

Eugene Eisenmann 1906-1981

It would be quite impossible, in the space available, to present an adequate account of Eugene Eisenmann's services to ornithology, to ornithological institutions and their publications, and to literally hundreds of friends and strangers around the world. Gene died in his sleep, apparently on October 13, 1981, leaving a shock wave rippling across the world. Although he had been in ill health recently, and had successfully come through two heart attacks, in the weeks before his death he seemed as animated, concerned, and involved in as many activities as ever.

We first met Gene on a trail on Barro Colorado Island, Canal Zone, in 1934, and since we had been friends and companions ever since, this must be a personal memorial. During all those years we looked upon him as a trusted guide and wise mentor, and indeed the ornithological world depended on him for "the last word" on matters taxonomic, especially south of the Mexican border. He was one of our most helpful Editorial Advisors, and his special contribu-

tion to *American Birds* was critical: he was the first ornithologist of great repute to contribute a major article when we first—without any backlog—ventured to publish major articles; with his paper on the spread of the White-tailed Kite (1971), he demonstrated to his peers that *American Birds* was a valid outlet for important papers: that one act started the flow.

Other eulogists will cite his long and generous record: his formal education and career in law, his gradually increasing devotion to ornithology, his long-time involvement (as President, Editor, and Fellow) in the Linnaean Society of New York, and with the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, as founding member and President. Better known nationally were his services to the American Ornithologists' Union, as Editor of the *Auk*, as Vice President, and through service on many committees, foremost among them the Committee on Classification and Nomenclature (the "Check-list Committee") most recently as Chairman. It is ironic that he did not live to see the publication of the 6th Edition, in which he was so instrumental, realised.

Among major publications were "Annotated List of Birds of Barro Colorado Island, Panama Canal Zone," (*Smithsonian Misc. Publ.*, Vol. 117, No. 5, 1952), and "The Species of Middle American Birds," *Trans. Linnaean Soc.*, N.Y. Vol. VII, 1955. Perhaps equally important was the assistance he freely gave to countless researchers and authors in neotropical birds; it would be hard to find a paper published in the last quarter century that did not acknowledge his counsel. Indeed, almost the first question asked by editors and referees on receipt of such papers would be "Has Gene seen it?" and if the answer was negative, the errant author would be advised to take steps. The flow of correspondence from the battered typewriter at his desk at the American Museum of Natural History, all typed with one hand, but always carefully researched, was enormous.

It is an understatement to say that this wise and genial man will be missed. He leaves an enormous void, but also a legacy of wisdom that will live.

—Robert Arbib

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