

TRIBUTE TO A NATURALIST

by Peter Alden

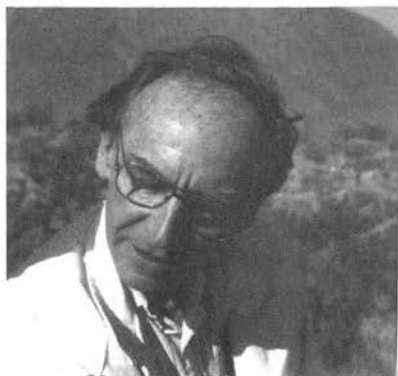
Jim Lane was a demigod to thousands of fledgling birders out west. His finding-bird books completed what O. S. Pettingill, Jr. started by pinpointing hundreds of bird-rich areas. A prolific writer and well-rounded naturalist, Jim could be counted on to know the reptiles and flowers as well.

Jim was the most welcomed "non-official" at most conventions of groups such as the National Audubon Society or American Birding Association. Everyone would ask for Jim, and he was always ready to go in the field. A quick smile and a long handshake greeted his thousands of admirers who knew he'd know where to take them or to direct them. Never aloof, Jim remembered all the good folk year after year and seemed to get his adrenalin flowing by seeing the joy in others as they saw each "new" bird.

Although his personal background was rarely discussed, and we often sensed he had influence in other disciplines, he was for birders the outgoing, omniscient naturalist so many of us wished we could be. As a tour leader for Massachusetts Audubon, he developed a unique style and a loyal following.

His many helpful books will be classics, a standard for others to revise. Those fortunate enough to have known this gentleman will long remember his charm and enthusiasm.

While leading a MAS tour with Jim Lane in the Chiricahuas, we were approached by a young "hotshot" birder who helped us find some rarity. When it was appropriate for introductions, he was introduced to me and knew of my Mexican work, but you should have seen his jaw drop when he learned he had just shown Jim Lane a bird. The reverence reminded me of reactions to finally meeting R.T.P.



Pat N. Fox who took this picture writes, "I have been on five trips with Jim Lane. The last one was in Big Bend. One evening, after everyone had collapsed from the rigors of the day, Jim found out that I had not seen a Poorwill. Despite his own weariness, he insisted that we get in the van and go find them, which we did. That was typical of Jim."