

IN MEMORIAM: ROBERT F. ANDRLE

Robert F. Andrle started off life, quite young, as a bird watcher. He was only in his middle teens when he was elected to membership in the Buffalo Ornithological Society, but he eventually went on to serve as their president from 1956-57, a longtime statistician and the editor of *The Prothonotary*, their monthly publication. (His impressive career as an ornithologist is well-documented in his obituary in *The Buffalo News*, to which this remembrance is indebted.)

However, it was not until the mid-90s that my wife Karen and I first became acquainted with him. A chance meeting at Hamburg Hawk Watch one spring turned into a thirty-year friendship that has provided us with many fond memories of time spent with one of the region's foremost birdmen.

He graduated from Buffalo's Canisius College in 1948 and received a master's degree in geography from the University at Buffalo in 1960. He then earned a doctorate in biogeography from Louisiana State University in 1964.

Dr. Andrle worked at the Buffalo Museum of Science for 30 years, starting in 1956. He was the longtime curator of vertebrate zoology, as well as the associate and acting director. He was also a fellow of the Buffalo Society of Natural Sciences. At various times, he was editor, author and reviewer for *American Birds*, *The Kingbird* and the *Bulletin of the Buffalo Society of Natural Sciences*, and he was the author of more than 75 scientific papers and popular articles. He also served for many years on the New York State Avian Records Committee.

As an ornithologist, Bob Andrle traveled the world, conducting research on birds. His work took him to places like Central and South America and the Caribbean. He led a research expedition in the Sierra de Tuxtla mountain range in Veracruz, Mexico, to study the wildlife, vegetation and landscape. He studied the Horned Guan in southern Mexico and Guatemala, and the Whistling Warbler on the island of St. Vincent. More recently, he completed a chapter in *Moments of Discovery: Natural History Narratives from Mexico and Central America* on his experiences conducting field research in Mexico and Guatemala.

Dr. Andrle's work at home was also influential. His regional publications included a 1970 supplement to Beardslee and Mitchell's *Birds of the Niagara Frontier* and *Gulls of the Niagara Frontier*, an early compilation that has contributed to the mounting interest in these species here. He and Janet Carroll co-edited *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State*, completed in 1988. In 2000, *Buffalo News* columnist Gerry Rising praised Dr. Andrle for organizing more than 4,300 of the state's birders to survey the breeding activities of the 242 species, plus three hybrids, which nested within the state's boundaries, as well as supervising a team that summarized and illustrated the information. "If Andrle had done nothing else over his long and distinguished career—and he has done a great deal—this publication would ensure that his name would be included on the roster of exceptional state ornithologists," Rising wrote.

After retiring from the Buffalo Museum of Science, Dr. Andrle led natural history tours to Trinidad, the West Indies, Costa Rica, Mexico and Venezuela. Closer to home his other activities included preparation of the materials that led to designation of the Niagara River as the first international Important Birding Area (IBA) and his work as an environmental consultant with government agencies and private engineering and environmental firms. This included working with the NYSDEC on various problems including the botulism that was decimating Lake Erie waterfowl.

Dr. Andrle advocated for establishing Tifft Nature Preserve in Buffalo and was a consultant to the Tifft Advisory Board. He also was a key part of a decades-long effort to transform what had been a dumping ground for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers into the Times Beach Nature Preserve on Buffalo's Outer Harbor. Both locations are now recognized eBird hotspots in the Buffalo area. The Friends of Times Beach Nature Preserve said on its website Dr. Andrle was "one of the first to notice that the place was located in a unique spot, at the confluence of the Buffalo and Niagara rivers and on the shores of Lake Erie, and that this unique location was very attractive to migrating and breeding birds." The persistence of Dr. Andrle and his fellow advocates paid off when the preserve was dedicated in 2004. A trail there was named for Dr. Andrle in 2014. "We have been extremely lucky to have him in Western New York," the Friends of Times Beach Nature Preserve said on its website when the trail was dedicated. The organization called him "one of the finest ornithological resources in North America."

In addition to birding, he also conducted field studies of butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies, and maintained a life-long interest in aviation and aircraft and enjoyed attending air shows around the region.

Over those later years I had the privilege of assisting him with marsh bird monitoring and Wood Thrush studies, breeding bird surveys, butterfly counts in Niagara County, and dragonfly research all over Western New York and the Niagara Peninsula in Ontario. What impressed me again and again wasn't just his extensive knowledge of the natural world, but also his almost child-like enthusiasm for just being out in the field. In later years as his mobility became limited, I would tell him about our latest feeder birds and recent rarities reported on the internet. This frequently elicited a response of, "Well for heaven's sake!" And I realized it was just his innate sense of wonder at the natural world.

I often told people that any opportunity to be in the field with Bob Andrle was time well spent. Karen and I learned a great deal from him (as did many others) and were proud to be considered among his friends. We admired him for his evident life-long love of learning, and we are grateful for his eagerness to share his extensive knowledge and enthusiasm with us. He was a man of many accomplishments as an ornithologist. I hope this remembrance will help to make newer birders consider and appreciate the dedication and efforts of one of those who came before.

Robert F. Andrie died on October 29, 2017, one day after his birthday at the age of 90, of Alzheimer's disease, in Chautauqua Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Dunkirk, NY.

Jim Landau, Colden, NY, landaujr@gmail.com

