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Source: The Auk, 135(4) : 1185-1186

Published By: American Ornithological Society

URL: https://doi.org/10.1642/AUK-18-103.1

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The Auk
Ornithological Advances
AmericanOrnithology.org

Volume 135, 2018, pp. 1185–1186
DOI: 10.1642/AUK-18-103.1

IN MEMORIAM

Robert F. Andrle, 1927–2017

Wayne K. Gall[1] and Gerald R. Rising[2]

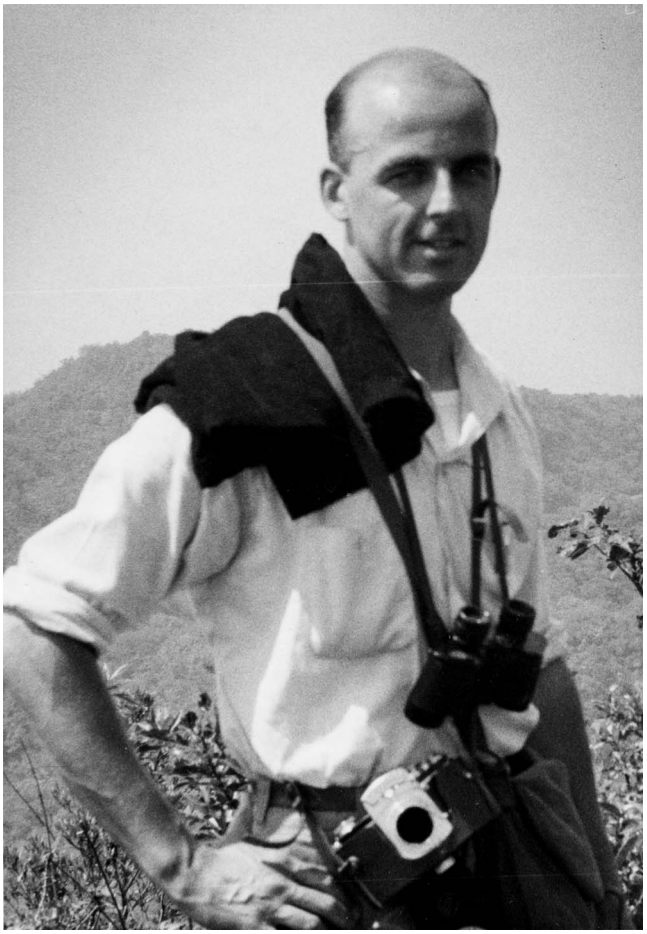
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Published September 26, 2018

Robert Andrle, an Elective Member of the American Ornithologists' Union (now American Ornithological Society) since 1988 whose professional career was spent primarily at the Buffalo Museum of Science, died on October 29, 2017, at the age of 90. He was born in Buffalo, New York, on October 28, 1927, and graduated from St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute there in 1944. His lifelong interest in birds was initiated when his attention was drawn to *Joc, Colette and the Birds* by British children's writer Vera Barclay. This book remains in his library, annotated "sparked my interest." He soon ventured beyond his Buffalo neighborhood to observe birds along the Niagara River from Unity Island south to the woodlands and marshes of Buffalo's Outer Harbor, particularly Tifft Nature Preserve and Times Beach. His records of the birds as well as of other fauna and flora of Niagara Frontier wildlands form the basis of most subsequent work. For example, the designation of the Niagara River Corridor as an international Important Bird Area was achieved through reference to those records.

Bob graduated from Canisius College in 1948 with a major in English. He joined the U.S. National Guard in 1953 and served on active duty at the 7th Army Corps of Engineers Operations Headquarters in Germany from 1954 to 1956. He then returned to western New York to continue his education, obtaining a master's degree in geography in 1960 from the University at Buffalo. Encouraged by his friend and fellow Buffalo birder, Harold Mitchell, he then went to Louisiana State University to pursue a doctorate in biogeography under the supervision of Robert C. West. He completed his doctorate in 1964 with a dissertation entitled "A Biogeographical Investigation of the Sierra de Tuxtla in Veracruz, Mexico."

Bob joined the staff of the Buffalo Museum of Science in 1956 as assistant preparator and became curator of biogeography in 1960. Beginning in 1966, he took on administrative responsibilities, including serving as assistant director until 1973 and then as associate director until 1977, at which time he was appointed curator of vertebrate zoology. In 1969, following the death of museum director Fred T. Hall, Bob served briefly as joint acting director (1969–1970). After leaving the museum staff in 1984, Bob remained a research associate in vertebrate zoology and a fellow of the Buffalo Society of Natural Sciences (BSNS).



Robert F. Andrle on a 1960 research expedition to the Sierra de Tuxtla, Mexico. Photo courtesy of Chris Andrle

Bob's major research was conducted in Guatemala, Mexico, Costa Rica, and the West Indies, with a major

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focus on the Horned Guan, the Black Chachalaca, and the Whistling Warbler. He published more than 50 papers on his research. A delightful account of his Central American experiences appears in *Moments of Discovery: Natural History Narratives from Mexico and Central America* (University Press of Florida). In New York, his major contribution was as coeditor (with Janet Carroll) of the state's first breeding bird atlas in 1988.

After 1984, Bob served as a consultant to a number of western New York communities and the Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation on wildlife-related issues, and he carried out lengthy studies of toxins in the food chain at Times Beach for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. He also led natural history tours to Trinidad, the West Indies, Costa Rica, Mexico, and Venezuela.

We on the Niagara Frontier knew Bob as a reliable behind-the-scenes resource. His service to the Buffalo Ornithological Society was significant both in extent and duration after he became an associate member in 1942 at the age of 15. He served as president (1956–1957) and as statistician (1963–2007), serving many of those 44 years with his colleague Frances Rew. He received an honorary appointment as Fellow in 1959. He also served as a member of the New York State Avian Records Committee for 24 years, chairing that committee from 1990 to 2000.

Bob is also remembered for his untiring efforts and unwavering advocacy that culminated in the preservation of Tifft Nature Preserve and Times Beach Nature Preserve. In 1972, he represented the Buffalo Ornithological Society on the Tifft Farm Subcommittee of the City of Buffalo's Citizens Advisory Committee and was Site Management Committee chair and an officer of the Executive Board in 1975. He was a founding member of the Board of Directors of Tifft Farm, Inc. After Tifft Farm, Inc., merged with the BSNS in April, 1982, Bob served on the Tifft Committee of the Board of Managers of the BSNS and later on the Board of the Friends of Tifft Nature Preserve, until declining health precluded his attendance at meetings.

Bob's love for the Buffalo waterfront extended north of Tifft to Times Beach, the western gateway to the Niagara River's "globally significant" Important Bird Area. This former recreational beach and later diked dredge-disposal site has evolved naturally to become an oasis along Buffalo's Outer Harbor. Bob was one of the first to notice that Times Beach's unique location near the confluence of the Buffalo and Niagara rivers was very attractive to migrating and breeding birds. To date, over 240 species of birds have been sighted there. By the late 1970s, Bob had developed a site management plan for Times Beach. His long-standing vision for the designation of Times Beach as a formal nature preserve reached fruition in May 2005. On September 13, 2014, Bob was honored, along with three other original members of the Times Beach Advisory Committee, by the unveiling of a sign for the Robert F. Andrle Trail.

Bob's son Christopher recalled how their home supported many injured birds in the days before rehabilitators: pet hawks and owls and a goose that contentedly paddled in their bathtub. He also told how his mother and the four children often accompanied his father on expeditions, and how, as the eldest, he served as his father's assistant on mountain patrols.

Christopher related a field experience with his father in the Sierra de Tuxtla of Mexico in 1962 that epitomized not only Bob's superb marksmanship, but also his persistence. At that time, verification of the presence of a species in a region required that one had a specimen "in hand." After spotting a very rare Black Hawk-Eagle during an excursion in tropical rainforest, Bob took an inordinate amount of time lining up the best shot at the bird, which was far off in the forest canopy. He fired once and was convinced that he had bagged this important voucher specimen—but he and Chris could not find the downed carcass. After reluctantly abandoning their search, they continued on with their fieldwork. A few hours later, on their return trip to camp, they came to the Black Hawk-Eagle site. Bob gave Chris one of his classic lines—"one last look"—and they resumed their search. Persistence indeed paid off as they ultimately located the prized specimen, speculating that if any more time had elapsed, army ants probably would have precluded recovery of an intact carcass. It was the first documented record of that species in the Sierra de Tuxtla.

Two other stories from Chris recall the bygone, pre-9/11 days of working for a natural history museum located close to the U.S.-Canadian border. Bob was part of a collecting foray into southern Ontario in search of a skunk needed for an exhibit at the Buffalo Museum of Science. After spotting a road-killed specimen, Bob tied it to the fender of his vehicle. Not surprisingly, when he arrived at the border, U.S. Customs Service officials didn't hesitate to wave the vehicle through. Another time, Bob arrived at the border after a winter excursion to the Canadian north woods, with four frozen timber wolves on the roof of his vehicle. The wolves were needed for a diorama depicting a scene in Algonquin Provincial Park. Since the customs officials didn't know where to find timber wolves in their manual, they similarly waved his vehicle through.

Bob Andrle is survived by his wife of 64 years, the former Patricia Yates, four children, seven grandchildren, one great-grandchild, and three siblings. It is worth noting that Bob's first date with Pat was lunch and birding at the Tifft Street dump, present site of the Tifft Nature Preserve.

His local colleagues will most miss what one of them called "his almost childlike enthusiasm for being out in the field."

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