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*IN MEMORIAM*

# C. Davison (Dave) Ankney, 1946–2013

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On February 28, 2013, Dave Ankney passed away from cancer at his marsh-side home at Long Point, Ontario. Dave's wife Sandi Johnson and his black lab Bug were at his side. To readers of *The Auk*, Dave is best known for his research on the role of nutrient reserves in shaping life-history strategies, especially among waterfowl. But to his former students and professional colleagues he is best known for his devotion to mentoring graduate students, his ardent defense of science-based conservation, and his love of a healthy and spirited debate.

DAVE ANKNEY. Photo credit: Joel Hopkins

Dave was born in Cleveland, Ohio, and raised in Michigan, where an early passion for duck hunting and a keen interest in biology led naturally to Dave pursuing a career in waterfowl biology and management. A Bachelor of Science at Michigan State University (1968) under the tutelage of M. D. Pirnie was followed by two years of graduate work at Iowa State University with Milton Weller. Dave then moved north to the University of Western Ontario for his Ph.D., working with Charlie MacInnes. Upon completion of his Ph.D. (1974), Dave was hired as an Assistant Professor of Zoology at the University and remained there for his entire career. Dave rose through the ranks and retired as a Distinguished Research Professor in 2002. Dave became an Elective Member of the AOU in 1981 and a Fellow in 1992.

The problem Dave tackled for his Ph.D. and a topic that remained a central interest throughout his career was nutrient reserve dynamics in nesting birds—specifically, given the substantial investment of energy and other nutrients in eggs, where do those resources come from, and how does that shape important life history traits such as clutch size? Dave studied the nesting biology of Lesser Snow Geese (*Chen c. caerulescens*) on the west coast of Hudson Bay in the Canadian arctic for his Ph.D. His 1978 paper (with MacInnes; *The Auk* 95:459–471) demonstrated that clutch size in Lesser Snow Geese was determined largely by the fat reserves that females carried with them to the breeding grounds, and reserves not invested in eggs were critical for maintaining females through incubation. This paper spawned a whole field of research on the relationship between reproduction and nutrient dynamics in birds. The paper's broad influence was recognized by its becoming a Citation Classic in 1992, with the number of citations now approaching 600. A companion paper (the first from

Dave's thesis) showing that egg-laying and incubating geese feed little if at all was almost rejected from *The Auk* because one of the reviewers felt that waterfowl papers should be published in the *Journal of Wildlife Management* (an enduring annoyance of Dave's was the bias among too many ornithologists that waterfowl research had nothing to teach us outside the realm of management). Fortunately, John Wiens, Editor at the time, had a more enlightened perspective and the paper was accepted. Dave and his students continued to be important contributors to the study of nutrient dynamics in birds. Although much of that research was conducted on waterfowl, Dave also explored these same issues in passerines, including House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*), Tree Swallows (*Tachycineta bicolor*), and Brown-Headed Cowbirds (*Molothrus ater*). Dave's work on cowbirds with his University of Western Ontario colleague Dave Scott examined how release from parental care has affected fecundity in this brood parasite (*The Auk* 97:677–683, 1980; *The Auk* 97:684–696, 1980; *The Auk* 100:583–592, 1983). They estimated that an average female cowbird lays 40 eggs in an eight-week breeding season and determined that such impressive fecundity was realized through modification of the laying cycle in a manner very similar to what has occurred in domestic chickens.

Dave's research also tackled many important conservation topics. North American waterfowl are among the most extensively managed group of birds in the world and management policies are subject to many influences. Dave argued forcefully and compellingly that good science should be pre-eminent among those influences. A substantial number of his >125 career publications in ornithology were related to important issues in conservation and management. A notable example is Dave's study of the many facets of the decline of American Black Ducks (*Anas rubripes*). This work pointed to hybridization and competition with Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*) as the principal cause of the decline (Black Ducks: Harvest, Mallards, or Habitat?, *Proceedings of the [Seventh] International Waterfowl Symposium,* 7:50–60, 1996), with hybridization facilitated by the lack of genetic differentiation between these ''species'' (*Evolution* 44:1109–1119, 1990; *The Auk* 103:701–709, 1986). Dave also played a central role in the debate about how to manage exploding snow goose populations. His 1996 invited paper ''An embarrassment of riches: Too many geese'' (*Journal of Wildlife Management* 60:217–222) questioned long-held views about waterfowl management by advancing the notion that reduction of midcontinent snow geese through increased harvest on a continental scale was consistent with principles of sound wildlife management. Dave's synthesis of the issue challenged the almost sacrosanct view that waterfowl should be exempt from population control. The Migratory Bird Treaty was subsequently amended to allow increased harvest of waterfowl for conservation purposes. Dave's ability to view conservation problems from a broad perspective made him stand out as a visionary in this field. In addition to the contributions of his research to management issues, Dave also participated directly in management and conservation through organizations such as the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (President, Director-at-Large), Canadian Wildlife Federation (Director), the Ontario Wildlife Foundation (Founding Director, President), the Long Point Biosphere Board (member), and Long Point Waterfowl (chair of scientific advisory committee). These contributions were recognized when Dave received the Ducks Unlimited Conservation Achievement Award (1997), the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters Professional Conservation Award (1999), and the Ontario Latornell Conservation Award (1999).

Dave's scientific achievements will endure, but the way he affected people is how he will be best remembered and most missed. Part of that legacy is the network of friends and professional biologists who first met through their association with Dave. Formally, as Professor of Zoology at the University, Dave supervised 29 M.Sc.s, 14 Ph.D.s, 4 postdocs, and the research projects of more than 50 undergraduates. Dave's own students and many other students with whom he interacted recall the trepidation they felt when presenting their research with Dave in the audience. Faulty logic, suspect assumptions, or sloppy thinking of any sort were sure to be challenged. Despite the discomfort, students learned that Dave was criticizing their science, not them, and that his goal was to make the science better and thereby to help them become better scientists (he usually succeeded). In addition, as much as Dave insisted on scientific rigor, he loved a good argument (reflected by the numerous commentaries in his C.V.). Dave liked to point out that you learn more from arguing with someone than you do from nodding your head in agreement. On the occasion of his retirement a decade ago, friends and colleagues organized an informal meeting to celebrate Dave's career. The speeches combined elements of both recognition of Dave's achievements and roasting a beloved friend. In the latter realm, and through no prior arrangement, every presenter made reference to Dave's love of debate (most also to the copious amounts of beer that so often lubricated such discourse). Venues for these animated discussions varied from traditional classroom settings (minus the beer), to duck blinds (also minus the beer), fishing boats, cabins, and field stations. One of Dave's favorite places to engage students and colleagues in discussion was the Delta Waterfowl Station, a renowned waterfowl research facility in Manitoba that facilitated the

research of many of his students. Just prior to Dave's passing he was awarded the first Kirchoffer Back Porch Award, named for the main lodge at Delta, where Dave had so often engaged in discussion and debate about many things, but above all waterfowl. Those of us who have had our arguments shredded by Dave's incisive mind were hopefully better for it, but above all we remember how much fun we had.

In addition to Dave's standing as a renowned and accomplished avian ecologist, both he and his wife Sandi were bird lovers. Dave was an avid birder, and actively kept a life list. Out of interest in the small things in the natural world, he would often "psh, psh, psh" to see what small birds he might draw out of some deep cover. Dave and Sandi's home was always festooned with a variety of feeders designed to attract all manner of birds that might be in the neighborhood.

In honor of Dave's accomplishments, influence, and friendship, a celebration of his life was held on May 19, 2013, at Long Point Waterfowl's Research and Education Centre near Turkey Point, Ontario. Long Point Waterfowl's website also has a tribute page to Dave (http://longpointwaterfowl.org/tribute-to-dave-ankney/). In recognition of Dave's enduring contributions to graduate student education, Long Point Waterfowl has developed Dave Ankney and Sandi Johnson Graduate Research Scholarships to be awarded annually to graduate students working on waterfowl issues in North America, one to an M.Sc. candidate and one to a Ph.D. candidate. Long Point Waterfowl will administer the scholarship, and a multi-agency committee will select the recipients. Donations toward the scholarship are tax-deductible and can be sent to Long Point Waterfowl (for Canadian receipts) or to Delta Waterfowl (for U.S. receipts).