BioOne COMPLETE

Richard G. Beidleman, 1923–2014

Author: Kennedy, Patricia L.

Source: The Condor, 119(3) : 637-639

Published By: American Ornithological Society

URL: https://doi.org/10.1650/CONDOR-17-50.1

BioOne Complete (complete.BioOne.org) is a full-text database of 200 subscribed and open-access titles in the biological, ecological, and environmental sciences published by nonprofit societies, associations, museums, institutions, and presses.

Your use of this PDF, the BioOne Complete website, and all posted and associated content indicates your acceptance of BioOne's Terms of Use, available at www.bioone.org/terms-of-use.

Usage of BioOne Complete content is strictly limited to personal, educational, and non - commercial use. Commercial inquiries or rights and permissions requests should be directed to the individual publisher as copyright holder.

BioOne sees sustainable scholarly publishing as an inherently collaborative enterprise connecting authors, nonprofit publishers, academic institutions, research libraries, and research funders in the common goal of maximizing access to critical research.

Downloaded From: https://complete.bioone.org/journals/The-Condor on 28 Mar 2024
Terms of Use: https://complete.bioone.org/terms-of-use

THE CONDOR
Ornithological Applications
AmericanOrnithology.org

Volume 119, 2017, pp. 637–639
DOI: 10.1650/CONDOR-17-50.1

IN MEMORIAM

Richard G. Beidleman, 1923–2014

Patricia L. Kennedy

Eastern Oregon Agriculture and Natural Resource Program and Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, Oregon State University, La Grande, Oregon, USA
pat.kennedy@oregonstate.edu

Published July 26, 2017

On August 7, 2014, the ornithological community lost a world-class teacher, researcher, and eloquent spokesman for the environment. Encouraging more engaged interest in nature, Richard "Dick" Beidleman used his wit, insight, and talent in public speaking, as well as compelling newspaper and magazine articles, to spur engagement in the political process to champion sustainable land management. He spoke to hundreds of audiences around the globe, including the Smithsonian Institution, the British Museum of Natural History, and Kew Gardens. As a quintessential role model, he brought a lively appreciation of science and nature to students and the public.

Born in North Dakota, Dick grew up in California (grade school) and New York (high school). His father, a music professor, taught at several universities, including San Diego State College. As a kid, Dick enjoyed the San Diego Zoo and the Natural History Museum, where he stuffed his first avian museum specimens at the age of six, exhibited his shell collection, and was active in junior naturalist programs. During the summers, the Beidlemans piled into their car and toured the western United States. These camping trips stimulated Dick's lifelong passion for the natural world. From age ten, he dreamed of a career as a park ranger, longing to wear "boots, riding breeches, and the Smokey Bear hat."



Dick Beidleman at 2013 Christmas Bird Count. Photo credit: Carol Beidleman

A four-year scholarship to Brown University didn't work out for Dick. He complained, "The only living thing I saw all year was a frog!" A journalism scholarship brought him to the University of Colorado–Boulder (CU), where he majored in journalism and biology, but World War II interrupted his schooling.

As a naval gunnery officer in the South Pacific, Dick collected butterflies and watched birds in the New Guinea jungles on breaks. In 1943, the young naval reserve officer was at midshipman's school at the University of New Mexico (UNM). At a photography shop, he was awestruck by the penetrating gaze of a young woman in a WAVE (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service) recruiting poster. He recognized her from the UNM campus as Reba Rutz, a 21-year-old English major and member of several literary societies, including Mortar Board, and he eagerly pursued her. Although initially wary of this eager sailor, she caved under his gentle persistence and invited him to church. Eventually, he persuaded her to see him beyond the church walls and they became engaged a year later, before Dick returned to the Pacific theater. According to their daughter Carol, "Dad may have been smitten by my mother's looks, but what drew him once he found her was her intellect." They married in 1946, after the war was over, his enlistment was complete, and Reba had completed her M.S. in English literature.

The young couple moved in 1946 to Boulder, Colorado, where Dick graduated from CU with his bachelor's and master's degrees in biology. While working on the latter, he started winter bird population studies in various habitats

© 2017 American Ornithological Society. ISSN 0010-5422, electronic ISSN 1938-5129
Direct all requests to reproduce journal content to the AOS Publications Office at pubs@americanornithology.org

Downloaded From: https://complete.bioone.org/journals/The-Condor on 28 Mar 2024
Terms of Use: https://complete.bioone.org/terms-of-use

near Boulder, sites he would continue to monitor for about 40 years. After graduation, Dick and Reba moved to Yosemite National Park for his dream job as park naturalist. Expecting it to be a permanent position, he was regretfully unemployed after one summer. Serendipitously, a letter from his master's advisor alerted him to a teaching position at Colorado State University (CSU). Teaching had not been on his radar, but he needed a job, so Reba and he quickly relocated to Fort Collins, where Dick became an assistant professor of zoology. While at CSU he also finished his Ph.D. in ecology (1954) at CU. His dissertation was an in-depth study of the cottonwood–willow river-bottom ecosystem in the Front Range of Colorado. This study was one of the first ecosystem-level investigations of riparian systems. He laughed that his dissertation, which many had described as "impractical," later became a critical planning tool for an ecosystem subjected to intense development pressure, including nuclear reactors and thousands of acres of subdivisions.

After eight years at CSU, ready for a change, Dick replaced his major professor at CU while the latter was on leave. In 1957 he was appointed assistant professor of biology at Colorado College, a small liberal arts college in Colorado Springs, where he served as chairman of the biology department from 1968 to 1971 and retired as a full professor in 1988.

Dick was a natural-born teacher. He taught all subjects with enthusiasm and had a memorable sense of humor; laughter was common in his classes. Like many ecologists, his favorite teaching environment was the field classes. When Colorado College went on the block plan in 1970 (students take one class every month instead of multitasking several classes), Dick had the luxury of loading the class in a van and heading into the field for three weeks. I was one of the lucky undergraduates under his spell for several years, and his influence was life-altering. I'll never forget his class "Special Topics: Pinyon–Juniper Woodland," for which we visited pinyon–juniper ecosystems throughout the West. He was the teacher equivalent of the Energizer Bunny. We counted birds at sunrise, measured vegetation in the afternoon, and attended hearings and meetings on woodland management in the evening. He influenced thousands of students whom he taught to both appreciate and advocate for the natural world.

Dick published more than 400 papers in ornithology, vertebrate zoology, ecology, history of science, and science education. He was also a published poet—his first publication was a poem titled "Mother's Day Eve" in the *Horace Mann Quarterly* (1939)—and wrote poetry throughout his life. His first ornithological publications were from his dissertation (in *Audubon Field Notes* in 1948), and his first appearance before an ornithological society was in 1954 at the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) meeting, where he summarized his research on association groups among bird species in winter. He published five papers in *The Condor*, four of which were on the invasive ecology of the European Starling. He also published regularly in *The American Biology Teacher*, *American Scientist*, *BioScience*, *Colorado Birds*, *Journal of the Colorado-Wyoming Academy of Science*, and *Journal of Field Ornithology*.

After completing his dissertation, Dick became fascinated by the history of the early naturalists of both North America and Australia. His first historical publication was in 1956, on the 1859 journal of naturalist George Suckley (published in the *Annals of Wyoming*). After 1956, he published every one to three years on a naturalist, including John Kirk Townsend, William Gambel, Thomas Nuttall, Lewis and Clark, and Charles Darwin. His last significant historical publication was a 2006 book on *California's Frontier Naturalists*, published by the University of California Press. This engaging narrative chronicles the fascinating story of the stalwart naturalists who were drawn to California's natural bounty. At the time of his death at age 91, he was working on a book manuscript about the German botanist Frederick Creutzfeldt and the 1853 Gunnison Expedition.

Dick tirelessly served on the boards of public and private institutions such as the Colorado State Park Board, Colorado State Natural Areas Council, Rocky Mountain Nature Association, and The Nature Conservancy. His exceptional service was recognized with numerous awards, including the 1971 Citizen of the Year Award from the City of Colorado Springs, the 1987 Environmental Achievement Award from the Thorne Ecological Institute, and an Honorary Doctorate from Colorado College in 1989. Most importantly, Dick was almost single-handedly responsible for helping to save, as open space, additions to the Garden of the Gods in Colorado Springs, as well as the Aiken Canyon Preserve for The Nature Conservancy, Mueller Ranch for Colorado State Parks, and Florissant Fossil Beds for the National Park Service. After being a thorn in their side for years, the City of Colorado Springs established the Beidleman Nature Center in his honor in 1987.

He joined the AOU and the Cooper Ornithological Society in 1948 and the Association of Field Ornithologists in 1989. His most significant piece of professional service was to the Biological Sciences Curriculum Study (BSCS). He served on the BSCS National Steering Committee from 1961 to 1964. He was one of the authors of the ecologically oriented "Green Version" of the BSCS high school biology textbook (published in 1968), the first time ecology was treated formally as a biological science in a national high school textbook. As Egerton and Knight (*Bulletin of the ESA* 2015) noted, "This textbook was one of Dick's most important contributions to the advancement of ecology as a discipline."

Downloaded From: https://complete.bioone.org/journals/The-Condor on 28 Mar 2024
Terms of Use: https://complete.bioone.org/terms-of-use

Two years after Dick retired from Colorado College, he and Reba moved to Pacific Grove, California. Ten days after relocating, they were walking near a beach when a drunken driver slammed into them, killing Reba and seriously injuring Dick. He recuperated slowly with the help of his former student Linda Havighurst; they married in 1991. Together Linda and Dick taught short courses in ornithology and botany at a variety of venues. For almost two decades, Dick continued to volunteer as a research associate and archivist at the Jepson Herbaria Archives at the University of California, Berkeley. He also participated every year in the Monterey Peninsula Christmas Bird Count, completing his last count on December 27, 2013, at the age of 90.

Dick is survived by his second wife, Linda H. Beidleman, of Pacific Grove, California; his son, S. Kirk Beidleman, and daughter-in-law Kathy A. Whitacre, of Estes Park, Colorado; his daughter Janet B. Robson of Tasmania, Australia; and his daughter Carol A. Beidleman, and son-in-law David H. Tiemeyer, of Santa Fe, New Mexico.

I thank Carol Beidleman for encouraging me to write this memoriam, providing me with terrific background material on her father, and reviewing a draft. A discussion with Jack Carter provided additional insights on Dick's contributions to Colorado College and to BSCS. Jessy Randall provided access to interviews conducted with Dick as part of the Colorado College Oral History Project. Lorelei Rockwell-Kennedy provided excellent comments that enlivened the writing.

Memorials Editor: Ted Anderson, ted020@centurytel.net

Downloaded From: https://complete.bioone.org/journals/The-Condor on 28 Mar 2024
Terms of Use: https://complete.bioone.org/terms-of-use