

In Memoriam: James Harris Enderson, 1936–2017

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Source: Journal of Raptor Research, 51(3) : 393-395

Published By: Raptor Research Foundation

URL: <https://doi.org/10.3356/0892-1016-51.3.393>

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IN MEMORIAM
JAMES HARRIS ENDERSON
1936–2017

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Jim Enderson, among the original members at the founding of The Raptor Research Foundation, died on 10 January 2017 in Colorado Springs, CO, following a long battle with complication of the lungs. Jim will be remembered primarily for his groundbreaking work with the Peregrine Falcon, especially in Colorado, but also throughout the western United States, as a part of the breeding programs and efforts to reestablish the species following its decline over most of United States and southern Canada. Those were scary times for peregrine enthusiasts.

Jim was born on 3 November, 1936, in Sioux City, IA. His life up through early graduate school was spent in the Midwest. His initial contact with raptors as a young boy involved his capturing and keeping in captivity a fledgling American Kestrel. He received his university training at the University of Illinois, Urbana, where he obtained both a B.S. degree and later a M.S. degree in zoology in 1959. He then moved west to the University of Wyoming, Laramie, where he received a Ph.D. while doing research on the ecology of the Prairie Falcon in the central Rocky Mountain region. After that, he joined the faculty at the Colorado College in 1962 and became a full professor in 1975, serving as chair of the biology department for several years, and finally retiring as an emeritus professor in 2001. During his career, he taught a variety of courses from anatomy and physiology to ecology to the flora of Colorado. He was an active member of the falconry community and was one of the founding members in 1962 of the North American Falconer's Association.

Jim was an active publisher in the professional peer-reviewed scientific literature. Most of his publications, nearly 70 in all, concerned the Peregrine Falcon in some fashion, with a handful of publications on the Prairie Falcon and other raptors. Jim had numerous chapters in books and produced many reports on peregrines for government agencies. He served on two government Peregrine Falcon recovery teams; the first team assignment covered the Rocky Mountain region and the second team assignment covered the entire western half of the United States. Jim was appointed leader of that second team, but because of the plethora of problems it addressed, the process was lengthy and a final draft was never published.

He doggedly pursued the comeback of the peregrine in Colorado on an annual basis, eyrie by eyrie. He eagerly awaited the spring arrival of peregrines back at their nest cliffs and spent the breeding season constantly in the field, observing and tallying the results. Aside from Colorado, however, he spent parts of many field seasons in Alaska, Northwest Territories (Canada), Greenland, Zimbabwe, and took a sabbatical in Scotland to work on peregrines there. In the 1990s, he had students from the college work with him on migrant peregrines in Mexico and the Texas Gulf Coast. Then, again with students, he surveyed and monitored the comeback of peregrines in many of the national parks in the Colorado Plateau region. One of his latest papers detailed the nesting performance of the recovered falcon populations in the western states of Colorado, Montana, and Wyoming. In 2004, he coauthored a lengthy and important Technical Publication for the Colorado Division of Wildlife chronicling peregrine biology and management in Colorado between 1973–2001. We would call that a truly long-term study.

Jim was one of the 63 participants invited to the 1965 conference on Peregrine Falcons and their decline organized by Joseph Hickey and held in Madison, Wisconsin. Some of the Europeans attending the

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conference seemed to have firm ideas as to the link between the falcon's decline in Europe and chlorinated hydrocarbon chemicals. There were, however, no data from North America indicating that same relationship. So, in 1966, with funds from the National Science Foundation, Jim organized a small crew to gather biological samples from peregrine biopsies, their eggs, and their prey while traversing north-bound river systems starting in Alberta, Canada, and ending up near the mouth of the Mackenzie River at Inuvik, Northwest Territories. Jim had earlier looked for peregrines along a transect from Colorado up into Alberta. The results of his study, together with a similar study done in the same time period along the upper Yukon River in Alaska, were among the first published reports to establish the eggshell-thinning and falcon decline relationship with pesticides in North America.

Not content with just chronicling the falcon's decline, Jim investigated the possibility of breeding peregrines in captivity and paired several of his falconry birds in backyard breeding chambers. Having met with several years of failure, he developed and refined artificial insemination, and succeeded in producing the first Rocky Mountain derived peregrine (*Falco peregrinus anatum*) in captivity. When the Peregrine Fund located a western breeding facility at Fort Collins, CO, Jim donated his breeding stock and all of their progeny as seed stock for the Fund's program.

Colorado began actively investigating peregrines as part of their nongame program in the early 1970s and wisely began a long-term partnership with Jim. He helped develop and implement statewide annual nest monitoring to assess occupancy, eggshell condition, and productivity. When the pair at the Royal Gorge was found to be incubating cracked eggs, he undertook the first successful effort to foster two of the Peregrine Fund's captive-produced young to the pair. All the techniques to maintain the wild pairs and reestablish breeding falcons were either developed or refined under Jim's care in Colorado. Jim had a hand in nearly all of more than 500 Peregrines released into Colorado over 15 yr. If he was not directly involved in the young being released to the wild, he probably transported them by air in his Beechcraft Bonanza. When the Peregrine Fund relocated to Boise, ID, Jim flew many trips delivering wild eggs and returning captive young for release back to the wild. Jim's legacy is the recovery of Colorado's peregrines from a low of only 11 occupied sites in 1973 to an unimagined number greater than 160 territories in 2016.

Much of peregrine monitoring and recovery history and other significant events in Jim's life are chronicled in his delightful, popular book "Peregrine Falcon: Stories of the Blue Meanie," published in 2005 by University of Texas Press. His book is a staple for anyone interested in Peregrine Falcons and their history in North America. He also coauthored the book "Peregrine Falcons of the World" published by Lynx Edicions, Barcelona, Spain.

Jim received many awards and honors throughout his career. Not only did awards come from the Colorado College for his teaching and scholarship, but also from organizations such as the North American Falconers Association, the Raptor Research Foundation, and the Peregrine Fund, for his contributions to raptor husbandry, captive propagation, the reintroduction of peregrines, and conservation in general. We will miss greatly his smile, love of laughter, his clever remarks, and his overall human kindness. But, we have been fortunate, among many, to have shared that with him. He was a true friend, colleague, and confidante. He is survived by his wife Betty, son Ritt, and daughter Anne. His ashes will be scattered at his cabin and his favorite Colorado peregrine nest cliff.

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