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In Memoriam

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IN MEMORIAM: PETER R. STETTENHEIM, 1928–2013

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Peter and Sandy Stettenheim in Antarctica. Photo by Joel Stettenheim.

He was six feet, two inches tall, a big man with a warm smile, a soft-spoken man whose thought-provoking ideas grabbed the attention of colleagues, a man of many interests, all of them pursued with intensity, skill, and joy. On Sunday, 20 January 2013, he returned home from a weekend with his son's family, sat down in his armchair to read, and shortly thereafter passed quietly away. Peter was a vibrant 84 years old, a Life Member, Elective Member (1968), and Fellow (1975) of the American Ornithologists' Union; Honorary Life Member of the Cooper Society; Patron and Investing Trustee of the Wilson Ornithological Society. Born on 27 December 1928 in New York City, Peter grew up in a Quaker family. His sense of social justice, his generosity, his measured and always balanced criticisms and comments made him an enormously respected colleague, community member, and friend.

As a boy, Peter attended the George School, a Society of Friends (Quaker) school in Newtown, Pennsylvania. Summers at a camp in the Poconos ignited his interest in birds, which expanded

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into a project on the birds of the George School campus. Soon after, he wrote a lengthy essay on the history of wildlife conservation in the United States. At Haverford College, Peter majored in biology, earned his B.A. (1949), and went on to graduate work at the University of Michigan. He was Bob Storer's first student and received his M.S. (1951) and Ph.D. (1959) in Zoology. He was fascinated by functional morphology, and his thesis was on "Adaptations for underwater swimming in the Common Murre, *Uria aalge*." He was particularly intrigued by adaptations of the wing and shoulder. During his tenure at Michigan he spent a productive summer at Friday Harbor Laboratory, the field station of the University of Washington. There he entertained thoughts of becoming an ecologist.

Andrew Berger, a noted ornithologist then at the University of Michigan Medical School, alerted Peter to a position in the Avian Anatomy Project at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Poultry Research Laboratory at Michigan State University. At a point when academic jobs were hard to find, this presented Peter, who was still a graduate student, with a position for which he was superbly qualified, and the Poultry Research Laboratory was close enough to the Museum of Natural History resources and friends for him to finish his degree.

At the USDA labs, Peter worked with Alfred M. Lucas to produce a comprehensive, thoroughly illustrated and detailed monograph on the anatomy of the avian integument and its derivatives. In 1972, it appeared as *Avian Anatomy—Integument, Parts I & II*, a full 750 pages, published by the USDA (and sold for $13.00!). It is still in demand, widely used, and considered the authority in the field. Coverage included feathers, scales, rhamphotheca, claws, and casques and covers both gross and microscopic anatomy of the integument with emphasis on feather structure and growth. The work led to Peter's lifelong interest in the functions and adaptations of feathers, a topic on which he often spoke. Peter was keenly interested in the recent discoveries of fossil feathers and their effect on our understanding of the origin and evolution of feathers.

After the appearance of the USDA publication, the Stettenheims moved to New Hampshire. Here, his interests in birds and their biology continued. His abiding commitment to excellent writing and illustration, so conspicuous in *Avian Anatomy*, found new modes of expression. As editor of *The Condor*, his rigorous attention to both the science and the writing served both journal and authors well.

Perhaps Peter's most lasting and influential contribution to ornithology was as an organizer and visionary. For example, he was instrumental in moving the moribund, multivolume *Handbook of North American Birds* to an extremely successful rebirth as the *Life Histories of the Birds of North America*, a continuous flow of single-species fascicles. Releasing the parts from taxonomic order to publish when ready moved the project to rapid completion. His design of individual species accounts simplified the transition from print to an electronic platform and provided a structure that continues to encourage revision. It was his brilliant break with tradition that ensured the initial success of *The Birds of North America* and will support its lasting value. Furthermore, he enrolled the first authors and edited many of the original species accounts. His vision and guidance created a living document that will remain a core reference of ornithology and an intellectual legacy far into the future.

When Peter assumed responsibility for *Recent Ornithological Literature*, it was a printed supplement to the *Auk*. Under his guidance, and with Jay Sheppard's able assistance, the number of journals covered was increased, the searchability of the index was enhanced, and the quality of the abstracts improved. Now known as *Ornithological Literature Worldwide* (*OWL*), it has continued to grow. It is sponsored by the AOU, British Ornithologists' Union (BOU), and Birds Australia. During this period of intense activity he participated in an AOU–National Science Foundation workshop on a national plan for Ornithology and on the AOU ad hoc Committee on the Future of Ornithological Publications in North America. Along with these activities, Peter also served the AOU as vice president and council member. In 2003, he was awarded the Marion A. Jenkinson Service Award.

Peter's contributions are not limited to the AOU. He was a long-term member of New Hampshire Audubon, serving two terms on the Board of Trustees (1973–1980 and 1997–2002), on the Advisory Council since 2007, and as an Honorary Trustee since 2007. Peter served on the Administrative Board of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology (1980–1984) and was a member of the BOU from 1956 and of the Deutsche Ornithologen-Gesellschaft from 1964. He was a member of the Council of Biology Editors (1975–1985). His life-long interest in feathers put him on the International Committee on Avian Anatomical Nomenclature's Subcommittee on External Topography and Integument. He was a trustee of the North American Loon Fund. In addition to a 61-year membership in the Wilson Society, he served as book review editor for *The Wilson Bulletin* (1971–1974) and became both a Patron and an Investing Trustee.

For many of us, Peter's contributions were much more personal than his service to the organizations that embody North American ornithology. He was our mentor, a person with whom we discussed our ideas and to whom we submitted our preliminary manuscripts. His standards for text and illustration were unparalleled, and he had an uncanny ability to see the whole picture of a manuscript or proposal and suggest adjustments for improvement. He had a gift for criticizing without giving offense.

There was rarely a Union meeting where Peter did not appear with his camera. He was a master of the informal portrait. His entire collection is now part of the AOU Archives at the Smithsonian. In recent years, Peter's interests in birds and human culture combined in a fascination with the often subtle roles and messages of birds as symbolic figures in art and literature, music and myth. Whenever Alan Brush traveled, he photographed birds in decorated ceilings, on pottery, in mosaics, and sent the pictures to Peter. There was always a comment, observation, or amazed response. Recently Alan visited the Nuremburg home of Albrecht Dürer, whose drawing of the Little Owl is revered as both good art and good ornithology. In a glass cabinet in the Dürer studio was a stuffed specimen that so resembled the picture that it was almost unmistakable. Peter responded with a comment on how Dürer's bird was delightfully benign, with none of the predator aura that surrounds most owl portraits.

Another manifestation of his interests was a course he taught in the ILEAD program at Dartmouth College. He also enjoyed participation in the Adult Tutorial Program as a volunteer tutor. Over the years, Peter served Lebanon (New Hampshire) College as trustee, board secretary, and chairman. He was a Founding Incorporator, trustee, board secretary, and chairman of the Montshire Museum of Science, Norwich, Vermont. Peter chaired the Plainfield (New Hampshire) Conservation Commission and was a member and trustee of the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests. He served on the Advisory Council of the Upper Valley Land Trust (Hanover, New Hampshire).

Peter was predeceased by Sandy, his wife of 46 years. He is survived by his daughter Wendy C. R. S. Jones of El Segundo, California, and his son Joel of Lebanon, New Hampshire, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

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