

MILLER RESEARCH AWARD

At its 1995 annual meeting, the Cooper Ornithological Society announced the recipient of the Loye and Alden Miller Research Award, which is presented for lifetime achievement in ornithological research. The Miller Award Committee, with the approval of the Board of Directors, honored Barbara Blanchard De Wolfe with the citation as given below.



BARBARA DE WOLFE

CITATION FOR BARBARA DE WOLFE

Barbara Blanchard De Wolfe, pioneer in the studies of avian life history and physiology, launched her career by studying the biology of the White-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*). Her Ph.D. research on two subspecies of White-crowned Sparrows, under the direction of Joseph Grinnell, is a classic model for field studies of the natural history of reproductive cycles. This remarkable opus, which was years ahead of its time, catalyzed detailed studies spanning several decades and dealing with diverse ornithological subdisciplines such as taxonomy (e.g., Banks, Lein), environmental physiology (e.g., Farner, King), and song dialects (e.g., Marler, Baptista, and others). Throughout this continuing work by others, De Wolfe has pursued her own research and has remained a dominant figure in these areas for over half a century. Indeed, her work is the primary reason that the White-crowned Sparrow has become one of the most frequent subjects of avian research.

Natural history is no longer popular among the funding agencies, yet, only in good detailed natural history studies such as De Wolfe's can we come to understand what organisms actually do in their environment. For example, some of the classic research in animal behavior involves laboratory studies of song development in various emberizine birds. In the lab, hand-

raised naive nestlings eventually learn song during a short time window (the sensitive period), then are silent through the fall and early winter (the memorization phase), and in the spring practice and sing the song acquired the previous year. However, by following young birds in the field De Wolfe discovered that fledgling Nuttall's White-crowned Sparrows (*Z. l. nuttalli*) sing adult song in the fall when they try to stake out territories. Thus, the long memorization phase observed in the laboratory by several workers is possibly an artifact of the lack of social interaction in a deprived situation.

In addition to constituting major scientific breakthroughs, De Wolfe's early studies were also societal breakthroughs as they were conducted in an era when women were tolerated but not really welcome in the biological sciences. Throughout her many years of teaching and research, she has been a model for the earnest, yet good-natured scientist who is far more concerned with seeking the truth and sharing the joys of research than with enhancing her reputation and ego.

In recognition of her heroic and pioneering studies, her over 50 years of excellence in biological research and excellence in teaching, for being an inspiration to generations of young men and women, the Cooper Ornithological Society takes pleasure in awarding Barbara Blanchard De Wolfe the Miller Award for 1995.