

In Memoriam

George J. Wallace

PROFESSOR EMERITUS OF ORNITHOLOGY at Michigan State University where he taught from 1942 until his retirement in 1972, Wallace died on March 8, 1986, at the age of 79. Perhaps best known for his research into the effects of DDT on robins, he successfully fought against the use of the pesticide, even at the risk of his job.

Originally from Vermont, Wallace retained his dry Yankee humor and was much valued as a speaker. He lectured

and traveled widely and received many awards in his lifetime. Before settling in Michigan, Wallace worked for the Vermont Fish and Game Service and was the director of a bird and wildlife sanctuary in western Massachusetts.

The author of two books, "An Introduction to Ornithology" and "My World of Birds," Wallace wrote several monographs and had over 100 articles published in ornithological journals. He was an active member in many profes-

sional organizations, including an honorary life member of the Michigan Audubon Society, a Fellow of the American Ornithologists' Union, and a member of the Wilson Ornithological Society.

Remembered as an outstanding teacher, one of his former students recalled Wallace as a teacher who "inspired interest and a love of birds in all of his students."

He is survived by his wife, Martha; two daughters, five grandchildren and two brothers. Memorial contributions can be made to the Michigan State University Development Fund. **M.G.S.**

Edgar B. Kincaid, Jr.



Suzanne Winckler

THE DEATH OF EDGAR B. KINCAID, Jr., last August at the age of 63 left Texas birdwatchers without a father figure. For over 40 years, Kincaid set

standards of excellence as a field observer, passing on his skills to generations of younger birders. He was passionately interested in what he called "ornithological history"—that is, in the changes of abundance and distribution

of birds in one area over time—and in pursuing this interest he was an ecologist well before the term came into common parlance. The best example of this lifelong passion may be found in sections of *The Bird Life of Texas*, a two-volume work written in the early 1900s by Harry Church Oberholser, but edited and updated with great style and authority by Kincaid.

Born in 1921 in San Antonio, Kincaid grew up on a ranch in the Hill Country, where, unlike the vast majority of his peers, he was attracted to the natural world rather than to the world of cattle and horses. He loved to tell the story of how, at about age six, he first laid eyes on a meadowlark on the cover of *Burgess Bird Book for Children* in a department store in San Antonio, and how he begged his mother (he claimed he threw a tantrum) to buy it for him. Subsequently, yellow (the shade of the meadowlark's breast) was his favorite color. He displayed it often in the form of stocking caps, neckties, and socks.

Kincaid earned a bachelor's degree in botany at the University of Texas. After college he went on lengthy sojourns to Chicago and New York, where he studied the bird collections at the natural history museums. A self-educator, to his large store of knowledge about Texas birds he added even more about birds of the world. Although he

traveled relatively little (continental United States, Mexico, and Hawaii), his international interests in birds manifested itself in his extensive ornithological library (now residing at Texas A&M University). To many people's surprise, Kincaid was also quite knowledgeable about fish, mammals, and opera, too.

During the 1950s and early 1960s, Kincaid was very active in the Texas Ornithological Society, serving for some time as an enthusiastic editor of the newsletter (he often included his distinctive child-like renderings of birds in the masthead and margins). He became

interested in Mexico, where he went as a young man with Irby Davis to assist in making sound recordings of neotropical birds, well before there were adequate field guides or so much general ornithological interest in the area as there is today. Aside from his work on *The Bird Life of Texas*, a project that took him 11 years, Kincaid was not a prolific writer. He did, however, encourage others.

But perhaps Kincaid's greatest ornithological contribution was the example he set in the field as an observer.

As a small footnote for the historical

record, Kincaid also originated and perpetuated the quirky but sometimes endearing tradition of bestowing bird names on people, a custom that has spread over the years from Texas to birders all across the country. Kincaid himself was called Cassowary, or Casso for short.

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Common Grackle (Quiscalus quiscula). Illustration/Karin Strong.