

## IN MEMORIAM: FRANK RICHARDSON, 1913–1985

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Twenty years ago, the Curator of Birds in the Burke Museum at the University of Washington welcomed a young graduate student/artist who was eager to study the patterns of color and forms of birds. The fact that the young man had majored in English rather than zoology made no difference, and the needed reference material was quickly made available. A look at the aspiring artist's watercolors was followed by thoughtful comment and bubbling enthusiasm. For the student, an important door had suddenly been opened and a relationship was being forged that would influence his life's work.

I was that student, and Frank Richardson was the Curator of Birds. How often I remember that day and the many to follow as Frank and later his wife Dorothy became my dearest of friends, friends who held deep-felt hope and expectation for a young man making his way in the world. Here were kindred spirits who shared not only in the adventures of scientific inquiry, but in the pleasures of creative expression in the arts.

Over time, I discovered that Frank gave much of his time and counsel not only to students and friends, but to the important environmental affairs of the Pacific Northwest. He was instrumental in forming the Washington Environmental Council and chaired the first wildlife committee. He was a principal force in bringing scientific attention to the significant wintering populations of Bald Eagles on the Skagit River. By persistently speaking in support of a preserve for these birds, Frank induced The Nature Conservancy to begin efforts that later

culminated in the Skagit River Bald Eagle Natural Area.

In more recent years, following his retirement from the University, Frank focused his scientific surveys and inventory work on unique habitats and avian populations in northern Puget Sound, and he worked aggressively for the successful preservation of these locations. During the period of his work, more than a half dozen islands in the Puget Sound archipelago were acquired by The Nature Conservancy. Because of these singular efforts, a preserve in these islands is to be established and named in his honor.

Frank earned his doctorate at the University of California at Berkeley and taught at the University of Nevada before coming to Washington in 1955. He was among the first of our contemporary scientists to carefully study segments of the Hawaiian avifauna, with a focus on honeycreepers. Island seabird populations along Washington's outer coast and within the Strait of Juan de Fuca also were given attention in his research. Breeding and foraging strategies described by Frank provided the foundation for a series of research papers.

Frank surely fit the description of the "curious naturalist," as there seemed to be little in the out-of-doors that escaped his interest. He understood the here and now, but looked to the future as well and applied his knowledge vigorously so that we might fashion a better tomorrow. With quiet dignity he gave more than most of his time, wisdom, and energy and inspired those who knew him well.