

In Memoriam: Bradley Curtis Livezey, Jr., 1954–2011

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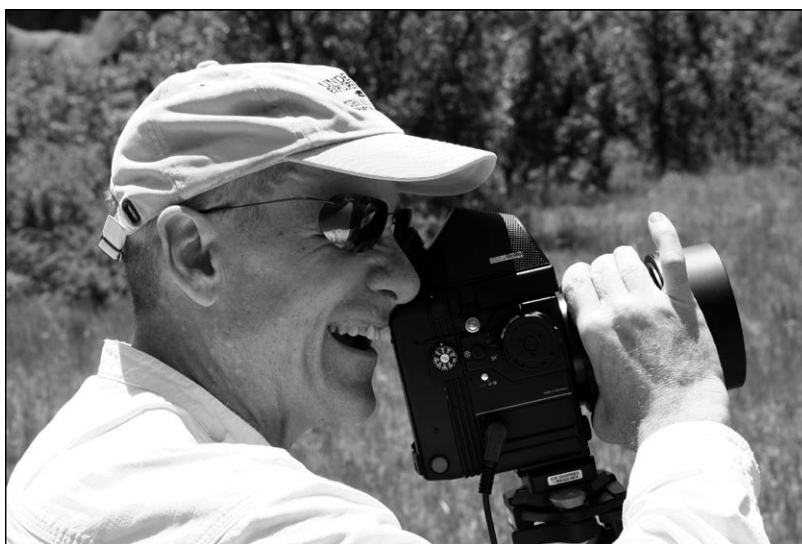


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IN MEMORIAM: BRADLEY CURTIS LIVEZEY, JR., 1954–2011

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Bradley Curtis Livezey, Jr., 1954–2011

Brad Livezey was born in Salem, Massachusetts, on 15 June 1954 and grew up with his parents, brother Kent, and sister Alyson. His interest in birds, shared by Kent, developed while camping with their father on his summer fly-fishing expeditions. Other youthful interests included running, weight lifting, nature photography, drawing, and travel. He learned to speak Russian as a teenager at New Trier Township High School in Winnetka, Illinois (1968–1972).

Looking for a change of scene, Brad attended Oregon State University in Corvallis, where he was an honor-roll student for four years and received a B.S. in Wildlife Science in 1976. As an undergraduate, he published papers on ageing and identification of rodents from osteological features. His graduate studies at the University of Wisconsin in Madison produced an M.S. in Wildlife Ecology (1979) for a study of ecology of nesting ducks at Horicon National Wildlife Refuge. Four published papers ensued. During

a summer break, Brad, Kent, and a friend made an intense birding trip—thoroughly organized by Brad—through Oregon, California, the Southwest, and Mississippi River states.

While pursuing graduate work in Biology at the University of Kansas (1979–1985), Brad received an M.S. in Mathematics (1984) and became proficient in morphometrics. A knowledge of cladistic procedures and phylogenetic theory, fostered by Ed Wiley, became a cornerstone of his research. Brad was both fun-loving away from the office (disco dancing on Saturday nights) and meticulous in his office (annoyed by pranks involving the rearrangement of books on his desk). He, along with a few other graduate students at the Museum of Natural History, accompanied Phil Humphrey on field trips to the coasts and Andean lakes of southern Argentina and Chile, and to the postwar Falkland Islands (avoiding land mines) to collect steamer-ducks for skins, skeletons, spirit specimens, and frozen tissues. Brad wrote his thesis on systematics and

flightlessness of steamer-ducks and received a Ph.D. in Biology (1985), with honors for dissertation defense.

Brad's postdoctoral years at the University of Kansas (1986–1992) included a semester as instructor in Calculus I and initiation of a phylogenetic analysis of genera of waterfowl. With support from the National Science Foundation (NSF), he embarked on studies of flightlessness in diving birds, but he could not resist the dodo, kakapo, and adzebill along the way. During visits to museums throughout the United States and in Canada, England, Scotland, France, Australia, and New Zealand, he undertook a relentless pursuit of anatomical data and also made many friends. He received the H.R. Payton Award from the Cooper Ornithological Society for his publication on flightlessness in the Auckland Islands Teal. His early, multifaceted approach to research remained a model for subsequent studies, and an insistence on organization, thoroughness, and scholarship contributed to success in obtaining grant support throughout his career.

In 1988, Brad and Julie F. Cameron, a medical doctor, were married in Kansas. They were divorced in 2002.

In 1993, Brad was appointed curator and head of the Section of Birds at Carnegie Museum of Natural History. He later served as Dean of Science for three years. After publishing numerous papers on modern and fossil waterfowl, and branching out to cover other birds (auks, penguins, grebes, cormorants, gruiforms), Brad expressed a weariness of being associated only with ducks. But he also became recognized as a world authority on flightlessness, and some of his published phylogenies, valuable in their own right, were intended as background for study of flightless species. A paper on the dodo and solitaire warranted a special review in *Nature*, but the benchmark for analysis of flightlessness was his massive work on rails (*Ornithological Monographs No. 53*).

Brad's many contributions to phylogenetics of avian orders and families are internationally acclaimed. Over a period of years, he and I produced an anatomically based, higher-order phylogeny of all birds, including Mesozoic outgroups. Backed by a prodigious grasp of the literature, he was outspoken against any practices or claims related to phylogenetics that he considered

unjustified—especially those concerning the significance of fossils or the total supremacy of molecular data. While acknowledging the potential of molecular data for phylogenetic analysis, he was not a practitioner.

Always interested in anatomical discoveries, Brad liked to sort through fossil bones in museums. Upon seeing the rarely recovered carpometacarpus of a flightless adzebill, he was the first to describe it and note its extreme reduction among carinate birds. His approach to studying skeletons was sometimes unconventional; at one point we had to squeeze into a large glass exhibit case that housed a mounted elephant bird, causing groups of French schoolchildren to giggle while taking notes.

For much of his life Brad needed medications for chronic pain stemming from a trampoline accident; rather than complain, he joked about it. He was very fond of his dog and cat, and he hated any act of cruelty to animals. Not attracted to purely social events, he told me that he could never host a house party, for lack of familiarity with exotic cheeses and a fear that no one would show up. But he relished being with a group of favorite colleagues at meetings or talking at length on the phone about professional gossip, research, or almost anything else. He enjoyed the challenge and collegiality of NSF research panels, and he had no lack of confidence in matters of science. He was helpful and encouraging to students, and among his other qualities were a quick wit, sharp sense of humor, trustworthiness, and strong loyalty to family and friends.

On the morning of 10 February 2011, Brad was driving on an icy road near his home when his car skidded sideways and was broadsided by a pickup truck. He died instantly.

Tax-deductible contributions to the Bradley C. Livezey Endowment for Ornithological Research may be made to: Director of Development, Carnegie Museum of Natural History, 4400 Forbes Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213.

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