

DEDICATION TO JAMES WILEY

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Were his only contribution the monumental bibliography on West Indian birds that he published in 2000 (Wiley 2000), Jim Wiley would rank among the most important ornithologists to have ever focused their attention on birds of this region. But Jim's contributions to the studies of Caribbean birds, beginning in the early 1970s and continuing without diminishment today, have been so much more. We know of no ornithologist of the region whose impacts have been more beneficial, going back to the first European explorers who mentioned birds in their natural histories. Therefore, it is with profound respect and admiration that this issue of JCO is dedicated to a colleague whose detailed knowledge extends to more species than seems possible and whose many publications and other contributions could hardly be more impressive.

Normally such remarks are only possible for doddering ancient figures or for spirits who have already passed from the scene after lifetimes of devoted field work. Fortunately, Jim is still at the peak of his capacities, and it is reasonable to anticipate that much is yet to come, regardless of his recent official retirement from the United States Geological Survey (USGS). Jim's energy in pursuit of worthy goals has been legendary and sets a standard for diligence that we can only dimly comprehend. Perhaps it all goes back to the Mexico City Olympics of 1968, where Jim competed as a member of the United States bicycle team and trained up to a level of fitness that he has maintained ever since.

All three of us have at one time or another had the privilege of collaborating in field studies with Jim, and we are directly familiar with his tireless capacities. Even more, we have been amazed how he somehow always manages good humor and a spirit of selfless cooperation under even the most miserable field conditions. Jim's skills range from scaling towering rain-forest trees to crossing treacherous streams (Fig. 1) and scuba diving, and we will never forget his tale of being nudged in the back by a curious Killer Whale (*Orcinus orca*) as he conducted field observations on marine Gobies along the Cali-

fornia coast for his master's degree. Fortunately for all of us, he survived this incident to finish his master's research at California State University in 1970 and to go on to many other studies.

From California, Jim moved on to graduate studies at the University of South Florida on Red-shouldered Hawks (*Buteo lineatus*), interrupted in 1973 by taking a position with the Puerto Rican Department of Natural Resources to study Plain Pigeons (*Patagioenas inornata*), White-crowned Pigeons (*P. leucocephala*), and other columbids, a group for which he has always had a special affection. In 1977, he took over supervision of the Puerto Rican Parrot Project for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) after completing a detailed study of the Hispaniolan Parrot (*Amazona ventralis*) in the Dominican Republic for the US Forest Service. He remained in the Puerto Rican Parrot position until 1986, having overseen a steady and convincing increase of the wild population and having launched the captive breeding and release efforts that continue today. The success Jim and his wife Beth had with Puerto Rican Parrot conservation was outstanding, and included an informative experimental release effort of captive Hispaniolan Parrots to the wild in the Dominican Republic in 1982. Concurrent with their efforts with parrots, Jim and Beth also conducted diverse ecological and behavioral studies of the raptors of Puerto Rican and Hispaniola and ground-breaking studies of the endangered Yellow-shouldered Blackbird (*Agelaius xanthomus*) in collaboration with Will Post, particularly with reference to the invasion of Puerto Rico by the Shiny Cowbird (*Molothrus bonariensis*). It was Jim's cowbird studies that led at last to finishing his Ph.D. with Bud Owre at the University of Miami in 1982.

In 1986 Jim was transferred back to California by the USFWS to conduct efforts for the California Condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*), a period when the very last wild condors were being trapped into captivity and when temporary experimental releases of surrogate Andean Condors (*Vultur gryphus*) to



Fig. 1. Jim Wiley crossing the Mameyes River, in flood, en route to a Puerto Rican Parrot nesting area in 1978. Photo by Noel Synder.

the wild were just beginning. This period also saw a profound change in Jim's dietary habits that resulted, quite understandably, from his having to oversee the supplemental feeding program for condors. For those who have long wondered about Jim's antipathy to Big Macs and Whoppers, he was faced at one point with the clean-up of a defunct walk-in freezer filled with rotting mammal carcasses immersed in an incredible miasma of toxic gases. Fortunately, despite this brush with hell on earth, his enthusiasm for guanabana ice cream and other nutritious tropical delights has remained intact.

From California, Jim moved to Grambling State University in Louisiana in 1991, where he took charge of a cooperative wildlife unit for the USGS.

At Grambling, he developed a special interest in the training of wildlife students from the West Indies, especially Jamaica and the Lesser Antilles, and a number of his former Grambling students are current members of the Society for Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds (SCSCB). There, he also had the good sense to keep all his local sightings of Bachman's Warblers (*Vermivora bachmanii*) and Ivory-billed Woodpeckers (*Campephilus principalis*) to himself.

As some indication of the importance of his mentoring contributions at Grambling, one of us (HR) recently was talking with an assistant to the Director of the USFWS. This individual was a graduate from Grambling some 15 yr ago and spontaneously de-

scribed how much he and the other grad students at the time appreciated and respected Jim's dedication in assisting underprivileged students, particularly those from developing countries throughout the Caribbean. Jim's ability to inspire others to careers in ornithology and conservation is one of his most important legacies.

In 2001, and continuing until his recent retirement, Jim took over supervision of the Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit of the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. There, he continued to be involved with diverse conservation and research projects in the West Indies, as well as local projects in the Chesapeake Bay region, carefully guiding an impressive number of students toward their graduate degrees.

Thus, despite being based in stateside locations from the late 1980s to the present, Jim's first loyalties have always been in the Caribbean, with frequent trips to Cuba, the Cayman Islands and Hispaniola, and continued work with the psittacines of these islands, as well as many other bird species. He has been especially focused on aiding Cuban ornithological efforts in recent years, and was given special recognition for these efforts by Cuban ornithologists at the July 2001 meeting in Cuba of the SCSCB.

Jim was a founding member of the Society of Caribbean Ornithology (now the SCSCB) and played an important role in launching the organization. He was the first editor of *El Pitirre*, and during the nine years of his editorship he was responsible not only for editorial duties, but with help of his students served also as the publisher (aided by desktop publishing software) and distributor of the publication. Jim oversaw the evolution of *El Pitirre* from a newsletter, for which he often scrambled for manuscripts in the early years, to a journal format covering a broad range of topics. As editor, he was especially helpful and patient with inexperienced authors and viewed the journal as an important forum for their contributions. Other editing contributions he has made have included serving for many years as editor of publications for the Western

Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology in California.

Jim's personal list of scientific publications includes well over a hundred substantial papers, books, and monographs, mostly on West Indian birds. We find ourselves consulting his annotated *A Bibliography of Ornithology in the West Indies* (Wiley 2000) with frequency, and it is impossible to exaggerate the usefulness of this colossal assembly of more than 11,600 references, stretching back to the earliest ornithological writings for the region. Among his other outstanding publications, we call special attention to his coauthorship of *The Parrots of Luquillo: Natural History and Conservation of the Puerto Rican Parrot* in 1987 (Snyder et al. 1987), coauthorship of *A Guide to the Birds of the West Indies* in 1998 (Raffaele et al. 1998), coauthorship of *The Birds of Hispaniola* in 2003 (Keith et al. 2003), and his authorship and coauthorship of numerous shorter papers on the Shiny Cowbird, the Puerto Rican Parrot, the Yellow-shouldered Blackbird, and various other psittacids, raptors, and columbids of the West Indies, not to mention his publications on such subjects as the effects of hurricanes on West Indian birds and techniques of captive breeding and reintroduction for endangered forms. For his overall contributions to field studies of Caribbean birds and to ornithology in general, the SCSCB is truly indebted to Jim Wiley.

LITERATURE CITED

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