

## 2001 DORIS HUESTIS SPEIRS AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS IN CANADIAN ORNITHOLOGY

Erica H. Dunn and David J.T. Hussell

The Doris Huestis Speirs Award for outstanding lifetime contributions to Canadian Ornithology, is awarded this year to two people, a pair that have worked tirelessly both separately and together to advance the science of ornithology in its pure and applied forms. This year's award is presented to Drs. Erica H. Dunn and David J.T. Hussell. Both began their academic careers in ornithology at the University of Michigan, in Ann Arbor. Ricky, as Erica is known to all, as a graduate student studying avian physiological ecology, and David, studying clutch size determinants in arctic passerines, work that has continued to fascinate and engage them.

In the mid-1970's they began their permanent stay in Canada, when David became the first director of the Long Point Bird Observatory. At this oldest bird observatory in North America, David and Ricky began the tradition of "birdathons", fun and highly competitive events that turn bird listing into hard-sought funds for non-government organizations. These events have also become critical in supporting and promoting the institutions that support bird research throughout North America. At Long Point, in particular, Ricky and Dave put together a scheme that proved of benefit to both the bird observatory and amateur ornithologists, as some of the funds, under the name of the James L. Baillie Memorial Trust, were distributed to worthy amateur projects that greatly enhanced bird conservation and public awareness of birds through- out Canada. At that time David, with an endless stream of volunteers, also began a detailed study of the Tree Swallow, a study that has become one of the longest running in North America, and is currently providing useful information on the influence of climate change on the breeding phenology of birds. Both Ricky and Dave were also instrumental in helping to organize the first Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas, an important and significant source of baseline information about Ontario bird populations. Ricky and Dave published on a variety of species during this period, using data from birds breeding and migrating through Long Point.

In 1978 Dave and Ricky left Long Point to live, first in Aurora, Ontario, where both worked for the Ministry of Natural Resources, fulfilling a mandate to find ways to assess Ontario passerine populations. In that work, Dave and Ricky continued to draw heavily on data coming from the migration monitoring station at Long Point, using the records to assess long-term population changes of dozens of species. During this time Ricky continued to coordinate the winter bird feeder surveys, that she had begun at Long Point, and, as a result of that survey, the North American survey of wintering bird populations began, which Ricky coordinated for a short time at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. This work resulted in the well-received popular book published in 2000 on birds at your feeder. The two of them also initiated a province wide survey of Great Blue Heron colonies, work that continues to be useful in ascertaining the status of this species. David, in addition to analysing the Long Point passerine data, also analysed hawk migration data applying similar techniques to determine whether these data were useful in assessing population changes.

In the mid-80's, Dave and Ricky moved to Ottawa, where Ricky took on a job as a research scientist with the Canadian Wildlife Service. There, Ricky and Dave introduced the concept of 'responsibility codes' to bird conservationists. This concept, published in a 1999 issue of Conservation Biology, stated that a species was important, not only if it was rare or endangered, but also if the range where it was most abundant (breeding, wintering or migratory) was within a single or a small number of political jurisdictions, making it particularly vulnerable to unwise land-use decisions. Warblers breeding in the eastern boreal forests of Ontario and Quebec are excellent examples of widespread though vulnerable species, due to heavy exploitation of boreal forests. The identification of these codes and the introduction of this concept

has already led to greater cooperation between neighboring jurisdictions sharing high responsibilities for particular species.

Ricky and Dave have been firm believers in the value of data gathered by volunteers. As a result of this conviction, their work has led to the establishment of numerous banding stations across Canada, where data on species from every biome can be analysed for population trends.

Ricky and Dave have greatly stimulated interest in population trends. With the Canadian publication, *Bird Trends*, edited by Ricky, they have provided Canadian ornithologists with easy to access information on a range of species. Ricky was also involved with the publication, in 2000, of the comprehensive Canadian atlas of bird banding, detailing the recoveries of most of Canada's banded birds.

Both Ricky and Dave have been involved in the organization and establishment of the Society of Canadian Ornithologists. Ricky has also been very active in the organization of the AOU, and both have attended over 25 meetings of this society with the meetings being highlights of their summer. During this time they have also acted as mentors to dozens of students of ornithology, often who have worked first as volunteers at the Long Point Bird Observatory (now called Bird Studies Canada).

Their past and present contributions to ornithology, only some of which I have touched on here, are greatly appreciated by all. We wait with anticipation for more creative approaches to ornithology from these two exceptional scientists.

Congratulations Ricky and Dave.

**Susan Hannon, sue.hannon@mberta.ca**