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Elsie Cole Collias was born in Tiffin, Ohio, on 24 March 1920, and died in Van Nuys, California, on 17 December 2006. Her grandmother taught her to read before she began formal schooling, and Elsie remained a recreational reader her entire life. Her father, Heath K. Cole, a lawyer with interests in nature, taught her the local birds. As a child, she developed an interest in insects and began collecting with a net made by her father; eventually she donated a substantial collection to Heidelberg College. She played snare drums in both high-school and college marching bands. She graduated *magna cum laude* from Heidelberg College in 1942. Elsie served as a teaching assistant at the University of Wisconsin, where she received both an M.S. (1944) and a Ph.D. (1948) in Zoology. While a graduate student in Entomology at Wisconsin, she was employed by the U.S. Public Health Service (1946–1947) and worked on mosquitoes in Georgia. After receiving the Ph.D., she was appointed an Assistant Professor at Heidelberg.

Elsie and I were married on 21 December 1948. In 1949, after she finished her teaching duties in Ohio, we traveled to Europe as guests of Niko Tinbergen at his field-studies summer camp in The Netherlands, and we spent time at Oxford University with David Lack at the Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology. While Lack was away briefly, we routinely weighed nestling European Swifts in the Oxford tower. We also visited zoos in Zurich and Bern. Subsequently, Elsie and I taught for four years at Illinois College in Jacksonville, Illinois, followed by a

year in Africa working on weaverbirds. From 1958 on, based at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), we continued to work as a team on bird behavior.

Elsie joined the AOU in 1974; she became an Elective Member in 1976 and a Fellow in 1982. She received the Elliott Coues Award (1980) from the AOU and the first Margaret Morse Nice Award from the Wilson Ornithological Society for lifetime contributions to ornithology (1997). She was made an Honorary Member of the Cooper Ornithological Society in 1994 and was a Fellow and Founding Member of the Animal Behavior Society.

She coauthored books on the evolution of nest building in weaverbirds (1964, University of California Publications in Zoology), on nest building and bird behavior (1984, Princeton University Press), and on external construction by animals (1976, *Benchmark Papers in Animal Behavior*). Much of this followed from her studies on African weaverbirds at UCLA and in the field. In this work, Elsie demonstrated the importance of practice and learning in the development of nest-building behavior in Village Weavers and described how the Sociable Weaver builds its apartment nest. She was primarily involved in early experiments to demonstrate the function of bright colors in bird mating and to elucidate the role of red bill color in the feeding response of young Franklin's Gulls. Elsie was the first to demonstrate experimentally the genetics of egg-color polymorphism in passerine birds. She also studied behavior in unconfined populations of



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(With Florida Scrub-Jays, Archbold Biological Station, Florida, 31 December 1979. Photograph by Nicholas Collias.)

Red Junglefowl at the San Diego Zoo and in Asia. When, in 1972, the Chairman of the UCLA Department of Zoology requested an appointment as Research Associate for Elsie, he wrote “together this husband–wife research team has turned out a steady stream of scientific publications accruing honor to UCLA, as well as to the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History.” Because California then disallowed nepotism, Elsie became a Research Associate at both institutions but received her salary from the Museum. She had more than 20 years of National Science Foundation support.

Elsie was conscientious in everything she did. She insisted that our daughter Karen

do her homework, and her early drilling on multiplication tables led to Karen’s love of mathematics. Elsie regularly spoke to the UCLA Faculty Women’s Club on her travels. She was also a long-term member of the Birding Section and, most fortunately for me, the International Cooking Section.

In the winter of 1997–1998, Elsie developed lymphoma, which was apparently cured by chemotherapy. A series of small strokes followed that gradually incapacitated her despite medicine’s best efforts. She is survived by her husband of 58 years, Nicholas, her daughter, Karen Collias Whilden of Vienna, Virginia, and a sister, Katharine Shinn.