

## **Marion A. Jenkinson Aou Service Award, 2009**

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## MARION A. JENKINSON AOU SERVICE AWARD, 2009

M. ROSS LEIN



M. Ross Lein recording songs of Dusky Flycatchers in the Castle River Valley in the Rocky Mountains of southwestern Alberta, June 2009.  
(Photograph by Valerie Haines.)

With this award, we honor the memory of Marion Jenkinson Mengel, former treasurer and, in the words of the Wizard of Oz, “doer of good deeds” for the AOU. M. Ross Lein, the recipient for 2009, epitomizes the dedication, attention to detail, knowledge, and creativity that Marion brought to her many duties. Like Marion, Ross has served the AOU in many capacities, most notably as secretary for many years.

Ross was born in Estevan, Saskatchewan, where he developed an interest in nature, especially birds, at a very early age. As a high school student, he came under the influence of Robert W. Nero and C. Stuart Houston. After finishing high school, Ross entered the University of Saskatchewan, where he completed a B.A. in Biology in 1966 and, subsequently, an M.A. on “The breeding biology of the Savannah Sparrow at Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.” He then

journeyed to Harvard, where he became Ernst Mayr's last graduate student and completed an outstanding comparative study of vocal communication in wood warblers, one aspect of which was published in *Nature* in 1972. That paper, written and published by a graduate student, was an outstanding example of clear thinking and comparative study applied to the field study of birds. Upon completion of his Ph.D., Ross accepted an academic appointment at the University of Calgary, where he continues to this day as a professor in the Department of Biological Sciences.

Ross has supervised 18 graduate students and published numerous papers, many of which reflect his lifelong fascination with avian vocal and nonvocal display behavior. Many of his papers also reflect his love of the natural history of the Canadian prairies, boreal forest, and Arctic. Ross is a productive and successful scholar who has passed the love of ornithology on to many undergraduate and graduate students, but that is not why we celebrate him with this award.

Among his early contributions to the AOU was his service as book review editor for *The Auk*. Then, in the late 1990s, Ross agreed to stand for election as secretary of the AOU. He was re-elected nine times. As secretary he served five presidents and helped ensure that despite a number of organizational changes the AOU continued to run smoothly. Ross's knowledge of AOU history is the stuff of legend. If a question arose during discussion of a contentious issue, Ross could find the relevant historical information to put the question and issue in context. Many were the times that his information rescued a discussion from chaos and led to a productive resolution. The efficiency with which he organized business meetings, fellows meetings, council meetings, and anything else that needed organizing had to be seen to be believed. More

than once, a quiet word or two from Ross rescued a lost president and enabled the meeting to continue without a hint of trouble.

Unable to receive the award in person because of a scheduling conflict, Ross sent the following letter of thanks.

"I am deeply honored to have been selected by the Executive Committee to receive the Marion Jenkinson AOU Service Award for 2009. When I was a teenager, Stuart Houston encouraged me to consider ornithology as a career, as he encouraged a number of small-town boys from Saskatchewan, including past editor of *The Auk* Spencer Sealy.

"I attended my first AOU meeting in 1964, and the AOU has been my 'professional home' since that time. I met Marion Jenkinson at that meeting, although I did not realize her pivotal role in the functioning of the AOU at that time. At that meeting I also met Glen Woolfenden, Dick Banks, and Ned Johnson, all of whom became good friends, even though we were limited largely to annual interactions at meetings.

"Stuart, Glen, Dick, and Ned have all received the Jenkinson Award in the past. If I have provided valuable service to the AOU over my career, it is the result, in no small part, of the encouragement that they gave and the examples that they set."

*Award criteria.*—The Marion A. Jenkinson AOU Service Award was created by the Council in 1996 to honor Marion Jenkinson Mengel, who served the AOU as treasurer and in other capacities for many years. It is awarded to an individual who has performed continued extensive service to the AOU, including holding elected offices but emphasizing volunteered contributions and committee participation. Recipients are selected by the AOU Executive Committee. The award consists of a framed certificate.