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IN MEMORIAM: NED KEITH JOHNSON, 1932–2003

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Source: The Auk, 121(2) : 600-602

Published By: American Ornithological Society

URL: https://doi.org/10.1642/0004-8038(2004)121[0600:IMNKJ]2.0.CO;2

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In Memoriam



The Auk 121(2):600–602, 2004

IN MEMORIAM: NED KEITH JOHNSON, 1932–2003

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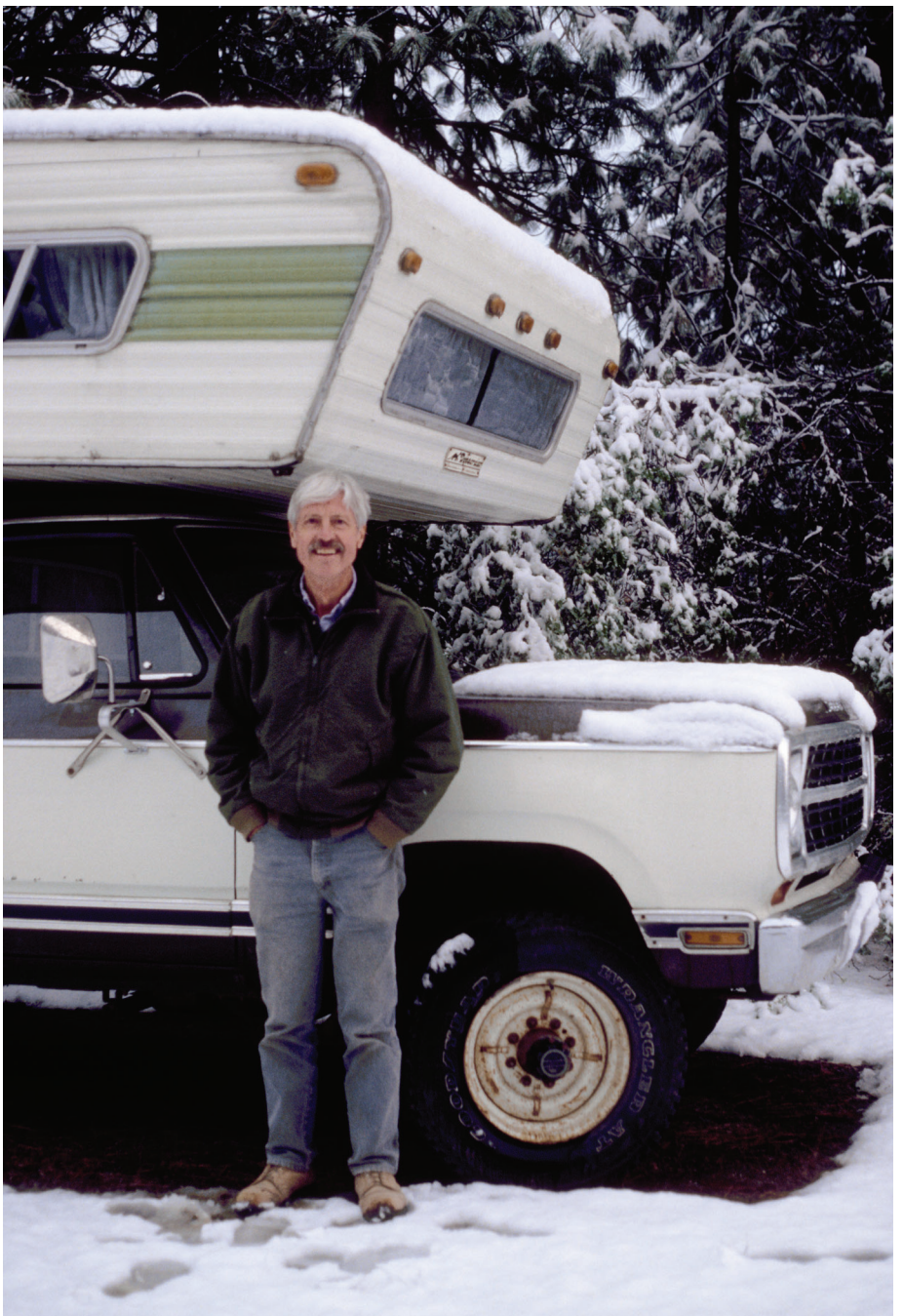
Ned Keith Johnson, a past President (1996–1998) and Life Member of the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU), died on 11 June 2003 at his home in Orinda, California, after struggling with leiomyoscarcoma for 15 years. He joined the AOU in 1951, became an Elective Member in 1964, and a Fellow in 1971. His passing ends a lifelong career dedicated to teaching and research on birds.

Ned was born in Reno, Nevada, on 3 November 1932. Although raised in a Mormon family, he eschewed religion early in favor of two childhood passions: birds and fishing. He got hooked on birds at the age of seven and nurtured his love of the outdoors by birding, hiking, or fishing in the mountains and desert near Reno, and by taking meticulously labeled photographs of birds when still a teenager. As an undergraduate at the University of Nevada-Reno (UNR), Ned tagged along with his older brother Kay—a retired fisheries biologist with the Nevada Division of Wildlife—on field trips and got a job working in the UNR bird collection as a curatorial assistant. Here Ned met his mentor Ira LaRivers, a UNR professor and expert on insects and fishes of Nevada. LaRivers added him as a subpermittee on his scientific collecting permit and took him on numerous collecting trips throughout Nevada. Ned soon realized the importance of scientific collecting for careful documentation of avian distribution and variation; he collected and prepared over 7,200 specimens, most of which are deposited in the UNR museum and the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley. Ned was known as a true champion of museum collections and specimen-based research. He spread this word to his students, emphasizing the value of specimens for studies of natural history, evolution, and conservation. Although he had a deep conservation ethic, he felt a growing frustration in later years toward increasingly negative attitudes against scientific collecting, purportedly in the name of conservation and animal welfare. He was especially disturbed by resistance toward collecting by biologists, even when specimens were crucial for answering particular questions.

Ned received his B.S. in biology from the UNR in 1954, married, and was drafted to serve in the U.S. Army in Germany from 1954 to 1956. After returning, he enrolled as a graduate student at the University of California (UC), Berkeley. Although courted by E. Raymond Hall to attend the University of Kansas, Ned chose Berkeley so that he could study birds with Alden H. Miller. By that time, Ned already had published 10 papers in *The Condor*, *Journal of Mammalogy*, and *Great Basin Naturalist,* the first in 1949 when he was only 17 ("Loggerhead shrike steals shot sparrow"). The topics of those early papers ranged from new distributional records for birds and mammals of Nevada, to natural history notes, such as "Dipper eaten by brook trout" and "Food of the Long-eared Owl in southern Washoe County, Nevada." Never daunted by a challenge, Ned chose to study the biosystematics of *Empidonax* flycatchers for his Ph.D dissertation, becoming the leading authority on this difficult and controversial group of birds. He completed his degree in zoology in 1961 and immediately joined the faculty at UC Berkeley where he remained until his death only two weeks before his planned retirement. As Professor in the Department of Integrative Biology (formerly Zoology), he also held the title of Curator of Birds at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology.

Although Ned's initial passion was to learn everything about the birds of Nevada, he soon branched out into systematics and speciation, biogeography and avifaunal change, molt, migration, bioaccoustics, plumage pigmentation, evolution of feathers, and sexual size dimorphism and food habits in raptors. Ned's papers were scholarly and detailed, and, as John Hubbard wrote, he showed an eagerness "to embrace and apply new concepts and techniques in ornithology, while never discarding the good features of the old ways." He published 123 papers, including two monographs on the systematics of *Empidonax,* co-authored the *Check-list of North American Birds*, *7th edition*, and co-edited a book, *A Century of Avifaunal Change in Western North America*. His work

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Ned Keith Johnson, 1932–2003

(Collecting birds in Trinity County, California, during a snowstorm, June 1999. Photograph by Carla Cicero.)

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on *Empidonax* became a model for studies of sibling speciation in birds.

Ned carried his zest for field work throughout his life. In addition to Nevada and other western states, his primary stomping grounds, field work took him to Alaska, Canada, Mexico, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Ecuador, Peru, Paraguay, Argentina, Venezuela, Trinidad, Germany, New Zealand, and South Africa. He often took his family on field trips, including two year-long sabbaticals to Central and South America. In an interview with *Living Bird* in 1996, Ned stated, "I'd die if I couldn't get in the field." He also felt a strong need to live among the birds while studying them, traveling in a four-wheel drive truck equipped with a camper for sleeping, cooking, and bird skinning. When he died, he was collaborating on several systematic revisions (*Cyanocitta, Perisoreus, Amphispiza*), bioaccoustic studies (*Vireo, Pipilo*), a new taxonomic description (*Synallaxis*), a book on geographic variation and evolution, and was planning several field trips to collect birds.

Ned was an active member of many professional organizations, including the American Association for the Advancement of Science (Fellow), California Academy of Sciences (Fellow), Cooper Ornithological Society (President, 1981–1983), International Ornithological Committee (Permanent Member), and Point Reyes Bird Observatory (Fellow). He won the A. Brazier Howell Award from the Cooper Ornithological Society in 1960, and the William Brewster Memorial Award and Marion Jenkinson Service Award from the AOU in 1992 and 2001, respectively. The latter, given while he was recovering from major cancer surgery, was awarded in recognition of Ned's 69 committee-years of service to the AOU, including 36 years on the Committee on Classification and Nomenclature of North American Birds.

Perhaps Ned's greatest influence was on the undergraduate and graduate students that he mentored and befriended during his 43-year career. His primary teaching assignments included Ornithology and Natural History of the Vertebrates, although he also taught a variety of other courses such as Biogeography, as well as graduate and freshman seminars. He loved students and students loved him. His enthusiasm and passion for natural history were contagious, and he left a legacy in the countless students who learned to appreciate the natural world in a completely different way. The following quotes from undergraduates summarize his impact: "Ned was the first professor at Berkeley to give me a chance." "He always made the time to help me out with anything, and did an amazing job at connecting with his students." "Ned was my favorite professor at Berkeley." "I can't say that I was inspired by many. Ned managed to be one of the great few." Despite his illness, Ned finished teaching the natural history course just three weeks before he died.

As the academic grandson of Joseph Grinnell, Ned perpetuated the legacy of strong scholarship at Berkeley by sponsoring 3 Master's students, Mercedes Foster, George T. Ferrell, and Carolyn S. Connors, and 15 Ph.D students, Robert B. Hamilton, Luis F. Baptista, Richard E. Johnson, James F. Lynch, Stephen F. Bailey, Robert M. Zink, Jeffrey G. Groth, Douglas A. Bell, Scott V. Edwards, Carla Cicero, Julia I. Smith, Kevin Burns, Thomas A. Stidham, Alison Chubb, and Jason A. Mobley. Although Ned encouraged his graduate students to work independently and to be original in their thinking, he was strongly supportive and readily available for consultation—except when collecting birds in the field. As Kevin Burns wrote, "In some ways he is not gone because his influence lives on in many of us."

Ned had many other passions, including music (especially classical, opera, and medieval folk songs) and fly fishing. He made every effort to combine scientific work with fishing and was looking forward to spending more time in both endeavors during retirement. He also loved to play guitar and sing, and his wit and dry sense of humor were unforgettable. Ned's death leaves a void in many arenas that will not be filled easily. He will be missed by family, friends, colleagues, and students, who are all richer for having known him.

Ned is survived by his partner, Carla Cicero, of Moraga, California; three daughters in California: Heidi, Rebecca, and Amy; a son, Alexander, of South Korea; and three grandchildren. He was predeceased by a son and a brother.

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The Auk 121(2):603, 2004

IN MEMORIAM: RICHARD LIVERSIDGE, 1926–2003

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Richard Liversidge was born on 17 September 1926 in Blantyre, Malawi, and died on 15 September 2003 in Kimberley, South Africa. His interest in birds began as a schoolboy, but he registered as an engineering student at the University of Cape Town in 1946. He worked full-time as a technician at the university, while he studied zoology and botany, one subject a year, and finally graduated in 1955. He subsequently worked at the Port Elizabeth Museum, during which time he studied the Cape Bulbul for his Ph.D. He was the first curator at the Tsitsikama National Park. In June 1966, he was appointed as Director of the McGregor Museum in Kimberley, a position he held until his retirement in 1986.

Liversidge co-authored, with Geoff McLachlan, the first (1957) and subsequent three revisions of the *Birds of South Africa*, originally published by Austin Roberts in 1940. He published over 80 scientific papers and 40 articles in various journals on botany, ecology, ornithology, mammals, and history. He also wrote *A Rapid Bird Guide* (1978) and *The Birds Around Us* (1990). He co-authored several other books on history and game management. He recently described two new species of pipit, the Long-tailed Pipit (*Anthus longicaudatus*) (*Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club* 116:211–215, 1996) and, together with Gary Voelker, the Kimberley Pipit (*Anthus pseudosimilis*) (*Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club* 122:93–108, 2002).

A member of several historical and game farmers' societies, his interests covered a wide range of subjects. He served on the executive committee of the National Monuments Council for 14 years, and on the councils of the Zoological Society of South Africa and the Wild Life Management Association. He was also the last surviving founding member of the Cape Bird Club, the Western Cape branch of BirdLife South Africa.

He was elected a Corresponding Fellow of the American Ornithologists' Union in 1974 and an Honorary Fellow in 1991. He became a Fellow of the Linnean Society of London in 1994 and a Fellow of the South African Museums Association in 1996. Other awards were for Game Conservation in Cape Province (1976), a Merit Award from the Northern Cape Game Ranchers' Association (1990), and the Cape Times Centenary Medal (1990) for outstanding achievements in the conservation of historical buildings. A special memorial issue of *The Ostrich* with his portrait will appear later this year.

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