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IN MEMORIAM: CAMILLE FERRY, 1921–2007

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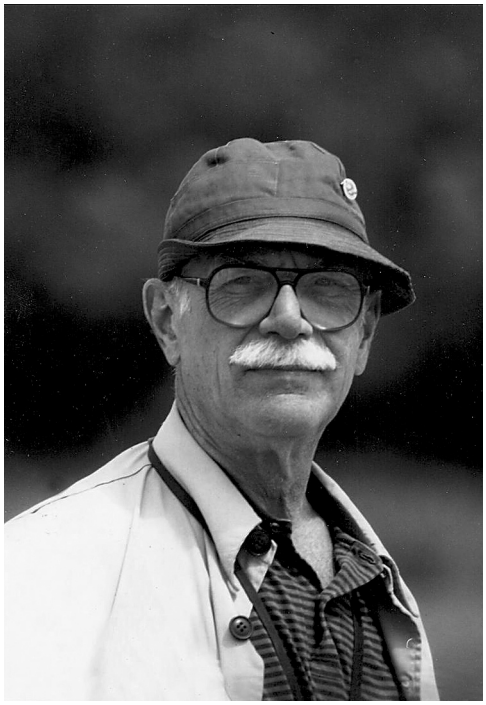

Camille Ferry, 1921–2007
(Photograph by Jean Cuisenier, 1985.)

Camille Ferry, Honorary Fellow of the AOU since 1982, passed away on 24 September 2007. Born in Dijon, France, on 15 June 1921, he was educated locally, completing his studies in medicine in Dijon. Medicine is a tradition in his family; his mother and one of his sons are physicians.

In 1943, Camille was intern and Chief of Clinic in a hospital in Paris, until he voluntarily joined the Leclerc Division of the French army in 1944. His meritorious military service as Head Doctor earned him the prestigious award "Légion d'honneur." After World War II, he served as surgeon and practiced in a private clinic before becoming, in 1967, Professor of Surgery at the University of Medicine and Head of Surgical Service in the main hospital of Dijon. In 1988, he retired as a surgeon but remained extremely active in ornithology.

This exceptionally active man actually led two parallel lives. He was primarily a renowned surgeon as well as a very active ornithologist. He trained in natural history with famous naturalists such as Paul Paris and Henri Jouard. In the early 1950s, Camille was a pioneer in devising new techniques of bird censusing. In 1966, during the XIV International Ornithological Congress in Oxford, he organized a small meeting with a handful of European ornithologists interested in bird censuses. This was the origin of the International Bird Census Committee (IBCC), which subsequently merged with the European Atlas Committee in the European Bird Census Council (EBCC) that is still very active in atlas and monitoring projects. This so-called "French school" of quantitative ornithology, with these new techniques of bird census (e.g., *Studies in Avian Biology* 6:414–420, 1981), resulted in a series of groundbreaking studies on the structure and dynamics of bird communities in forested habitats. Camille contributed significantly to the study of bird communities in ecological successions (e.g., *Proceedings 16th International Ornithological Congress*: 643–653, 1976), which made him an expert on the consequences of forest-management techniques on bird species assemblages. His studies and those of his associates have been used to compare the fates of bird communities in the managed forests of western Europe with those of the remaining tracts of forest that are still more-or-less pristine in eastern Europe (e.g., the Bialowieza forest in Poland).

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Camille had a passion for birds and had a particular interest in two fields, systematics and evolution. He helped his friend Charles Sibley in collecting egg-white specimens from France before Charles developed the DNA-hybridization technique. Camille was not so much interested in systematics *per se* but valued it as a means for understanding the origin, development, and relationships of the main groups of birds together with their ecology and behavior through space and time. His knowledge and interest in evolution were immense, and he always gave illuminating and original insights in interpreting avian evolution. He illustrated evolutionary issues in a beautiful study on the zone of sympatry between two closely related species of warblers, the Melodious Warbler and the Icterine Warbler. He demonstrated how convergence in behavior, song, and life-history traits where the two species are in contact resulted in interspecific territoriality between the two species, a problem that raises many evolutionary questions (see the abstracts of *Proceedings XIV International Ornithological Congress*: 57–58, 1967).

Camille was also interested in many other fields of ornithology, and biology in general. His engaging intelligence provided him with an astonishingly wide and eclectic scientific curiosity. As a physician, he was particularly interested in physiology and followed with great interest the recent developments, especially in endocrinology and immunology. He also had a deep knowledge of many other topics, for example, the song repertoires of birds, abundance and distribution of species, the physiological determinism of clutch size, coevolutionary issues related to birds and the dissemination of plant species—to cite a few.

Camille published about 60 papers in French and international journals, as well as in the International Ornithological Congress proceedings and chapters in several books. Of course, he was an amateur in ornithology, but his outstanding personality and the exceptional extent of his general and scientific culture, combined with a great talent for recognizing the new and most promising concepts and fields of research, made him a mentor for many young scientists. I met him when I was 15, and his inspiring influence was decisive in my decision to become a professional ornithologist. Perhaps his major contribution to ornithology was his decisive role as a leader in organizing and devising research projects based on new ideas and concepts from the literature and through discussions with ornithologists he met during excursions and international congresses. He was exceptionally broad-minded and open to young people. In 1957, he organized, in Dijon, the Centre d'Etudes Ornithologiques de Bourgogne (CEOB). This society met weekly and organized talks on myriad ornithological topics as well as making field excursions. Camille served as President of the French Ornithological Society and did much to strengthen ornithology in France through his modern scientific approach. He was a fascinating speaker and easily shared his passion with many young ornithologists and graduate students who were stimulated by the ornithological meetings that were organized yearly under his initiative. Camille also attended many international meetings, in particular several annual meetings of the AOU and nine International Ornithological Congresses between 1962 and the last one, which was held in Hamburg in 2006. He was a member of the International Ornithological Committee.

In addition to his many professional and ornithological commitments, Camille was mayor of the small village near Dijon where he lived for several decades. He enjoyed a very active social life that allowed him to share life's pleasures with his many friends. He married Françoise in 1950, and they had three children, François, Nicolas, and Anne. His accomplishments and contributions provide a rich legacy for ornithology, which has not always been fully recognized, mostly because of his great modesty. Those who had the privilege to know him will always remember his incredibly wide interest in so many aspects of science, history, and philosophy. They will also remember his great sense of humor, generosity, supportive attitude toward young scientists, and, above all, his demanding standards of scientific excellence and rigor.

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