



## IN MEMORIAM: PAUL GÉROUDET, 1917-2006

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## IN MEMORIAM: PAUL GÉROUDET, 1917–2006

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Paul Géroudet died of cancer in Geneva, Switzerland, on 23 November 2006. Géroudet's work was extraordinarily influential in French-speaking Europe in the 20th century, and he was largely responsible for the reintroduction of the Lammergeier in the Alps. A Corresponding Fellow (1964) and Honorary Fellow (2004) of the AOU, he was an honorary member of the ALA (Swiss German ornithological society), Société romande pour l'Etude et la Protection des Oiseaux, and Pro Natura, and Honorary Editor of *Nos Oiseaux*. He received the Grande Médaille Geoffroy St-Hilaire of the Société nationale de Protection de la Nature in Paris (1962) and honorary doctorates from the Universities of Neuchâtel (1963) and Geneva (1977). This recognition is remarkable given that Géroudet did not obtain a university degree and pursued ornithology in his free time.

Early in his career, Géroudet taught high school and then worked at the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) from 1967 to 1971. In the course of 31 years, he did field work, edited the quarterly *Nos Oiseaux*, wrote a six-volume ornithology manual, translated *A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe*, and was active in conservation, all during time off. It was only from 1972 to 1979 that he was finally able to pursue field work and writing full-time with fellowships from the Swiss National Science Foundation. Géroudet continued his multiple interests for another 15 years. In the late 1990s, macular degeneration greatly curtailed both his field work and his writing.

Paul Géroudet was born in Geneva, Switzerland, on 13 December 1917. His father, Arthur Géroudet, stimulated his interest in ornithology by taking him to the Museum of Natural History. The teenaged Géroudet studied birds with the encouragement of Robert Hainard (1906–1999) and Pierre Revilliod (1883–1954). By 1938, Géroudet was one of the

preeminent ornithologists in Switzerland. In 1939, Alfred Richard (1864–1940), then editor of *Nos Oiseaux*, asked him to replace him in that position. Géroudet accepted (he was 21 years old). In 1940, not finding a paying job as an ornithologist, he became a schoolteacher.

The six-volume *La Vie des Oiseaux*, and the seven volumes of the entirely revised edition, published between 1978 and 2000, constitute a handbook to the birds of the western Palearctic. Its comprehensiveness made it essential to French-speaking ornithologists. Two aspects of Géroudet's handbook deserve mention. First, Géroudet based most of the text on his own extensive field work. His treatments show a uniformity of presentation not found in the *Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa: The Birds of the Western Palearctic* or the *Handbuch der Vögel Mitteleuropas*. And secondly, because Géroudet was a master of the French language, his elegant, even poetic prose makes his accounts enjoyable reading and thus accessible to a wide audience. Géroudet's genius was his ability to combine readability with scientific accuracy. As a consequence, his books have attracted more French-speaking persons to ornithology than any other publication in that language and Géroudet can rightly be credited with being responsible for a renaissance in ornithology in French-speaking Europe.

Géroudet also wrote the three-volume *Les Oiseaux Nicheurs d'Europe* (1958, 1960, 1962), *Les Oiseaux en Suisse* (1969), *Last Survivors: The Natural History of Animals in Danger of Extinction* (with Noel Simon, 1970; published simultaneously in French), *Red List of Threatened and Rare Bird Species in Switzerland* (with Bruno Bruderer and Willy Thönen, 1977), *Atlas des Oiseaux nicheurs en Suisse* (with Alfred Schifferli and Raffael Winkler, 1980), *Les Oiseaux nicheurs du Canton de Genève* (with



PAUL GÉROUDET, 1917–2006  
(Photograph by François Vuilleumier.)

Claude Guex and Michel Maire, 1983), and *Les Oiseaux du Lac Léman* (1987). In addition to books, Géroudet contributed more than 680 articles, reports, and notes to ornithological journals and more than 100 popular pieces on conservation. He focused his research on the life history of birds and on problems of distribution and geographic expansion. Géroudet edited *Nos Oiseaux* for 55 years (1939–1994), soliciting manuscripts, rewriting poorly crafted articles, page-setting, and proofreading. He wrote everything by hand and never used a typewriter or a computer. Two features in *Nos Oiseaux* bear his hallmark. One was his organization of winter censuses of waterbirds, on which he published 37 reports. This program was incorporated into the European-wide censuses of the International Waterfowl Research Bureau (IWRB). The other was his organization, compilation, and publication, from 1947 onward, of seasonal ornithological calendars that summarize phenological information. The raw data included in these reports are largely unanalyzed, although Géroudet himself, in his *Les Oiseaux du Lac Léman*, synthesized decades of winter censuses of water birds.

Géroudet made two additional contributions, one in ornithology and the other in conservation biology. Géroudet's French-language version of *A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe*, which appeared in 1954, the same year as the original English text, was an instant bestseller. Géroudet adapted the British-oriented guide to a continental audience by making changes in nomenclature that agreed with current taxonomy, adding Italian and Spanish names, and improving species accounts. In French-speaking Europe, Peterson et al.'s *Guide des Oiseaux d'Europe* became "the Géroudet." It went through 13 editions, 6 of which were entirely revised by Géroudet himself. The latest appeared in 2006. Géroudet's *Guide des Oiseaux d'Europe* raised the bar in field identification in French-speaking Europe. Moreover, the same persons who used "the Peterson-Géroudet" in the field also read his *La Vie des Oiseaux* to learn more about avian biology. The two books combined, plus the journal *Nos Oiseaux*, allowed readers to become better ornithologists.

Géroudet worked as successfully in conservation biology as he did in ornithology. He made unceasing efforts to establish nature

reserves. One example is the "Teppes de Verbois" near the city of Geneva, where meanders of the Rhône River had created a habitat mosaic harboring a high biotic diversity. The area had been severely damaged by a dam and gravel pits. In addition, the government wanted to install a nuclear power plant there. Conservationists in Geneva, led by Géroutet and others, stopped the planned nuclear plant and reduced the gravel extraction. Further, they persuaded the authorities to finance the ecological restoration of the area. Recreated environments include ponds, one of which was named "The Géroutet Pond." A second involvement stemmed from his belief, which he backed by aggressive action, that species that had become extinct through human activities could be reintroduced. The Lammergeier was his prime objective for reintroduction. A program similar to the one that saved the California Condor succeeded, and the Lammergeier breeds again in the Alps.

Géroutet was my mentor in ornithology. He emphasized field techniques, note taking, and how to write papers, and introduced me to the ornithological literature and to figures like Lars von Haartman, Reginald Moreau, and Alexander Wetmore. Under a gruff demeanor, Géroutet hid a softer side. Even though not wealthy, he donated thousands of dollars from book royalties to worthy causes in ornithology and conservation. Carmen, his wife since 1950, was the ideal companion. Although she liked operas and he preferred operettas, they shared a love of travel and a passion for food. As a result of Paul's oenological knowledge, he was inducted in 1964 into Burgundy's illustrious group of wine connoisseurs, the "Confrérie des Chevaliers du Tastevin." Paul and Carmen Géroutet had no children. Detailed appreciations of Géroutet's extraordinary life and work have appeared in *Nos Oiseaux* (54: 3–28, 2007, with a partial bibliography) and *Der Ornithologische Beobachter* (104:70–74, 2007).

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## IN MEMORIAM: JOHN L. BULL, 1914–2006

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John Lewis Bull, who chronicled the birds of New York City and State, was born in Manhattan on 28 February 1914. Self-taught in natural history, John's first job after graduating from high school in New Rochelle was in the Bronx studio of the taxidermist, James Clark. John exhibited an early interest in both birds and butterflies and volunteered in the Entomology Department of the American Museum of Natural History. He was an active field naturalist, spending scores of hours in the field, often with other self-taught naturalists. In 1949, John was with banker-lepidopterist Sidney Hessel in Lakehurst, New Jersey, when Hessel discovered the striking Hessel's Hairstreak.

Childhood tuberculosis left John medically unfit for military service during World War II.

In 1942, he joined the United States Customs Service and served as an examiner and specialist in feathers at the Port of New York until 1959. After two years in southern Florida as a special investigator with the National Audubon Society, John returned to New York City. From 1962 until his retirement in 1983, he held a number of positions in the Department of Ornithology at the American Museum of Natural History: research assistant, field associate, scientific assistant, and senior scientific assistant.

John joined the AOU in 1947, became an Elective Member in 1965, and served on its membership committee in 1963–1965. His *Birds of the New York City Area* (1964) drew on the observations of numerous local birders, particularly members of the Linnaean Society of New