



## **IN MEMORIAM: GEORGE WILLIAM SALT, 1919–1999**

Author: Jones, Stephanie L.

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## IN MEMORIAM: GEORGE WILLIAM SALT, 1919–1999

STEPHANIE L. JONES

*U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Nongame Migratory Birds, P.O. Box 25486 DFC, Denver, Colorado 80225, USA*

George William (Bill) Salt, a member of the AOU since 1947 and an Elective Member since 1962, died of natural causes on 8 December 1999, at Davis, California. He was born in Spokane, Washington, on 19 October 1919, and earned his degrees at the University of California, Los Angeles and the University of California, Berkeley, where he studied under Alden H. Miller. Bill served in the U.S. Army (Armored Cavalry) in Europe from 1943 to 1946. He was married in 1942, and had three children.

Bill first became interested in birds and ecology at age 11, when he observed a Rufous Hummingbird in the San Bernardino Mountains of southern California. Later, Lee Chambers, secretary of the southern division of the Cooper Club, took Bill and several other young people to their monthly meetings. Bill joined the Cooper Ornithological Society in 1947. He went to the University of California, Davis, in 1951, where he was among the founding faculty of the new Zoology Department (later Evolution and Ecology) and where he retired in 1990. At U.C. Davis, Bill became interested in birds, protozoa, and rotifers, pursuing studies in animal physiology and ecology, with an emphasis on predator–prey relationships.

Bill's early ornithological work was particularly significant, because of his larger-scale (cross-biome) approach to avifaunal analysis. He began to quantify relationships that Joseph Grinnell, Alden Miller, and others defined qualitatively across California. Bill's classic

Jackson Hole paper (*Condor* 59:373–393) provided a different foundation for defining avian diversity at scales larger than species richness. Ornithologists since have used his simplified graphic illustrations of unique versus shared species in presentations on diversity definitions. In the same year, Robert MacArthur described niche segregation and defined avian diversity as local species richness; MacArthur eventually came full circle, adopting Robert Whittaker's alpha, beta, and gamma diversity distinctions in the 1970s. Bill's work was moving from the alpha and into the beta (community coefficients) approach fully 20 years before Whittaker's 1975 book, *Communities and Ecosystems*. Bill's editorship of *The American Naturalist* (1980–1984) resulted in a landmark series of papers published by the University of Chicago Press in 1994 as *Ecology and Evolutionary Biology: A Round Table on Research*.

After his retirement, Bill continued to work with students and colleagues as a Professor Emeritus, while also pursuing his lifelong love of art and fly-fishing. Bill's early journals (now in the Alden Miller collection at the University of California, Berkeley) are illustrated with many fine line drawings, and his later paintings are found in collections in Davis. After his retirement, he painted a particularly lovely series of nudes that decorated his house. His many students and colleagues remember Bill for his support of students, his dry wit, his impish sense of humor, and his intolerance of pretense.