

**Pine Grosbeak** at Ft. Scur 14 Nov (J&LM), only the fifth for Be and first in 22 years. Perhaps another harbinger were 35 Com. Redpolls 11 Nov at Cooper's Island, Be.

#### ADDENDUM

Two Least Grebes in breeding plumage were at Caneel Bay, StJ, 18 Apr (RR); breeding there would reprise a 40-year hiatus. Row also reported two **Double-crested Cormorants** off Cruz Bay, StJ, mid-Apr, perhaps only the third record there. Also at Caneel Bay were several ad. and one-two imm. Black-crowned Night-Herons (RR); breeding at St.J would be a terrific record. EM found a male Hook-billed Kite near Mt. Hartman, Grenada, in Jul. A Dunlin in the Dominican Republic Apr 1996 predates the most recent report (GK). Six Fork-tailed Flycatchers were near the Grenada airport in Jul (EM). A Blue-winged Warbler was at Palpite, Zapata, Cu, 15 Feb (GK). Am. (Caribbean) Coots nested for the first time in a century at East Point, St. Philip, Bd 4 Jul, with 3 hatchlings 25 Jul (MF). A Pearly-eyed Thrasher 14 Jun (DA et al.) provided the 3rd record for Bd (*fide* MF). Check Trinidad and Tobago's Field Naturalist Club website (<http://www.wow.net/ttfnc>) for details too long to condense herein.

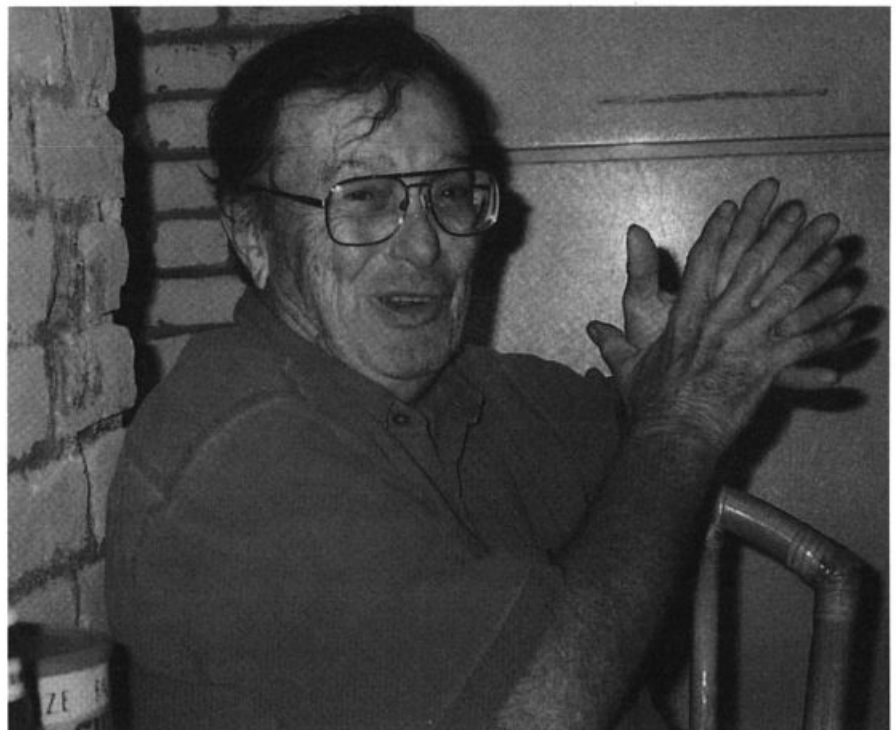
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Place names that are frequently mentioned, but very long, may be abbreviated in a form such as "C.B.B.T." or "W.P.B.O." Such local abbreviations will be explained in a key at the beginning of the particular regional report in which they are used. In most regions, place names given in italic type are counties. Standard abbreviations that are used throughout *North American Birds* are keyed on page 20.

# William B. Robertson Jr.

**August 22, 1924–  
January 28, 2000**



**T**he brief, dust-jacket biography of the co-author of "Florida Bird Species: An Annotated List" (1992, *Florida Ornithological Society Special Publication* no. 6) reads:

William B. Robertson, Jr. began studying landbird populations in southern Florida and the northern Bahamas in 1950 for his Ph.D. research, and received a Ph.D. from the University of Illinois in 1955. Soon afterwards, he was employed as a research biologist in Everglades National Park. . . . In 1976 he was awarded the United States Department of Interior Medal for Distinguished Service and today he is Senior Scientist at the South Florida Research Center. A Fellow of the American Ornithologists' Union, he has published more than 100 articles on the Everglades ecosystem and on

the birds of Florida and the West Indies. Besides his reputation as the dean of Florida ornithologists, and his service as first president of the Florida Ornithological Society, Robertson is best known for his studies of the seabirds of Florida's Dry Tortugas.

Yet, readers today of *North American Birds* know little of his influence on the antecedent journals, *Audubon Field Notes* and *American Birds*, the ecology of the Everglades, and other things global. After Dr. Bill, as he was affectionately known, signed on with the National Park Service, he was assigned the duty of surveying the birdlife of St. John in the United States Virgin Islands, the newest member of the National Parks in March 1956. The result was the first manuscript devoted to avian biogeography of the Virgin Islands since

Nichols' in 1943. Bill would remain at Everglades National Park as the Service's only scientist east of the Mississippi for nearly a decade. His enconcement there, a testimony to his knowledge, skills and ability, provided a unique opportunity to witness the ecological interface of three major biomes.

Dr. Bill's ornithological analysis in the Florida regional reports, Christmas Bird Counts, and Changing Seasons in *Audubon Field Notes* and *American Birds* from 1949 intermittently through 1984 established his continental "field of view." Although his command of ornithogeography reached hemispheric proportions, Dr. Bill's primary focus was the ecological health, welfare, and safety of Florida's Everglades. After researching and studying the natural effects and cultural uses of fire in south Florida by 1953, Bill concluded that to save pinelands and hammocks of the Park, he would have to burn them. "Fire" was a true four-letter word in national parks and forests in those days. The resultant change in philosophy, practice, and value of fire as an ephemeral consumer in ecological systems is utilized now around the world. Dr. Bill's ecosystem management reached global proportions.

In the evolution of *North American Birds*, Bill's influence and mentorship can-

not be overlooked. Apart from his many contributions to Everglades CBCs, Changing Seasons, and Florida regional reports, his "Observations on the birds of St. John, Virgin Islands" (*Auk* 79:44-76, 1962) was the nexus of the West Indies regional report inaugurated in 1979, an offspring of my master's work on birds of St. John. The late Bob Arbib and Susan Drennan, each editors of *American Birds*, did not hesitate to widen the scope of the journal geographically, to watch the lives of birds that spend upwards of three-fourths of their life history exiled annually from breeding grounds. For the past 20 years, international readership of the West Indies regional report which has cited observations from most uninhabited, and some uninhabited, islands in the Caribbean has benefited from Bill's original study on St. John. Indeed, the readership itself is the West Indies report, as every other regional editor must also proclaim allegiance.

Bill's interest in West Indian species was largely centered on life histories of seabirds, such as the Sooty Terns at the Dry Tortugas, Florida. Although geographically and politically aligned with Florida and the United States, these small islands are West Indian in character—they afforded Bill his Carib-

bean connection and retreat. In spring and early summer, Bill had his annual recalibration with the birds, the islands, and the cosmos. His work with Sooty Terns is a model for longitudinal bird research. He, his late wife Betty, and many volunteers banded about one-half million Sooty Terns. In one of Bill's publications he astounded seabird biologists by discovering that juvenile Sooty Terns from the Tortugas trek to the Gulf of Guinea off West Africa!

During my tenure with the Virgin Islands government as a biologist studying seabirds, I had occasion to recover Sooty Terns at Saba Cay off St. Thomas during our own long-term banding and life-history studies. We found birds in the colony that we did not know. They were birds from the Dry Tortugas. After consulting with Bill on my thesis work, we were now communicating on a different level. We eventually presented a joint paper with Horace Jeter from Mississippi and Orlando Garrido from Cuba on recruitment of Sooty Terns throughout the Gulf/Caribbean Basin. When Bill visited me in St. John in 1989, the West Indies regional report had 10 years under its belt, a Virgin Islands Audubon Society had been chartered, and five Christmas Bird Counts were solvent on four Virgin Islands: St. Croix (2), St. John, St. Thomas, and Tortola (British Virgin Islands). All this and much more was an over-arching response to Bill's work in the Virgin Islands 43 years earlier. Many of these developments and accomplishments eventually would have come to pass, but without Bill's scholarship, creativity, and mentoring they might not have occurred so soon.

In 1993, Bill wrote in my copy of "Florida Bird Species" that "This book is for Rob Norton who also believes that there can never be too many Caribbean islands," a simple and profound attestation of Bill's comprehension of people, places, and systems. Bill once said that anyone who had come in contact with the Everglades could not be unaffected by the experience. I venture to say that the same will be said of one of its greatest champions. A phrase from his "Everglades: The Park Story" best sums up my tribute: "*In ways not simple to explain, American lives are richer because there is still room in the land for crocodiles to build their . . . nests . . . and for deer to browse . . . with perhaps a panther to stalk them.*" In ways not simple to explain, American lives are richer because there was a Bill Robertson.

—Robert L. Norton



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