In Memoriam

IN MEMORIAM: JOHN C. OGDEN, 1938–2012

PETER C. FREDERICK¹ AND DONALD A. MCCRIMMON²

¹Department of Wildlife, University of Florida, Ecology and Conservation, P.O. Box 110430, Gainesville, Florida 32611, USA; and
²Cazenovia College, 22 Sullivan Street, Cazenovia, New York 13035, USA

John C. Ogden at Etosha National Park, Namibia, September 2011.
(Photograph by Patty Kitchings.)

John C. Ogden, aged 73, a Fellow of the AOU, died at home in Homestead, Florida, on 31 March 2012 following a brief illness. John’s love of ornithology and the natural world developed early, and his first publication (in The Migrant, journal of the Tennessee Ornithological Society) came out while he was in high school. During his four-decade scientific career, he became a pioneer in the restoration of entire populations (California Condor, Wood Stork) and ecosystems (Everglades) long before these approaches were commonly attempted. His insights were driven by his early-acquired biological intuition and his solid scientific investigations. His subjects were often endangered, and the recommendations from his studies usually controversial. Within these maestrooms, he was not afraid to take risks when he believed the science supported politically difficult choices, and he was never afraid to tell the truth about scientific uncertainty. Moreover, he was willing to step well outside his natural and secure role of biologist to become a translator between scientists and managers, a convincer of politicians, and he was ultimately able to turn a biologist’s vision and worldview into solid planning and restoration.

John received his undergraduate degree from Vanderbilt University and went on to graduate studies at the University of Tennessee and the Florida State University. At the conclusion of his professional career, he had 85 publications to his credit, including basic work on reproductive and foraging ecology of waterbirds and raptors, and, frequently, publications with clear management implications. His works on raptors and wading birds remain classic references. The book Everglades: The Ecosystem and Its Restoration, published in 1994 and co-edited with Steven M. Davis, was hailed at the time by reviewers as the best book ever published on a single wetland and an indispensable benchmark.

John began his professional career in 1964 as an Everglades National Park field biologist responsible for long-term ecological studies of southern Everglades and Florida Bay vertebrates including the Wood Stork, Osprey, Short-tailed Hawk, American Crocodile, and American Alligator. From 1974 to 1988, he worked for the National Audubon Society, first as senior research biologist and later as director of the Ornithological Research Unit based in Tavernier, Florida. During this time, he oversaw a national