

## **Tom J. Cade 1928–2019**

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IN MEMORIAM  
TOM J. CADE  
1928–2019

Tom J. Cade, emeritus Professor of Ornithology at Cornell University and founder of The Peregrine Fund, passed away on 05 February 2019 in Boise, Idaho, at 91 years of age. He was born in San Angelo, Texas, in 1928, spent his boyhood there and in southern California, and served in the U.S. Army. He received his baccalaureate from the University of Alaska in 1951, and a Master's degree and Ph.D. in 1955 and 1958, respectively, at the University of California, Los Angeles. He published more than 250 scientific papers and three books. His dissertation on the ecology of Peregrine Falcons (*Falco peregrinus*) and Gyrfalcons (*F. rusticolus*) in Alaska (Cade 1960) set the standard for autecological studies of raptors. His early mentors included George Willett (Howard 1946), George Bartholomew (Dawson 2007), Thomas Howell (Cade et al. 2005), and Frank Pitelka (Batzli 2008). Tom was an active member of the Raptor Research Foundation (RRF) from its beginning and was a frequent contributor and peer reviewer for the *Journal of Raptor Research*. RRF's Tom Cade Award was named in his honor.

Much of what has been written about Tom Cade has focused on his career and his contributions as a scientist and conservationist; see for example, his oral autobiography (Cade and Blount 2018), a marvelously detailed recounting of his life and accomplishments. Notable posthumous remembrances include those of Gallagher (2019) and Genzlinger (2019); so rather than repeat what has been published, we reflect for our Raptor Research Foundation colleagues on his extraordinary character and other memories of him as a coworker and, of course, a friend.

Those who knew Tom Cade admired and valued him, each in our own way. He was a particular pal to every one of us, always approachable, always kind, and interested in what we had to say. And interesting himself. There was always something new with him, new because Tom's focus was far outside himself and never petty. He was an educated man, with language, and culture, and curiosity, and a deep familiarity with the natural world, of course. And yes, a fascination with falcons—their life histories, behavior, adaptations, habitats, their fabulous flight capabilities. For Tom, falcons were nature's superstars, and as a falconer, he got to know them close at hand. As we all know, he became concerned for their well-being, and dedicated himself to their survival. You know you have the right job when you keep doing it long after you retire. And that was Tom, a biologist every day, and a good one, and a family man blessed with his wife—our dear friend Renetta—children, grandchildren, and even great grandchildren.

He was a person who saw things through, and in a very determined manner. He saw the loss of the eastern Peregrine Falcon as a mandate for its restoration, and he took that idea all the way to home plate—from annihilation to a robust population. He was the person who said “Let's do it!” And together with some other enlightened, hard-working geniuses, the group of them did just that. Bravo!

The arc of Tom's life corresponded with the sweep of environmental awakening—the recognition that life on this extraordinary planet is an integration of processes—a grand assembly of fine details, all interdependent—the thing that Aldo Leopold wrote about when Tom was a teenager. The peregrine's predicament underscored Leopold's notion that nature works like a fine watch, and we are not to be throwing its parts away. Tom was present and active in that era of corroboration. Here was the sudden global permeation of an absurdly simple molecule (DDE) with wide-reaching, profound effects upon life's order, the first of many discoveries revealing humankind's impact upon the planetary ecosystem.

Tom's accessibility and easy nature made him a hub of information and perspective for the rest of us. He read all kinds of things, and usually had something to relate from that sphere. A new book or a scientific paper, a letter from someone studying something somewhere—always something new to learn more about, especially things that related to his understanding of raptors and his goal of saving them.

We do not think Tom could say “No” to an adventure. Picture him in his twenties, assembling his collapsible, somewhat doubtful canoe on the edge of the Yukon River at Dawson, Yukon Territory, loading his meager supplies, with onlookers worrying for his safety. Then weeks alone traveling downstream, looking



Tom Cade and his favorite Gyrfalcon, Kumpan. Photo © Kate Davis, 2008

for peregrine eyries, learning as he went, writing everything down. Tom had scads of subsequent adventures in Alaska, and elsewhere, and he never quit exploring even as he aged. As a young man, he was thrown from an open train car that flipped on a curve in the Alaskan wilderness, and as an older one still looking for falcons, he fell off a raft into the very worst rapids of the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon. In his mid-70s, (honestly!) he spent 18 d with Kurt Burnham, skirting at least a thousand miles of Greenland's rugged coast in an outboard motorboat, checking on seabird colonies, spending each night on the barren, rocky shore, with icebergs and those huge tides. He had many grand experiences—from St. Lawrence Island in the Bering Sea, to canoeing the Coleville River, field work in Iceland, Africa, Latin America, the island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean, and more. Tom was a very tough man, both mentally and physically. There he would be, at the end of an exhausting field day, working quietly on his notes, long after the rest of us had dissolved into relaxation and sleep, a self-contained, self-motivated man. Immersed. Committed.

Fieldwork was one thing, but then imagine his trips to Washington, DC, in the late 1960s and early 1970s to befriend bureaucrats, raise money, and share his concerns—to explain things to strangers, many of them on different planets, so to speak, and some having no prior knowledge of what he had in mind, nor what was happening in the environment. Starting from nothing in an unfamiliar landscape, turning indifference into helpful enthusiasm, he did it all in the name of restoring the Peregrine Falcon.

Falcons of all species thrilled him. So did shrikes, African sandgrouse, Bateleur (*Terathopius ecaudatus*), kangaroo rats, and pocket mice. He loved intricate details and remembered them. Just look at the myriad of particulars he recalled during his interviews with Clinton Blount in that wonderful book on Tom's life (Cade and Blount 2018).

So what was it with Tom and peregrines? What was it about them that so firmly held his attention throughout his life? We know that his first encounter with a wild one knocked him out. "*This bird,*" and we quote him, "*came plummeting out of the sky like an artillery shell.*" As with so many topics in nature, the more Tom learned, the more amazed he became. We think that Tom, like many others, imagined what it would be like to *be* a peregrine—what it might *feel* like—to suddenly wing-over and pursue a shimmering flock of shorebirds or a white-throated swift (*Aeronautes saxatalis*) in the gulf of air below a great cliff; to confront a trespassing

Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) six times your size and dangerous in the extreme; to travel to Argentina, then back across that vast landscape, year after year, to return to a particular little outcropping along the floodplain of an arctic river. We think that Tom remained, more or less, within a permanent state of wonder as he contemplated the natural world.

Tom Cade, in all his many facets, was a man of literature and poetry, and he occasionally recalled lines from the great works. His favorite poem, Renetta tells us, was Tennyson's *Ulysses*, which of course fits perfectly with Tom's unwavering philosophy of seizing the day. As the reader may recall from the storyline, Ulysses in his old age, back from the Trojan War and the long journey home, and now bored with being king, urges his sailors to join him in some new and exciting voyage: "*Tis not too late to seek a newer world. . . to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.*"

As we remember our dear colleague and friend, let us all take a moment and remember Tom laughing—chuckling that wonderful chuckle—his face aglow. Let that memory take us forward.—**Grainger Hunt (email address: [zzgrainger@gmail.com](mailto:zzgrainger@gmail.com)), 552-205 James Drive, McArthur, CA, 96056 USA; Clayton M. White, Professor Emeritus of Ornithology, 1146 South 300 West, Orem, UT, 84058 USA; and Lloyd Kiff, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, 900 W. Exposition Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA, 90007 USA.**

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In Memoriam Editor: Joel E. (Jeep) Pagel