



James Harris Enderson (1936–2017)

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IN MEMORIAM

James Harris Enderson (1936–2017)

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James Harris Enderson, an Elective Member of the American Ornithologists' Union (now American Ornithological Society) since 1974, passed away on January 10, 2017, in the Hospice Unit at Penrose Hospital in Colorado Springs following an extended bout with lung problems. He will be long remembered for his outstanding teaching career at Colorado College and for his record of research on raptors, particularly falcons. He was 80.

Jim was born in Sioux City, Iowa, on November 3, 1936, to Harris and Marjorie Enderson. He grew up in the Midwest and developed an interest in the outdoors, particularly birds, at an early age. He graduated from Joliet Township High School in 1954 and received his B.S. in biology and M.S. in zoology from the University of Illinois, Urbana (1959), under the supervision of Charles Kendeigh. Kendeigh cautioned him that there was no future in studying birds of prey, a group to which Jim had become addicted at an early age through the sport of falconry. So he continued his education at the University of Wyoming, where he earned a Ph.D. His thesis was on the ecology of the Prairie Falcon.

In 1962, at the age of 25, Jim joined the zoology department at Colorado College, where he spent his entire professional career. He taught anatomy, physiology, ecology, vertebrate zoology, and the flora of Colorado. He became an associate professor in 1968, a professor in 1975, and was chair of the biology department for several years in the 1980s. He was beloved by his students, whom he often took on extended field tips, and he received awards from the college for his teaching skills.

In 1969–1970, he spent a sabbatical leave at Cornell University under a National Science Foundation Fellowship, working with Tom Cade and Clayton White, who was also there on a fellowship. In addition to his extensive fieldwork in the western United States, he also worked in Alaska, the Northwest Territories, Greenland, Scotland, and Zimbabwe. In the 1990s, he and his students worked on wintering falcons on the Texas Gulf Coast. Jim published more than sixty scientific papers on falcon ecology. He was an early board member of The Peregrine



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Fund, a group responsible for the restoration of peregrines and other raptors. He was a founding member of the North American Falconers' Association, was appointed to several governmental committees, and was a member of two of the five U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Peregrine Falcon Recovery Teams and was leader of the last one. He also worked in close association with the Colorado Division of Wildlife.

In 1987, Jim was honored by the North American Raptor Breeders Association for the first successful captive

breeding of the *anatum* peregrine of temperate North America. He received two awards from the Raptor Research Foundation: in 1993 for captive propagation and reintroduction, and in 2000 for his contributions to the understanding of raptor ecology and natural history. In 2004, he was awarded the Gresham Riley Award from Colorado College for teaching and scholarship, which he cherished.

In 2004, Jim coauthored (with Gerald Craig) a Colorado Division of Wildlife monograph on peregrines. In 2005, the University of Texas Press published his book *Peregrine Falcon: Stories of the Blue Meanie*, which is about his life and times with peregrines. And in 2013, he coauthored a book (with Clayton White and Tom Cade) titled *Peregrine Falcons of the World*, in which all the worldwide subspecies are discussed. Jim also had a not widely known skill as an artist. One of his fine paintings of a Peregrine Falcon can be seen as a full-page image in his chapter in *Return of the Peregrine: A North American Saga of Tenacity and Teamwork* (2003).

He was also a skilled pilot and owned his own Beechcraft Bonanza, which he mostly used for spotting ducks on ponds to which he could later return for hawking. When The Peregrine Fund began large-scale reintroductions of young peregrines in the western states in the 1980s and '90s, Jim transported several hundred of them to hack sites not only in Colorado, but also to surrounding states, greatly ameliorating logistical problems.

Early one morning in 1983—about the time of the infamous undercover activities of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Division of Law Enforcement, known as "Operation Falcon"—Jim became aware that, unbeknownst to most people, some Peregrine Falcons were nesting on cliffs in the Lake Powell region of southern Utah. In fact, one of the few justified arrests during Operation Falcon involved the taking of some young falcons from a nest at Lake Powell. About the same time, there was another revealing instance in which young falcons flew prematurely

from a nest on an island where a TV crew was attempting to film a vehicle that had been placed on top of a cliff by a helicopter for a commercial. Reports of these events led the National Park Service to wonder how many falcons might be nesting in the Lake Powell region, resulting in a contract with Jim to find out.

This investigation, which stretched into two decades of work, led to a fantastic discovery. Jim and his college students found hundreds of pairs of falcons, not just in the Lake Powell watershed but throughout the greater Colorado Plateau region in Colorado, Utah, southern Nevada, northern Arizona, and northwestern New Mexico. Despite his worsening illness, Jim was still making field trips into this vast region and finding new aeries as recently as the year before his death. As he said not long before he died, no one knows how many pairs of peregrines are nesting in the Colorado Plateau region, but it could easily involve a thousand or more locations.

For readers who may be interested, the Archives of Falconry in Boise, Idaho, recently accessioned a large collection of Jim's field notes, reports, maps, and photographs relating to his largely unpublished findings about falcons on the plateau. These important materials will require much study and analysis to flesh out the details of this story and to keep this important legacy of Jim's alive.

Because Jim was such an intimate part of what The Peregrine Fund was doing right from its beginning in 1970 and was involved in so many ways in our activities and organizational management, the three surviving founders enthusiastically agreed that James H. Enderson be recognized hereafter as an Honorary Founder of The Peregrine Fund.

Survivors include his wife Betty Enderson, son Ritt Enderson (Angie), daughter Anne Toroxel (Mike), sister Joan Silliman (Dan), Betty's two daughters, and nine grandchildren.

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