

Elliott Coues Award, 2009

Authors: Brown, Charles R., and Bomberger Brown, Mary

Source: The Auk, 127(1) : 244-245

Published By: American Ornithological Society

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1525/auk.2010.127.1.243.2>

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.

The Auk 127(1):244–245, 2010
© The American Ornithologists' Union, 2010.
Printed in USA.

ELLIOTT COUES AWARD, 2009

CHARLES R. BROWN AND MARY BOMBERGER BROWN



Left: Charles R. Brown in Keith County, Nebraska, July 2005 (photograph by Kathleen Brazeal). *Middle:* Cliff Swallows at a natural cliff colony site in Keith County, 27 May 1991 (photograph by C. R. Brown). *Right:* Mary Bomberger Brown at an Interior Least Tern and Piping Plover colony near Venice, Nebraska, June 2008 (photograph by Joel Sartore).

The 2009 Elliott Coues Award is presented to Charles R. Brown and Mary Bomberger Brown in recognition of their outstanding and innovative contributions to ornithological research. Charles R. Brown is presently a professor at the University of Tulsa, Oklahoma, while Mary Bomberger Brown is program coordinator

for the Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's School of Natural Resources. After graduating from Austin College, Charles went to Princeton University, where he began a study of the costs and benefits of coloniality in Cliff Swallows. Charles met Mary in 1981, when they worked

together on Cliff Swallows, and they became a stellar team, each bringing out the scientific best in the other. Charles accepted the position of assistant professor at Yale University in 1985, and he and Mary moved to the University of Tulsa in 1993. At both institutions, they continued their research on Cliff Swallows, obtaining several large research grants and publishing many important articles in scientific journals, including *Animal Behaviour*, *The Auk*, *Behavioral Ecology*, *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology*, *The Condor*, *Ecology*, *Nature*, *Science*, *Evolution*, and *Trends in Ecology & Evolution*. Their scientific productivity has been voluminous: they have jointly published more than 120 articles, and citations of these articles by scientists throughout the world have been copious.

Charles and Mary's research has changed the way that ornithologists and behavioral ecologists think about the costs and benefits of coloniality. Their demonstration of "information centers" (*Science* 234:83–85, 1986) set a new course for behavioral ecology, as did their comparison of the costs of ectoparasitism versus colony size (*Ecology* 67:1206–1218, 1986). Their analysis of ectoparasitism versus dispersal is exhaustive (*Ecology* 73:1718–1723, 1992), and their quantification of a heritable component to choice of colony size is elegant (*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 97:14825–14830, 2000). Their investigation of evolutionary change in response to a rare climatic event (*Evolution* 52:1461–1475, 1998) produced an important advance in our thinking about evolution. More recently, they have examined a bird-associated virus within their study population of swallows (*Molecular Ecology* 17:2164–2173, 2008), and this continuing research is likely to provide important insights into the ecology of arthropod-borne diseases. Among their myriad accomplishments, their finding of

rampant brood parasitism in Cliff Swallows is especially important (*Science* 224:518–519, 1984), as is their later discovery that individuals commonly transfer already-laid eggs between nests by moving them in their beaks (*Nature* 331:66–68, 1988).

Charles and Mary's long-term research on Cliff Swallows ranks as one of the most outstanding and most complete studies of any avian species. They now have a data set containing information for ~200,000 different banded individuals and >315,000 captures and recaptures. In tracking thousands of individuals over their careers, they have uniquely combined demography, coloniality, and lifetime reproductive success. *Coloniality in the Cliff Swallow* (University of Chicago Press, 1996) beautifully summarizes their research for professional biologists, and *Swallow Summer* (University of Nebraska Press, 1998) does the same for amateur ornithologists. Using behavioral observations, experimental manipulations, quantitative genetics, estimation of coefficients of natural selection, demography, epidemiology, and immunology, Charles and Mary have provided important insights into avian behavioral and population ecology. In recognition of their outstanding contributions to ornithology, the AOU is pleased to present each with a medal signifying receipt of the 2009 Elliott Coues Award.

Award criteria.—The Elliott Coues Award recognizes extraordinary contributions to ornithological research. The award is named in honor of Elliott Coues, a pioneering ornithologist of the western United States and a founding member of the AOU. There is no limitation with respect to geographic area, subdiscipline of ornithology, or time course over which the work was done. The award consists of a medal and an honorarium provided through the endowed Ralph W. Schreiber Fund of the AOU.