surrounding him. His knowledge and advice was sought by many men of science. He became an excellent photographer. He published articles in *Auk*, *Wilson Bulletin*, *Oriole*, *The Journal of Mammalogy*, as well as studies for the Georgia Ornithological Society. He discovered a unique spiny mussel, *Elliptio Spinosa*, in the Altamaha River swamp.

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## Scope and Content Note

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This collection contains photographs of nature and wildlife, including but not limited to: marsh life, marine life, foliage, American oyster catchers, blue and green herons, eastern wetlands, king rails, henhouse sparrows, sanderlings, purple sandpipers, gulls, terns, various insects, wharf-male crabs, sand crabs, and fiddler crabs. Images depict wildlife in their habitat and as museum specimens (taxidermy and skeletal). Photographs were largely taken by Ivan Rexford Tomkins circa 1950s.

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## Arrangement Note

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This collection is arranged into 2 boxes:

- 1 Box 1: Ivan Tomkins' nature photos, primarily photographs of typical bird species of the Savannah River Delta. Folder 1 includes species: Willet, Stilt Sandpiper, Royal Tern nesting colony, Purple Sandpiper, and American Oystercatcher. Folder 2 includes species: Least Tern (juvenile), mixed flocks of terns, gulls, and shorebirds, Tricolored Heron (breeding plumage), American Oystercatcher (nest and young), Tricolored and Little Blue Herons in breeding colony (rookery), Stilt Sandpiper, Willet (on nest), many other Willet photos (nesting, in the hand, etc.), large gull with a deformed bill, Least Tern (chicks). Also includes a historic map of Chatham County and several images of

Henslow's Sparrows singing that were not taken in Georgia (the species winters in the state, but does not breed here – these birds were on top of green plant stalks singing on territory; it was clearly spring/summer and must have been during travels to PA or farther north). Also contains a number of mammal skull photos, both terrestrial and some cetaceans. Folder 3 also includes birds from freshwater marshes/dredge spoil sites where Mr. Tomkins worked. Species included: Large flocks of waterfowl in freshwater marshes, mixed flocks of terns, gulls, and shorebirds, and various photos documenting historic breeding numbers of American Oystercatcher. Also Wilson's Plover brooding young on the nest. There are a number of photos of fossils including shark teeth, mammoth teeth, etc. that were recovered from dredge spoil from the Savannah River. Also numerous photos of mollusks and crustaceans, including tree snails, bivalves, shrimp, etc. Also contains a number of mammal skull photos, both terrestrial and some cetaceans. There are some cetacean photos here as well. Circa 1950s

- 2 Box 2: Folder 1 includes: Ivan Tomkins' nature photos, primarily photographs of typical bird species of the Savannah River Delta and nearby bottomland/marsh habitats. Species include: Swainson's Warbler habitat, marsh landscapes, Willet (on nest and with eggs), Black Skimmers (including chicks), Wilson's Snipe (foraging), Wood Stork (soaring), Northern Flicker (at nest cavity, taken using a blind), Purple Sandpiper, Seaside Sparrow specimens collected in Georgia and already prepared as skins, Least Tern (on eggs and a chick), flocks of Black Skimmers and Royal Terns, flocks of American Oystercatchers, American Kestrel (at nest cavity with a snake), Gray Kingbird, Eastern Wood-Pewee (but mislabeled as a Least Flycatcher), Bobolink (female), Western and Semipalmated Sandpipers, Least Sandpiper, and Herring Gulls. Folder 2 is mostly landscapes, places, and some people. Some specifics include: a collage of aerial photos of Tybee Island in the mid-20th century, some mammals and birds, various ornithological and dredge-related colleagues of Mr. Tomkins. Folder 3 contains Ivan Tomkins' nature photos; many photographs of typical bird species of the Savannah River Delta and nearby bottomland/marsh habitats. Species include: Wilson's Plover (with chicks and on beach), flocks of Ruddy Turnstones, mixed shorebird flocks, Semipalmated Plover, Dunlin (at least one is mislabeled as a Purple Sandpiper), photos of Common Nighthawks nesting on oyster rakes, Blue Jay, Northern Mockingbird (young and adult), Common Ground Dove nesting in dunes, Common Nighthawk perched on a sign, Chuck-will's-widows on the nest, Black Skimmer flocks and eggs, Gull-billed Tern in flight, Green Heron. Also a few aesthetic documentary shots of habitat (beach, oysterbeds, jetties, etc.) and a few butterflies, spiders, and dragonflies. Folder 3 contains duplicate images from other folders. Circa 1950s.

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Information

Georgia Historical Society

### Access Restrictions

The collection is open for research.

### **Processing Information**

This collection is processed at the Basic Level (or collection level). There is no detailed inventory for this collection as it is not fully processed. To request that this collection be added to our priority list of collections to be fully processed as staffing and funding allow, please contact the Library and Archives staff.

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## **Controlled Access Headings**

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### **Genre(s)**

- Photographs.

### **Geographic Name(s)**

- Georgia--Coast.

### **Personal Name(s)**

- Tomkins, Ivan Rexford, 1893-1966.

### **Subject(s)**

- Birds--Georgia--Chatham County--Identification.
- Coasts--Georgia.
- Mammals--Georgia.
- Mussels--Georgia.
- Shells--Georgia.
- Skeleton.
- Wildlife watching--Georgia.