

## **Elliott Coues Award, 1999:**

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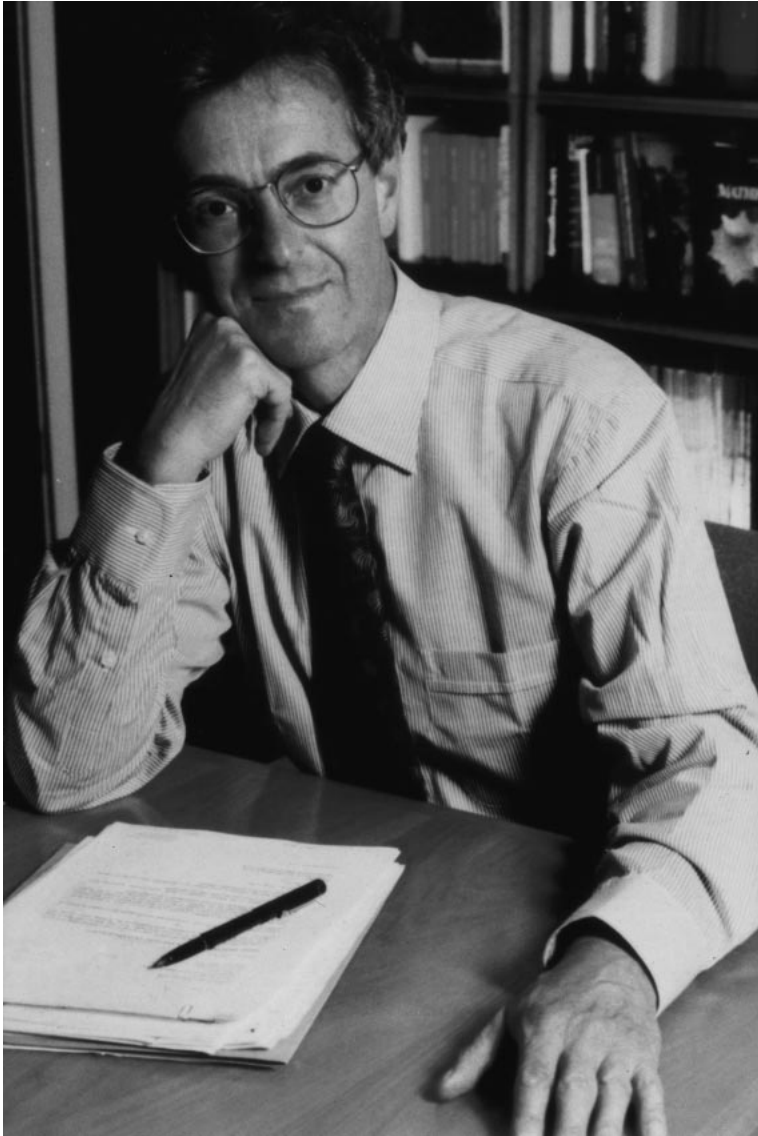
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### ELLIOTT COUES AWARD, 1999:

SIR JOHN R. KREBS



The American Ornithologists' Union proudly honors the extraordinary accomplishments of Sir John Richard Krebs, recipient of the 1999 Elliott Coues Award. Professor Krebs's career has been one of immense productivity and extraordinary influence. His publications include more than 130 refereed papers, 5 books, and 130 book chapters, reviews, or popular

pieces. They have addressed and resolved important questions in population regulation (*Ecology* 52:2–22, 1971), foraging theory and decision making (*Foraging Theory*, 1986), animal communication (e.g. *Animal Behaviour* 25:475–478, 1977), and animal memory (*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA* 86: 1388–1392, 1989). They have also introduced new

methods to the science of ornithology, including the use of optimality models to predict foraging behavior, and, more recently, techniques from neurobiology and experimental psychology to assess the mental capacities of birds and to relate these to particular regions of the brain.

Beyond technique, Professor Krebs is a master of elegant experimental design. The science he conducts stands out not only because of its technical sophistication but also because it is ingenious, offering novel intellectual solutions to a wide range of problems in avian behavior. Library search methods now make it possible to evaluate a scientist's "impact" by quantifying how frequently his or her work is cited in the papers of other scientists. For John Krebs, that number exceeds 5,000.

Another measure of a scientist's influence is the number, quality, and diversity of students he or she has trained. Professor Krebs's brilliant mind and personal magnetism have attracted numerous students to his laboratory. Fully 35 students have completed Ph.D. degrees at Oxford under his supervision, and another 38 have obtained postdoctoral training from him. Almost all of these have since joined college and university faculties or government agencies to continue as researchers and teachers, not only in Great Britain but also in Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Hungary, Mexico, Switzerland, and the United States.

Perhaps Sir John's greatest accomplishment is the founding of a new discipline, Behavioral Ecology. His textbooks, *Behavioural Ecology: An Evolutionary Approach* (now in its 4th edition, first published in 1978) and an *Introduction to Behavioural Ecology* (in its 3rd edition, first published in 1981), both edited or written in collaboration with Nick Davies, articulate a research agenda that is currently being followed by countless young scientists. Two forerunners, Niko Tinbergen and E. O. Wilson, had set the stage for a discipline that would unify ethology, psychology, and evolutionary ecology; Krebs and Davies achieved the unification. These texts, published in

seven languages, not only fostered new journals, including *Behavioral Ecology* and *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology*, they also led to the founding of the International Society for Behavioral Ecology, with Professor Krebs as its first president. It is the essence of behavioral ecology to ask how the relentless competition for food and mates has shaped the way animals respond to one another and to their physical environment. One of the fruits of the discipline has been the enhancement of appreciation for the roles of social conflict and cooperation in generating behavioral adaptations. Most recently (1994 to 1999), Sir John served as Chief Executive of Britain's Natural Environmental Research Council, a position that required that he set science policy and funding priorities for his nation. For those who value birds highly, it is important to have one of our own in a position of such authority.

For his stunning contributions to the fields of population ecology, optimal foraging, animal communication, neuroethology, and behavioral ecology, all of which have emphasized birds, as well as for his influential textbooks and other writings, and for his commitment to excellence and service, the American Ornithologists' Union proudly honors Sir John Richard Krebs.

*Award criteria.*—The Elliott Coues Award is given for meritorious contributions having an important influence on the study of birds in the Western Hemisphere, but which have not been recognized through a Brewster Award. Contributions to ornithology not eligible for recognition with a Brewster Award by virtue of geographic limitations may be honored through a Coues Award, as may works including important innovative ideas that through brevity of publication outside the primary ornithological literature may not have been selected based on Brewster Award criteria. However, the Coues Award is not necessarily limited to such works. The award consists of a certificate and an honorarium provided through the endowed Ralph W. Schreiber Fund of the American Ornithologists' Union.