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Source: *The Auk*, 122(2) : 711

Published By: American Ornithological Society

URL: [https://doi.org/10.1642/0004-8038\(2005\)122\[0711:IMPHRS\]2.0.CO;2](https://doi.org/10.1642/0004-8038(2005)122[0711:IMPHRS]2.0.CO;2)

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The Auk 122(2):711, 2005
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Printed in USA.

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Philip Harold Robert Stepney, a member of the AOU since 1971 and an Elective Member since 1985, was born in Edmonton, Alberta, on 17 November 1947. He earned a B.Sc. (Honors) in Zoology and Geology at the University of Alberta in 1969. He studied Brewer's Blackbirds with Jon C. Barlow at the University of Toronto and the Royal Ontario Museum for an M.Sc. in 1971, and studied competition between Brewer's Blackbirds and Common Grackles for the Ph.D. in 1979.

In 1977, Phil (as friends and colleagues called him) was appointed Curator of Ornithology of the Provincial Museum of Alberta in Edmonton. During his tenure there, he acquired thousands of birds—now a significant part of the museum's holdings. When Phil was unable to collect specimens during the long Alberta winter, he tracked down private egg collections and built one of the largest egg collections in North America by convincing the owners of the value of preserving their collections together in one place for research and exhibition. Ironically, a significant egg collection that Phil tried to buy throughout his career was finally acquired by the museum the week of his death.

He served as Director of the Provincial Museum of Alberta from 1989 to 2001. His influence was wide-ranging. Phil dreamed of creating a western-Canadian version of the Royal Ontario Museum. He added curatorial programs in Invertebrate Zoology and Quaternary Paleontology in 1983 and Bryology in 1988. He improved collections management systems, demanded higher academic credentials for his curatorial staff, and encouraged research. During his tenure as Director, the museum changed enormously. He developed a Master Plan that would have realized his dreams for the museum. In response to the greater pressure of market forces and despite budgetary restraint, he raised the museum's public profile and charted an entrepreneurial course of partnership and experimentation.

While in management, Phil's interests expanded to include the history of exploration and early development of the northern Great Plains. He acquired significant collections of Plains Indian material for the museum. He also forged research and exhibition exchange partnerships with provincial governments in Heilongjiang in northern China and Hokkaido in Japan. The museum initiated an active program of gallery renewal and feature exhibitions built from its own collections and through partnerships with museums worldwide. In the early 1990s, Phil acquired nationally significant collections of Plains Cree artifacts, 19th-century firearms, gems and minerals, western bronzes, and the Bob Scriver Blackfoot collection. He left behind a draft manuscript on French artist Paul Coze, who traveled western Canada in the 1920s and 1930s painting "traditional" aboriginal life, and another manuscript about horseback riding in the Rocky Mountains, a particular passion of his.

As a member of the AOU's Collections Committee (1984–1988) and co-chair in 1986, Phil participated in developing a set of guidelines and principles concerning the protection and use of ornithological collection resources in North America. He was a founding board member for the Alberta Bird Atlas Project and a driving force behind the publication of the massive *Bibliography of Alberta Ornithology* (McNicholl et al. 1982, Provincial Museum of Alberta Occasional Paper no. 3). He organized all the tours for delegates to the 19th International Ornithological Congress in Ottawa, 1986, and contributed to the 98th meeting of the AOU in Edmonton (1981). He was a founding member and membership secretary-treasurer of the Society of Canadian Ornithologists/Société des Ornithologistes du Canada.

Phil was 56 when he died in Edmonton on 19 May 2004 after a valiant five-year fight with multiple myeloma. He is survived by his wife, Donna, and their three children, Sean (Debbie), Erin, and Lindsay.