



WILLIAM BREWSTER MEMORIAL AWARD, 1989
NOEL F. R. SNYDER

One of the important contributions that ornithology has made to conservation biology has been the lesson that decisions about the management of endangered species should be based on the results of long-term intensive field studies. This principle has been demonstrated with great clarity by the work and writings of Noel F. R. Snyder. From 1972 to 1976, as a Research Biologist for the Endangered Wildlife Research Program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Snyder directed the study of the remnant population of the Puerto Rican Parrot in the Luquillo Forest. The project involved a complex strategy to protect habitat, to improve nest-site availability, to control the impact of predators, to defuse competition with other species, to establish a captive population, and to bolster the wild population with captive progeny. Implementation of these measures has resulted in the wild population that rebounded from only 13 individuals in early 1975 to a minimum of 45 individuals by mid-1989. Captives now number more than 50 birds. The development of the program is well summarized and cast in the perspective of general parrot biology in Snyder's recent book, co-authored with James W. Wiley and Cameron B. Kepler, entitled "The Parrots of Luquillo: Natural History and Conservation of the Puerto Rican Parrot" (1987, published by the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology, Los Angeles).

In 1980 Snyder took over direction of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service efforts to study the declining wild population of the California Condor. At that time, causes of decline were still uncertain, and there was considerable controversy among private and public agencies over the best strategies to follow in rescuing the species. Particularly controversial was the proposal to establish a captive population. Snyder and his colleagues developed a broad approach that involved comprehensive censusing by flight photographs, intensive observations of nesting pairs, and mortality studies through radiotelemetry. They found that the species was not suffering mainly from reproductive problems but was heavily stressed by excessive mortality, especially by hard-to-correct poisoning from lead bullet fragments in carcasses. Concurrent with these studies, Snyder became an increasingly strong advocate of captive breeding as a near-term necessity for survival of the species. He led the efforts to establish a captive population, initially through multiple-clutching of wild pairs and artificial incubation of wild eggs, but finally by trapping all the wild birds when their mortality rates proved to be far beyond control. Acceptance of the wisdom of this position came slowly, but with the successful hatching of a number of captive-produced eggs in 1988 and 1989, the Recovery Team is now looking forward to first attempts to reestablish condors in carefully selected wild habitats in the early 1990s. Noel

and Helen Snyder have summarized the entire history of the study of the biology and conservation of the California Condor in a major review (*Current Ornithology* 6: 175-267, 1989).

In recognition of his record of excellence in sustained field research, many highly regarded publications, and unquestioned integrity, the American Ornithologists' Union takes great pride in presenting the William Brewster Memorial Award for 1989 to Noel F. R. Snyder.