

ALFRED OTT 1939-2007

Alfred Ott, educator, birder, conservationist, passed away suddenly in mid-October. Al was president of the Queens County Bird Club from 2001 to 2003, and continued to be involved as conservation representative and field trip leader. Ian Resnick expressed the feelings of many of us in his e-mail statement:

As Al's successor as president of the Queens County Bird Club, I want to reiterate that Al will be deeply missed by all the area's birders. In addition to being a great birder and a really nice guy, he also helped to get many people involved in preserving the areas that make our hobby so much fun.

Many New York-area nature enthusiasts knew Al as the man who saved Jamaica Bay. When the powers-that-be decided to build an asphalt bike path through the Wildlife Refuge, Al took action, forming the Save Our Sanctuary organization, tirelessly collecting signatures in the Jamaica Bay parking lot, enlisting the support of over 60 other organizations, and explaining to the media, over and over, why the bike path was not in the best interests of the ecological health of the community or the world.

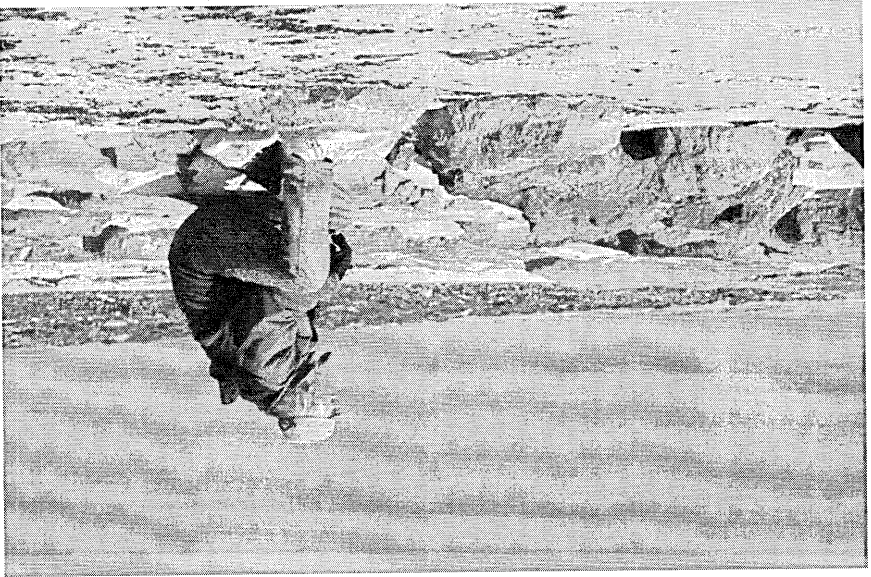
To us, his friends and fellow birders, Al was a mentor and guide, a constant, large presence at Forest Park in the spring, Alley Pond and Kissena Parks in the fall, and anywhere at any time there was an interesting bird to be seen and appreciated. And, often it was Karin and Al who would be watching the bird (or Al watching and Karin reading). Many QCBC and Forest Park birders learned their field marks with Al's help; it always amazed me that no matter where we were—Forest or Jones Beach or Fort Tilden—Al knew the name of every birder and they all knew and respected him.

Al continued his conservation work once the bike path initiative was defeated (at least for a while; the current bike path is smaller and less intrusive than the one originally planned, though Al was still not happy about it). His most recent campaign was the fight to preserve Ridgewood Reservoir. If you would like to do something in Al Ott's memory, you can make a contribution to the Ridgewood Reservoir Education and Preservation Project.

Steve Plust, birder and QCBC member has offered to match every \$100.00 that we can collect with \$50.00 of his own up to \$5,000.00. Please send donations to Heidi Steiner, 9 Howard Place, Brooklyn, NY 11215. They should be made out to the Newtown Historical Society and should have Ridgewood Reservoir Project or RREPP in Memory of Al Ott written on the memo line. Your donation will be tax deductible. And, we think it is something that would have greatly pleased Al Ott.

Donna L. Schulman
Editor, *Queens County Bird Club News & Notes*

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Al Ott at Point Lookout, March 2005. Photo by Bernie Klemmner.