

## IN MEMORIAM: DONALD S. FARNER

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DONALD SANKEY FARNER, 1915-1988

Donald Sankey Farner, one of the most distinguished biologists of his generation, died on 18 May 1988 at the age of 73 years. Among his many honors, he served as President of the American Ornithologists' Union (1973-1975) and Editor of *The Auk* and was a recipient of the William Brewster Medal (1960). He had been a member of the American Ornithologists' Union since 1941.

Farner earned the B.S. degree from Hamline University (1937, *summa cum laude*), and the M.A. (1939) and Ph.D. (1941) degrees from the University of Wisconsin. While in Madison he met and married Dorothy S. Copps, a graduate stu-

dent in foreign languages. A daughter, Carla, was born in 1942, and a son, Donald C. ("Butch"), in 1943. After two years (1941-1943) as Instructor in Zoology at the University of Wisconsin, Farner entered active military service as a Lieutenant in the Medical Service Corps of the United States Navy (1943-1945). He subsequently remained active in the U.S. Naval Reserve and retired with the rank of Captain.

After mustering out of the Navy, Farner served for two years as Assistant Professor of Zoology at the University of Kansas, and then (1947) accepted a post at Washington State University as Associate Professor of Zoology. He

was promoted to Professor of Zoophysiology in 1952 and served in that role at Pullman until 1965. From 1960 through 1964 he was also Dean of the Graduate School.

During their early years at Washington State University, Don and his family regularly spent summers in the field. This included five at Crater Lake National Park, where he was a Seasonal Naturalist (Assistant Park Naturalist in 1951-1952) and one (1949) at the Flathead Lake Station of Montana State University, where he served as Visiting Assistant Professor. In 1965, Farner moved to the University of Washington, where he chaired the Department of Zoology from 1966 to 1981. He retired in 1985 with the rank of Emeritus Professor of Zoology, but remained active professionally until shortly before his death three years later.

Farner's career evolved mainly along four lines of distinguished achievement: original research, editorial leadership, biopolitics and diplomacy, and teaching (both formal and informal). Two attributes dominated the development of Farner's research life—his versatility and his skillful interactions with collaborators. His scholarship was deep and amazingly diverse, always grounded in a thorough (some of his students said "fanatic") knowledge of the literature of his subjects regardless of the language in which it was written. He authored or coauthored about 260 scientific publications. The earliest four of these (1941-1948), from his doctoral dissertation, concerned aspects of digestive physiology in domestic chickens, and were still cited at least as recently as 1986.

During his military service, Farner was assigned to studies of arthropod-borne diseases, in the course of which he wrote some 15 refereed papers (1943-1947) on the taxonomy of mosquitoes and trombiculid mites and their roles as vectors of disease. The first of his notes and papers on the natural history of fishes, salamanders, reptiles, and birds in Crater Lake National Park appeared in 1942. His monograph *The Birds of Crater Lake* (1952) is still a standard reference for the region. During this period Farner also published several seminal studies, using bird-banding data, on avian demography and philopatry. These solidified his growing reputation as an up-and-coming ornithologist in the traditional sense.

In the late 1940s, however, the underlying experimentalist in Farner surfaced in his initial studies of the photoperiodic control of the avian

annual cycle, carried out with his earliest students, L. R. Mewaldt, A. C. Wilson, and J. R. King. He set the stage for this redirection of his research interests with his classic review "The annual stimulus for migration" (*Condor* 52: 104-122, 1950). Except for infrequent excursions into other topics (e.g. thermoregulation in seabirds), Farner's attention remained fixed on photoregulation, reproductive biology, and endocrinology for the remaining three decades of his research career.

Farner's *modus operandi* in research soon settled on very fruitful and effective sponsorship of talented postdoctoral students and collaboration with visiting senior scholars. The almost uninterrupted parade of these stimulating people began in Farner's laboratory in Pullman in the mid-1950s, and provided a rich setting for the education of his graduate students there and later in Seattle. Farner formed particularly enduring research alliances with Hideshi Kobayashi (Tokyo), Andreas Oksche (Giessen), Arturs Vitums (Pullman), Brian Follett (Bristol), Jürgen Aschoff (Andechs), their students, and, in a few cases, students of their students. These and many others were a world-wide family in which Farner gave as much as he gained. His laboratory was a case study in effective, nonexploitive research administration.

Farner's accomplishments in research alone would have sufficed to earn him an illustrious reputation, but his prodigious energy overflowed into prominent roles, as already noted, in academic administration, national and international scientific diplomacy, editorial service, and curriculum development. His first post in academic administration was as Dean of the Graduate School for four years at Washington State University. During his 15 years as Chairman of the Department of Zoology at the University of Washington, the department grew to first-rank stature, owing in no small part to Farner's astute appraisals of people and his powers of persuasion. His administrative skills were widely recognized, and he often served as a consultant on the organization or reorganization of academic departments and research institutes. He took special satisfaction from his leadership of the feasibility study (1961-1962) that culminated in the founding of the Institute of Arctic Biology at Fairbanks, and from his role as an advisor to the USSR Academy of Sciences (1981).

Farner's keen interest in world-wide biology

and biologists drew him and his family to sabbatical years in New Zealand (Dunedin, 1953, as a Fulbright Research Scholar) and Australia (Nedlands, 1959, as a Guggenheim Fellow), and various periods of residence, accompanied by his wife Dottie, at the Max-Planck-Institut für Verhaltensphysiologie (Andechs), where he was a Senior Scientist of the Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung in 1978 and 1985.

Farner seemed to thrive on travel and was often accompanied by Dottie. Their map-of-the-world Christmas cards, with their beloved weekend home in the San Juan Islands depicted as the centrum of their travels during the previous year, were a seasonal highlight for scores of friends and acquaintances. The events and duties that kept Farner jetting around the globe were not only invited lectures and symposia, of which there were many, but also leadership roles in international science. Among the most prominent of these were his services as Secretary-General (1964–1967) and President (1967–1973) of the International Union of Biological Sciences. In various roles in the International Congress of Ornithology, including service as President of the Berlin meeting in 1978, Farner was a primary force in broadening the perspective of the Congress and in modernizing its administration. At the interface between international and domestic science policies, he served a term as a member of the Smithsonian Council (1966–1972) and in several capacities with the U.S. National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council. He took special pride in his accomplishments as Chairman of the NRC Division of Biological Sciences in 1969–1974. At the national level, Farner took part for many years in the affairs of the AAAS, the American Society of Zoologists (President in 1984), and many other organizations including the American Ornithologists' Union. He was an Honorary Member of the Cooper Ornithological Society, the Deutsche Ornithologen-Gesellschaft, the Ornitologiska Föreningen i Finland, and the Societas Scientiarum Fennica.

Farner's international perspectives and acquaintanceship stood him in good stead in his many editorial roles. He served on various editorial boards and as editor or section editor of several prominent journals, including *Chemical Abstracts*, *Journal of Experimental Zoology*, and *Cell and Tissue Research*. His editorial work is best known, however, for what might be called "creative editing." This entailed not only the or-

ganization of many timely symposia and the redaction of their proceedings, but also the launching of much larger works. These included the serial monographs entitled "Zoophysiology" (Springer-Verlag, originally "Zoophysiology and Ecology"), for which Farner was Coordinating Editor for 21 years, and the first nine volumes of "Avian Biology" (Academic Press), of which he was co-Editor from 1968 until his death. Both of these major works benefited immeasurably from Farner's global viewpoints and from his uncanny memory, which produced lists of potential authors, with their strengths and shortcomings, on a very extensive array of topics.

Perhaps the least widely known of Farner's many interests were his contributions to biological education and curricular reform. He taught undergraduate classes throughout his career and, although he might sometimes grouse about "the little buggers," he took his classroom duties seriously. He helped to modernize the high-school biology curriculum as a member of the BSCS Green Version Writing Team (1964–1967) and the BSCS Steering Committee (1967–1970). The original undergraduate core curriculum and Program in General Biology at Washington State University were largely products of Farner's vision and efforts in the early 1960s, as was the Ph.D. Program in Zoophysiology.

At the graduate level, Farner trained about 20 Masters and Doctoral students, many of whom have developed distinguished careers of their own. In this role, Farner was a patient but exacting taskmaster. He taught mainly by example rather than by exhorting or cajoling, and he was himself a formidable example. His students soon knew that they must establish rigorous and regular work schedules; that they must master the research literature, both classic and current, of their field regardless of the languages in which it was written; that they must write and speak in clear English; and, above all, that their theses or dissertations must be the result of original, independent thought and work. We suspect that all of us who were his students will recall the trepidation with which we sometimes anticipated the weekly conferences in which our mentor "inquired into our progress" and instilled in us a version of his own *modus vivendi*.

A rich and complex career bespeaks a deep and complex man, and Farner was surely that. Doubtless the varied people with whom he in-

teracted retain varied recollections of him. Those of us who knew him well and longest remember a man who deployed his astonishing energy and stamina with great forethought and efficiency. If we were allowed only one word to describe what motivated Farner's professional life it would have to be "excel." He strove to be excellent himself, to promote excellence in his colleagues and his university, and for excellence in the many organizations in which he played a role as a leader. He felt good about the medals, invitations, and many other forms of recognition that peppered his curriculum vitae; but it was not the limelight itself that gratified him most, but rather just the symbols that he was progressing along his chosen path. He was typically impatient with long-winded introductions or florid praise from the podium. He often expressed his annoyance forthrightly, at least to those who were able to interpret the signals from his celebrated eyebrows. It is cer-

tain that he would snort and grimace if he were to read this Memorial.

We visited with Don for the last time in August 1987, at the AOU meeting in San Francisco. As usual, he did not gather an entourage of the sort by which prominent people sometimes seek to display their importance. As usual, he spent as much or more time chatting with students as with his peers and cronies. As usual, he offered sound advice to the AOU Council and was wryly philosophical when the councillors did not agree with him. As usual, he appeared as his one-of-a-kind persona—voluminous shorts, a bowtie on formal occasions, stubby tobacco pipe, and wisps of hair awry. Only a few months earlier he had lost a kidney to the disease that finally killed him. Nevertheless, in spite of his depleted stamina, he was keen and optimistic; and, as usual, "just on my way home from a few days in Europe." We bid him an affectionate farewell.