

In Memoriam: Sergej Postupalsky, 1934–2016

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IN MEMORIAM
SERGEJ POSTUPALSKY
1934–2016

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Sergej Postupalsky died on 13 April 2016 in Sauk Prairie, WI, following a long battle with cancer and other complications. Sergej will be fondly remembered by his many friends and colleagues, not only across Michigan and Wisconsin, but throughout the world. Many of these lifetime friendships were formed at the Madison Peregrine Conference in 1965, at Raptor Research Foundation meetings, by those “gabooning” for him over the decades, and through his unending efforts to provide outreach, understanding, and advocacy for raptors and their habitats. Enjoying life to the fullest, Sergej was an avid stamp collector, a fan of opera, enjoyed conversing in seven different languages, and truly appreciated a homemade blueberry pie.

Born 4 October 1934 in Litomyšl, Czechoslovakia, Sergej immigrated to the United States when he was 17. His Czech accent was as rich as his sense of humor. Sergej was working as a draftsman at Chrysler Corporation and pursuing an engineering degree during nights and weekends when he went on a field trip to Houghton Lake with the Detroit Audubon Society and discovered two birds that would enlighten his life-long passion for raptor conservation—the Bald Eagle and the Osprey. He went on to obtain a B.S. degree from Wayne State University in 1965, a M.S. degree from the University of Michigan in 1967, and nearly completed a Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

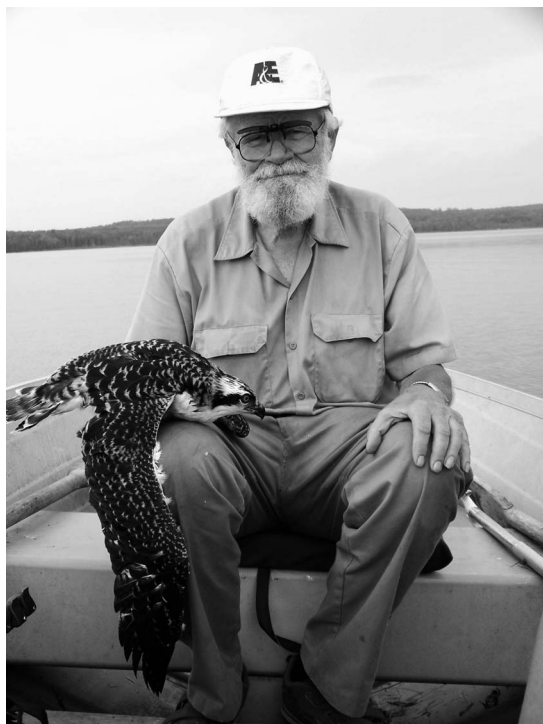
Starting in 1962, Sergej began a meticulous and unwavering effort to annually monitor the reproduction on Ospreys and Bald Eagles in Michigan. Without missing a single breeding season, he worked tirelessly to count, band, and watch over nesting Osprey through Michigan and Wisconsin, including his beloved Houghton Lake and Fletcher’s Pond populations, for 53 consecutive years! He made his living working for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and translating Russian technical materials. Sergej had an amazing photographic memory, and while working in some remote location would instantly recall and share intricate details about the nests and individual birds he studied for so long. Such dedication and sacrifice toward one species is rare and a cause for much celebration and admiration.

An avid bird bander, over his long career Sergej banded over 21,500 birds of more than 75 species. This included over 4,000 Bald Eagles, 3,500 Ospreys, 3,400 Red-tailed Hawks, and 2,400 American Kestrels. Sergej was not only a user of bird bands, but had a keen interest in their use and advancement. At the “Quandahl Conference” in 1972 (named for a ghost town in northeastern Iowa), four eagle banders (i.e., Sergej, Charles Sindelar, Jon Gerrard, and Jim Grier) developed and tested the rivet band currently used on eagles today.

His academic contributions are still very relevant today, in particular his emphasis and concern for consistent and standardized use of terminology and methodology associated with assessing raptor reproduction and productivity. Working with many colleagues, he also published many studies involving the use of artificial nesting platforms and the role that environmental contaminants have in long-term population ecology of Ospreys and Bald Eagles. Sergej will be deeply missed by his family, his many friends, and his “gaboons,” many of whom are contributors and readers of the *Journal of Raptor Research* and members of the Raptor Research Foundation.

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For 53 consecutive breeding seasons, Sergej meticulously monitored and recorded the productivity of Ospreys at Fletcher's Pond, Alpena County, MI (Photo by Barb Jensen, 2011).