

IN MEMORIAM: IRVING CANTOR

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Irving Cantor died on June 10, 2017, at the age of 97. He was survived by his wife Jean.

Irving was a Fellow of the Linnaean Society of New York and, according to the editor of the News-Letter, a member since 1940. He was the last of the Bronx County Boys.

Irving surprised me by signing up for our Rio Grande Valley Festival birding trip for the Linnaean Society in 2006. Later he went with us to Northern California and after that Laurie and I took him to Argentina for a couple of weeks of birding in 2010. Two weeks of hard travel was almost too much for Irving at that time, but he insisted on the second week so we could go to Argentine Patagonia, where we finally saw the Magellanic Woodpecker. As always, he flew first class.

Sometime after that, Irving asked me to join him on the Audit Committee of the New York State Ornithological Association. Irving had chaired the committee for many years, and I think he saw he was coming to the end of it.

When Irving and Jean moved from East 32nd Street to North End Avenue—I think it was around 2010—Irving gave up Central Park birding, which he had begun to find unrewarding anyway, and he made it his business to know all about the birds in Nelson A. Rockefeller Park—he knew how many Am. Robins, and how many Double-crested Cormorants, were present virtually every day for several years. We would have lunch every month or so and in spring and fall I would take my binoculars along and we would spend an hour and a half in that little park.

A side of Irving not well known in the birding community was his interest in financial matters. He was a registered stockbroker, as well as an accountant, and we talked at length about investments. Another side, better known to everyone who knew him—he did not like food.

I never knew exactly how many birds Irving had seen. I don't think he knew either. He wasn't that kind of birder. (I am that kind of birder.) He kept meticulous records; he liked to see birds and keep track. In an article in the Linnaean News-Letter in 2015, Irving wrote about Central Park birding—

It was four years before I saw my first American Crow in the Park and almost six years before the first Red-tailed Hawk. The Park also bore witness to population shifts in our common water birds over those eight decades [1935-2015]. Some examples: Buffleheads unknown; Ruddy Ducks and Northern Shovelers very rare; Great and Snowy Egrets unknown; Double-crested Cormorants accidental; Great Black-backed and Ring-billed Gulls rare; but Laughing Gulls were common transients.

We will miss his careful reporting. We will miss Irving's good sense, generosity, and frequent indignation. We will miss our friend.