



## **IN MEMORIAM: PAULA DEBENEDICTIS, 1942-2006**

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Source: The Auk, 124(2) : 722

Published By: American Ornithological Society

URL: [https://doi.org/10.1642/0004-8038\(2007\)124\[722:IMPD\]2.0.CO;2](https://doi.org/10.1642/0004-8038(2007)124[722:IMPD]2.0.CO;2)

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*The Auk* 124(2):722, 2007

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Printed in USA.

## IN MEMORIAM: PAUL A. DeBENEDICTIS, 1942–2006

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Paul A. DeBenedictis, a member of the AOU since 1964 and an Elective Member since 1979, died in Syracuse, New York, on 3 May 2006. He had been disabled since 1996, when he suffered cardiac arrest and subsequent brain injury, but had remained interested in nature, travel, and the arts.

Paul was born on 8 December 1942 and grew up in Berkeley, California. He developed an interest in the natural world at an early age, triggered, he said, when he found an alligator lizard under a flowerpot only to have the lizard lose its tail in his hand after he grabbed it. His early interests ranged from astronomy to herpetology, but it was not until his teen years that he became fascinated by birds. While at the University of California in Berkeley, where he earned a B.S. in Zoology in 1964, he was invited to participate in the 1964 expedition as part of the Galápagos Island International Scientific Project organized by the University. He published several short articles on bird behavior based on his observations on that trip. He also was an active birder in the western United States as an undergraduate and contributed articles and observations from his fieldtrips.

After graduating from Berkeley, Paul entered the Ph.D. program in Zoology at the University of Michigan, where his interests shifted to experimental studies of community organization in amphibians. He earned his Ph.D. from Michigan in 1970. While there, he met and married Virginia (Morzenti). In fall 1970, Paul accepted a position as assistant professor in the Department of Biology at Syracuse University, where he remained until 1977. His broad interests led him to a career in computers, and he moved to the State University of New York Upstate Medical University as director of Student Computing Services. In 1993, he

received a University award for his outstanding service and contributions to the university and the community it serves.

Paul was very active in the birding community locally, regionally, and nationally. He was active in the Onondaga Audubon Society and the New York State Bird Club. He edited *The Kingbird*, the state ornithological journal, from 1984 to 1996. He was a member of the New York State Avian Records Committee, formed partly at his recommendation, and served as chair of this committee for several years. His contributions to ornithology in New York State were recognized in 1996 with the Gordon B. Meade Award and in 1997 with the Elon Howard Eaton Memorial Award, both from the New York State Bird Clubs. Nationally, Paul served as chair of the American Birding Association check-list committee. He also initiated a section of *Birding Magazine* entitled "Gleanings from the technical literature" and continued for some years to contribute to this important outlet for connecting amateur birders to the recent scientific literature. Paul's contributions helped maintain the bridge between the amateur and scientific birding communities.

He is survived by his wife, Virginia, and their two children: Tim, a computer software engineer, and Lisa, a resident in internal medicine. Paul was a valued colleague, willingly drawing on his considerable intellectual skills and broad knowledge of natural history to collaborate with faculty and graduate students on research and teaching projects. He will be missed by all who were fortunate enough to know him, and especially by those who counted him among their birding companions.

I thank Virginia and John DeBenedictis and Lynda Weaver for help in preparing this memorial.