



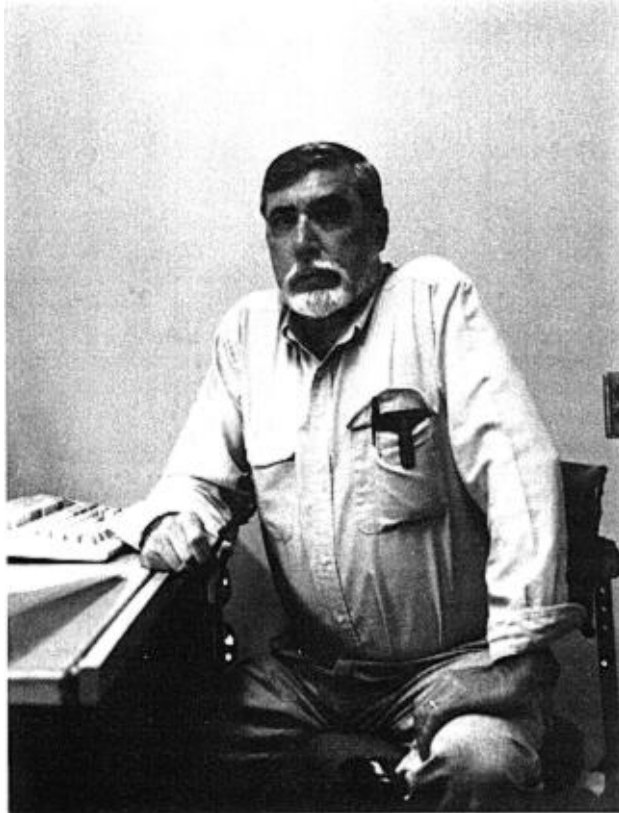
In Memoriam

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IN MEMORIAM: JAMES R. KING, 1927-1991

GLENN E. WALSBERG

Department of Zoology, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona 85287, USA



JAMES R. KING, 1927-1991

(Photograph taken at Washington State University, Pullman, Washington in December 1990 by Joan Folwell)

James Roger King, a leading student of avian biology and environmental physiology, died on 7 April 1991. His diverse honors include election as President of the American Ornithologists' Union (1980-1982), President of the Council of the Cooper Ornithological Society (1977-1978), recipient of the William Brewster Medal (1974), Fellow of the John Simon Gug-

enheim Foundation (1969), and Editor of the *Condor* (1965-1968). He became a member of the American Ornithologists' Union in 1952 and was elected a Fellow in 1967.

Jim was born on 12 March 1927 in San Jose, California. He received his undergraduate education at San Jose State College. While at San Jose, he met Eleanor Porter, whom he married

in 1950. A daughter, Julia, was born in 1953, followed by a son Robert in 1956 and a daughter Joanna in 1959.

While an undergraduate, his interest in the biology of birds was initially stimulated by an ornithology class taught by William Graf. Following graduation with a B.A. in biological and physical sciences from San Jose State College, King moved to Washington State University, commencing a 40-year residency at that institution that was interrupted only briefly and sporadically. He earned an M.A. in 1953, working under the tutelage of George E. Hudson and documenting the breeding birds of the Palouse Prairie of southeastern Washington. During this period, he also developed an interest in environmental physiology through exposure to the work of Donald S. Farner, then an Associate Professor of Zoophysiology at Washington State University. King and Farner thereafter maintained close ties throughout their lives. King was one of Farner's earliest students and one of the two with whom Farner was most impressed to the end of his life. With Farner as major professor, King embarked upon his Ph.D. studies of premigratory adiposity in the White-crowned Sparrow. His education thus provided him with the fortunate combination of an appreciation for avian natural history and an expert knowledge of experimental physiology.

Following attainment of the Ph.D. in 1957, King accepted a position as Assistant Professor of Experimental Biology at the University of Utah, which he held for three years. He then returned to Washington State University to accept a faculty position there. At that university, he was an Assistant Professor (1960–1962), Associate Professor (1962–1967), and Professor of Zoophysiology (1967 until his death). He also served as Chairman of the Department of Zoology from 1972 until 1978.

King's career was characterized by consistent dedication to excellence in all professional activities, be they research, professional service, or teaching. In his first academic appointment at the University of Utah, undergraduates found him to be a tough, demanding, and highly knowledgeable instructor—and clearly one of the best in the university. The quality of his lectures was such that, more than 30 years later, former students can still recall portions verbatim. At the graduate level, his lecture courses in environmental physiology and scientific writing at Washington State University were of

the highest quality. As a graduate mentor, he was simultaneously demanding and tolerant. He expected his graduate students to exhibit levels of rigor and dedication similar to his own. Few, of course, could fully meet such expectations. I was impressed with how effectively he suppressed disappointment and channeled his displeasure into constructive efforts at educating and molding a student. On rare occasions, however, when he despaired over a particularly egregious offender, he was capable of verbal eviscerations that were remarkable not for their volume but rather for their perspicacity and linguistic skill.

King's judgement of academic issues was highly regarded, and he made notable contributions through service to the academic community. As Chairman of the Department of Zoology at Washington State University, he provided strong leadership. He led primarily by example and encouragement, but occasionally by coercion or verbal blasting—particularly of those whom he felt should know better. He frequently was recruited to evaluate academic programs at other universities. Conversations with deans reveal that his opinion was particularly valued because it was carefully balanced, clearly expressed, and always forthright. King's personal integrity was such that he would not lower standards or suppress his views, when he felt them sufficiently important, to conform to fads or for personal gain. For example, he was interviewed for a position as chair of a biology department at a major university. Accepting the position would have meant substantial personal and professional benefits. When discussing the position with the president of the university, however, he was informed that the new chair was expected to "keep the faculty in line" and "ensure that research in the department was of a nature most profitable to the institution." Jim responded that such views ran against the heart of the academic tradition of free inquiry and, ultimately, would damage the university as a community of scholars. Finally, in a classic piece of King phraseology, he stated that the president sounded like an "academic fascist." This rather limited the likelihood of his being offered the position.

Such honesty and adherence to ethical principles should not be confused with unnecessary abrasiveness or egocentricity. As with graduate students, I often was impressed with his level of tolerance for—and amiability with—those in

the academic community with whom he disagreed or had grievances. At times, however, Jim could present an intimidating presence. This was usually unintentional and due in part to his physical size, his Scottish mien, and his reputation for high standards. The faint-hearted who did not come to know him missed his fine sense of humor. My personal files—and I suspect those of others—are replete with letters from Jim commenting on academic issues and personalities in terms that were simultaneously perceptive, funny, and pungent. He was a regular, although anonymous, contributor to the *Auklet*.

In research, just as in his teaching and academic service, Jim was characterized by a remarkable combination of dedication, creativity, and acumen. He was known for putting in regular, long hours of work, and once said that he had "no hobbies. My work is my hobby." This was not completely true, but he was a remarkably hard worker throughout his career. As a Postdoctoral Fellow in his laboratory in 1976–1978, I commonly arrived to start the day by finding the coffee pot still warm from Jim's departure in the small hours of the morning.

Although much of his work used the White-crowned Sparrow as a study subject, King was not content to devote his career to a single research focus. Rather, he moved through and made pioneering contributions to several subdisciplines of environmental physiology—including chronobiology, energetics, biophysical ecology, and nutritional ecology. Within each subdiscipline, his approach was nearly a perfect example of the scientific process. Jim was skilled at identifying key questions and in designing experiments to effectively address them. His data collection and analysis were notable for high scientific rigor and for adroit use of approaches that effectively integrated natural history, physiology, chemistry, and physics. In addition to the direct contributions of his papers, the suc-

cess of this integrative approach also prodded other workers in ecological physiology toward increased emphasis on the placement of physiological responses and adaptations in their appropriate natural context.

King's papers often were a joy to read. He had a superb gift for writing, both professionally and personally. I was once amazed to observe him turn an unimpressive graduate thesis into a landmark paper that he coauthored with the student. He did this by reanalyzing the data, combining them with a novel and creative set of views, and expressing them in an elegantly crafted paper. Less well-known, but certainly not unrelated to his professional writing skills, was Jim's fondness for poetry. This extended even to the point of publishing a set of poems on cranial-nerve function in the *Physiologist*.

King's scientific contributions, of course, extended well beyond his production of primary research articles, and included editorial activities and the publication of synthetic reviews. The multivolume series *Avian Biology*, which he coedited with Donald Farner, is one of the best synthetic compendia on any group of organisms. This series not only reflected, but also accelerated, a shift toward the altered view of ornithology as a broader and more integrated scientific study that the term "avian biology" has come to signify. In addition, King's own review articles were unusually valuable because they were synthetic as well as summarizing, commonly presented novel and stimulating views, and frequently challenged widely accepted notions. By doing so, he significantly altered the development of environmental physiology.

Throughout his career, Jim King was an exemplar of a scientist and scholar. His creativity, combined with high professional standards and a strong preference for constructive action, produced an enduring effect on his discipline and on those of us privileged to have known him.