

## **IN MEMORIAM: JOHN CALEEKAL GEORGE, 1921–2005**

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To those who study herons, or who merely appreciate them, James Hancock was our guide, our guru, our inspiration. Sometime well into mid-life (such transitions happen slowly), having accomplished all he cared to professionally, he began to focus his camera and his inimitable energies on herons, and from that point forward James's story line and that of an entire family of birds became inexorably intertwined.

His wonderful wife, Sylvia, his children and grandchildren, his travels, his friends, his home, his Hampshire countryside, and especially his trout streams were the other stuff of this very full life. Few amateur ornithologists have had such an effect on a specific area of ornithology as he. His is a breed that is fast disappearing, and his like certainly will not be seen again.

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## IN MEMORIAM: JOHN CALEEKAL GEORGE, 1921–2005

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John Caleekal George, AOU Life Member since 1968 and Elective Member since 1977, died after a brief illness on 1 April 2005 at the age of 83 in Guelph, Ontario. A disciplined scholar of international stature, his contributions to ornithology spanned six decades and two continents. To quote P. Jawaharlal Nehru on the death of Mohandas K. Gandhi, "What, then, can we say about him except to feel humble on this occasion?"

Born on 16 June 1921, in the State of Kerala, India, John George was the son of leading Indian zoologist Dr. C. J. George and his wife, Annama. Although John was initially drawn by his mother's interests to the arts and humanities, his father instilled in him a passion for biology. John attended university to study medicine, but soon switched to the biological sciences. He received a B.Sc. in Zoology and Botany (1942) and a Ph.D. in Zoology (1948) from Wilson College at the University of Bombay (Mumbai). At university, John was also a fine athlete, excelling in soccer, field hockey, cricket, badminton, and tennis. This would ultimately lead him to a lifelong interest in muscle biology. However, he first served in Calcutta as a zoologist in the Department of Anthropology of the government of a newly independent India.

Founding Head of the Department of Zoology at the newly founded University of Baroda in India from 1950 to 1967, John became a Professor in 1956. In 1953–1954, he was a Fulbright Fellow at the University of Pennsylvania and the Marine Biological Laboratory at Woods Hole in Massachusetts. He held a Fulbright at Washington State University in 1961–1962. In 1967, he became Professor of Zoology at the University of Guelph in Ontario, and he was named Professor Emeritus at Guelph in 1986. Cofounder in 1963 of the Indian Journal of Ornithology, *Pavo*, and co-author in 1966 with the late Andrew J. Berger of the textbook *Avian Myology*, John also contributed 12 book chapters and approximately 400 publications in a myriad of scientific journals and conference proceedings. His first publication was in 1943, his latest in 2004. The great majority of his works were studies of avian muscle, endocrinology, thermoregulation, toxicology, and migration.

John was cited for excellence in research by Sigma Xi, the Scientific Research Society. He was a Fellow of the New York Academy of Sciences. He participated in numerous national and international symposia and conferences and served on the Senate of the University of Guelph. He served as Chair of the Animal Biology Grant

Selection Committee of the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada.

John was devastated in 1999 by the death of Achamma (Molly) Mathew, his spouse of 49 years. He was further saddened by the deaths of friends and colleagues (including Roy C. Anderson, 2001, and Peter W. Hochachka, 2002). Yet somehow John always managed to have time and a smile for others, to find delight in their achievements, and to write daily in his university office.

John was fond of Isaac Newton's words, "If I have seen further than others, it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants," when he spoke of his own career. Those he met who inspired him included 20th-century goliaths such as J. B. S. Haldane, Viktor Hamburger, Lewis V.

Heilbrunn, A. V. Hill, Hans Krebs, and Albert Szent-Gyorgyi. Although he never seemed to realize it, John was himself a giant upon whose broad shoulders so many others stood. Thirty-seven students completed their Ph.D. and 12 their M.Sc. degrees under his supervision.

John is survived by sons Vinod and Manoj; a daughter, Anuppa; and grandchildren Satish, Tania, and Dinesh.

The authors completed Ph.D. degrees under the supervision of John George. Although that was nearly 20 years ago, both recall that time as golden. We thank Dr. James S. Ballantyne, Department of Integrative Biology, University of Guelph, and Dr. George's daughter, Anuppa Caleekal-Ruton, for assistance in preparing this article.