Elliott Coues Award, 2009

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Charles R. Brown and Mary Bomberger Brown

Left: Charles R. Brown in Keith County, Nebraska, July 2005 (photograph by Kathleen Brazeal). *Middle:* Cliff Swallows at a natural cliff colony site in Keith County, 27 May 1991 (photograph by C. R. Brown). *Right:* Mary Bomberger Brown at an Interior Least Tern and Piping Plover colony near Venice, Nebraska, June 2008 (photograph by Joel Sartore).

The 2009 Elliott Coues Award is presented to Charles R. Brown and Mary Bomberger Brown in recognition of their outstanding and innovative contributions to ornithological research. Charles R. Brown is presently a professor at the University of Tulsa, Oklahoma, while Mary Bomberger Brown is program coordinator for the Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's School of Natural Resources. After graduating from Austin College, Charles went to Princeton University, where he began a study of the costs and benefits of coloniality in Cliff Swallows. Charles met Mary in 1981, when they worked

together on Cliff Swallows, and they became a stellar team, each bringing out the scientific best in the other. Charles accepted the position of assistant professor at Yale University in 1985, and he and Mary moved to the University of Tulsa in 1993. At both institutions, they continued their research on Cliff Swallows, obtaining several large research grants and publishing many important articles in scientific journals, including *Animal Behaviour*, *The Auk*, *Behavioral Ecology*, *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology*, *The Condor*, *Ecology*, *Nature*, *Science*, *Evolution*, and *Trends in Ecology & Evolution*. Their scientific productivity has been voluminous: they have jointly published more than 120 articles, and citations of these articles by scientists throughout the world have been copious.

Charles and Mary's research has changed the way that ornithologists and behavioral ecologists think about the costs and benefits of coloniality. Their demonstration of "information centers" (Science 234:83–85, 1986) set a new course for behavioral ecology, as did their comparison of the costs of ectoparasitism versus colony size (Ecology 67:1206–1218, 1986). Their analysis of ectoparasitism versus dispersal is exhaustive (Ecology 73:1718–1723, 1992), and their quantification of a heritable component to choice of colony size is elegant (Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 97:14825–14830, 2000). Their investigation of evolutionary change in response to a rare climatic event (Evolution 52:1461–1475, 1998) produced an important advance in our thinking about evolution. More recently, they have examined a bird-associated virus within their study population of swallows (Molecular Ecology 17:2164–2173, 2008), and this continuing research is likely to provide important insights into the ecology of arthropod-borne diseases. Among their myriad accomplishments, their finding of rampant brood parasitism in Cliff Swallows is especially important (Science 224:518–519, 1984), as is their later discovery that individuals commonly transfer already-laid eggs between nests by moving them in their beaks (Nature 331:66–68, 1988).

Charles and Mary's long-term research on Cliff Swallows ranks as one of the most outstanding and most complete studies of any avian species. They now have a data set containing information for ~200,000 different banded individuals and >315,000 captures and recaptures. In tracking thousands of individuals over their careers, they have uniquely combined demography, coloniality, and lifetime reproductive success. *Coloniality in the Cliff Swallow* (University of Chicago Press, 1996) beautifully summarizes their research for professional biologists, and *Swallow Summer* (University of Nebraska Press, 1998) does the same for amateur ornithologists. Using behavioral observations, experimental manipulations, quantitative genetics, estimation of coefficients of natural selection, demography, epidemiology, and immunology, Charles and Mary have provided important insights into avian behavioral and population ecology. In recognition of their outstanding contributions to ornithology, the AOU is pleased to present each with a medal signifying receipt of the 2009 Elliott Coues Award.

Award criteria.—The Elliott Coues Award recognizes extraordinary contributions to ornithological research. The award is named in honor of Elliott Coues, a pioneering ornithologist of the western United States and a founding member of the AOU. There is no limitation with respect to geographic area, subdiscipline of ornithology, or time course over which the work was done. The award consists of a medal and an honorarium provided through the endowed Ralph W. Schreiber Fund of the AOU.