

William Brewster Memorial Award 2014, to Geoffrey E. Hill

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AWARDS

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The 2014 William Brewster Memorial Award was presented by the American Ornithologists' Union to Dr. Geoffrey E. Hill, Professor of Biological Sciences at Auburn University in Auburn, Alabama.

Geoff received his undergraduate degree from Indiana University and graduate degrees from the University of New Mexico (M.S.) and the University of Michigan (Ph.D.). After receiving his doctorate in 1991, he received an NSERC postdoctoral fellowship and conducted research at Queen's University, Ontario, Canada, for the next two years. He began his position at Auburn University in 1993 and rose through the ranks to full professor by 2002. Recently, he has also effectively served the academic community as the Integrative Organismal Systems (IOS) deputy divisional director at the National Science Foundation.

Geoff's earliest work was on plumage and reproductive success in the Black-headed Grosbeak, but he began his comprehensive and influential research program on plumage, sexual selection, life history, and immunology of House Finches during his doctoral program, and this rich vein has carried through with remarkable success to the present day. Along the way, Geoff has also conducted research on an exceptionally broad array of related (and less related) topics and species, ranging from similar studies of behavior and ecology of Eastern Bluebirds, to ecological and behavioral research on a range of Alabama birds, to studies of bird-biting mosquitoes and the arboviruses they transmit. Tremendously creative throughout his career, Geoff is without question one of the most prolific, influential, and successful scientists who has ever worked on bird plumage coloration and the evolution of animal signals.



Geoff has authored about 225 book chapters and papers in first-rate journals (including *Science*, *Nature*, *Proceedings of the Royal Society*, *The American Naturalist*, *The Auk*, and others) and has been cited some 11,000 times in the literature. He also edited a two-volume academic book with Kevin McGraw on bird coloration that is already a landmark publication in behavioral and evolutionary ecology. His popular books on House Finches (*A Red Bird in a Brown Bag*), bird colors (*National Geographic Bird Coloration*), and Ivory-billed Woodpeckers (*Ivory-bill Hunters*) are widely read far beyond the ornithological community.

While Geoff is clearly a productive scientist across a wide range of ornithological and behavioral arenas, his

pioneering studies on mate choice in House Finches are among the best work ever done in this area and, consequently, his study organism is now widely viewed as one of the model systems for the study of female mate choice and sexual selection, among other things. He is a brilliant experimentalist, with a knack for conducting elegant studies that cut to the heart of a question: His “designer” finches produced by diet variation provide a good example of this. His research program on the carotenoid-based pigmentation of plumage coloration is now widely viewed as a classic study (his *Nature* paper alone has 570 citations) that helped spawn an entire area of research that continues to expand into new and interesting dimensions (e.g., the role of carotenoids in immune function).

The AOU honors Dr. Geoffrey E. Hill with the 2014 William Brewster Memorial Award for his major contributions to ornithology, including his excellence in avian research, his outstanding record of publications, and his

commitment to teaching, training, and outreach in ornithology.

Award Criteria.—The William Brewster Memorial Award consists of a medal and an honorarium provided through the endowed William Brewster Memorial

Award of the American Ornithologists' Union. It is given to the author or coauthors (not previously so honored) of the most meritorious body of work on birds of the Western Hemisphere published during the 10 calendar years preceding a given AOU Annual Meeting.