

IN MEMORIAM

Robert G. McKinney 1925-2011

Robert (Bob) G. McKinney, born on 27 July 1925, passed away peacefully at home on 26 October 2011.

Bob was a birder, hiker, and bird bander, and a fun-loving, caring person. He was a member and active participant in the Eastern Bird Banding Association, Braddock Bay Bird Observatory (BBBO), Burroughs Audubon Nature Club (BANC), Genesee Ornithological Society (GOS, a section of the Rochester Academy of Science), New York State Ornithological Association (NYSOA), Rochester Birding Association (RBA), the Bergen Swamp Preservation Society (BSPS), and the Genesee Valley Hiking Club (GVHC). In addition he pursued an interest in trains and railroad history and enjoyed attending classical music concerts.

Bob was not just a joiner of these organizations. He was a founding member and long-time treasurer of BBBO; recognizing his service, the newly renovated banding room there has been named the Robert G. McKinney Banding Laboratory. As an amateur botanist, he was active with the collections of the BANC. He joined the GOS in 1945 and, among his many roles with that organization, he served as president in 1976-77 and 1983. In 1965 his work was recognized when he was elected a Fellow of the Rochester Academy of Science. With the GOS's dissolution he became member of the RBA. He attended nearly all of the annual meetings of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, now NYSOA, beginning with the first in Rochester in 1948. With the BSPS, Bob was a long-time trustee and for many years was their chief negotiator for land acquisition for the preserve. Wearing his birder hat, he compiled a seasonal checklist for the preserve in 1956. He fell in love with the Adirondacks early on, and by the mid-1970s had climbed all 46 of its high peaks. With the GVHC he was active in trail maintenance and in hiking both in New York and on trips abroad.

Bob's path through outdoor interests moved opposite to many current birders', starting with an interest in butterflies introduced by an uncle who was chief entomologist at the Field Museum in Chicago. But birding became a major interest, and he traveled extensively by land and sea, visiting many countries and all continents except Australia. He found his 700th ABA lifer, a Northern Pygmy-Owl, in California in July 2008.

Schooled as a chemical engineer, he pursued a lifetime career in that field with the Eastman Kodak Company, retiring in the mid-1980s. With a scientific background, bird banding held a strong appeal for Bob. He received his first banding permit in 1950 and his permit to use mist nets on 6 February 1953. In 61 years of this pursuit he banded 122,597 birds of over 175 species. On crutches and slowed down by having to undergo dialysis treatment three times a week, Bob still continued to band at BBBO during the fall of 2011 with help from his favorite banding assistant, his wife Chita. His last banding session was on 24 September 2011 when he banded 52 birds and charmed 35 students

visiting from SUNY Geneseo. He was particularly pleased to band a 'lifer' Worm-eating Warbler, a very rare fall species locally, at BBBO in August 2011.

Bird banding was a way to observe birds closely and to assist in efforts to track them and determine migration patterns. Bob applied his scientific approach to this endeavor in organizing all his records and in publishing papers on both his studies and on banding technique, including a paper on the separation of *Empidonax* flycatchers.

Above all, Bob cared deeply for his wife, children, and his Church. Our sincere condolences to his wife, Chita, son David, and daughter and son-in-law, Laurie and Tom Dirk.

Robert G. Spahn