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SPECIAL ISSUE HONORING NEDRA KLEIN

IN MEMORIAM

NEDRA KATHRYN KLEIN, 1951–2001

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NEDRA KATHRYN KLEIN, a member of the American Ornithologists' Union since 1979 and Elective Member since 1998, died 12 May 2001 in Barnes-Jewish Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri, of complications following open-heart surgery. Nedra was born in Chicago, Illinois on 30 April 1951 and grew up in the Chicago suburb of Wilmette. As a teenager, she was diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease. The extensive radiation treatments she endured cured her of that disease (she was among the first cohort of survivors), but also set in motion the long-term tissue and organ damage that contributed to her death. By the early 1990s, Nedra's heart problems were becoming debilitating. She had her first open-heart surgery in the spring of 1995, and the second in April 2001.

Nedra's interests in natural history began in childhood; she always loved warblers and their songs. Nedra received a bachelor's degree in 1974 from the University of Colorado in Boulder. She earned her Master's degree in 1982 from the University of Montana, studying vocalizations of American Redstarts (*Setophaga ruticilla*) under the guidance of Richard Hutto. After taking some time off from academics to be with her mother after her father died

(she worked in a bank for part of that time), Nedra spent a year in Baton Rouge at the Louisiana State University Museum of Natural Science, where she honed her skills in museum science. She then went to the University of Michigan to work on genetic structure in Yellow Warblers (*Dendroica petechia*) with Robert Payne, receiving her Ph.D. in 1993. Nedra completed a post-doctoral research appointment at the University of Michigan working on the co-speciation of nest parasitic indigo-birds (*Vidua*) and their estrildid hosts. She then moved to the American Museum of Natural History in New York for post-doctoral work on the systematics, biogeography, and conservation of Caribbean birds. Her first open-heart surgery was performed during that time. She recovered well from that surgery and was able to conduct several more field seasons in the Caribbean sponsored by both the American Museum and the Field Museum in Chicago, where she was a research associate.

She held research and teaching appointments at the University of Wisconsin, Madison and Lewis and Clark University in Portland, Oregon, before settling in 1998 as an assistant professor of biology at Truman State University in Kirksville, Missouri.



Sierra de Bahoruco, Dominican Republic, June 1998. Nedra Klein and John Gerwin. Photograph by Kate Wallace.

At Truman, she began a rewarding period of teaching, fieldwork, and scientific research. An excellent teacher, she imparted her passion for the natural world to her students. When she died, Nedra was working on the systematics and evolution of warblers and the morphological, behavioral, genetic, and biogeographic evolution of Caribbean birds (Stripe-headed Tanagers [*Spindalis zena*], among many others).

Nedra will be remembered for her careful study of morphological and molecular evolution of Yellow Warblers and for her outspoken support of museum collections and the need for documentation in the form of voucher specimens. Encountering great resistance to the idea of scientific collecting, she patiently and persistently educated governmental and wildlife officials on the value of documenting their biodiversity through museum inventory work. Her specimens are housed in many institutions in the United States, Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Africa. Her work in the Caribbean is her true legacy, developed and continued through a network of colleagues and friends despite her physical limitations.

Nedra lived a life of the highest personal integrity. She did not hesitate to halt or alter her academic career for her family. Her mother lived with her during her doctoral studies in Michigan until she died from ovarian cancer. Despite many difficulties, Nedra lived each day to the fullest. She triumphed over



Sierra de Neiba, Dominican Republic, 1998. Rob Williams (BirdLife), Nedra Klein, Doug Wechsler (VIREO), and Dominican field assistant. Photograph by Kate Wallace.

physical adversity to become a strong, independent, loyal, and sometimes goofy woman. Her own family was small, but she created families among her friends wherever she lived. All now mourn her death. I have lost a valued colleague and a dear friend. The museum ornithological community has lost a special champion.

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Sierra de Bahoruco, Villa Ida, Dominican Republic. Rob Williams, ?, Nedra Klein, John Gerwin, Doug Wechsler, and Rod Martins. Photograph by Kate Wallace.