

1992 DORIS HUESTIS SPEIRS AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS IN CANADIAN ORNITHOLOGY

Thomas H. Manning



photo by W.K. Baldwin

The Doris Huestis Speirs award of the Society of Canadian Ornithologists honours those who have made important contributions to Canadian Ornithology. I am pleased to announce that this year (1992) we recognize the work of Thomas Henry Manning, a pioneer in exploration and ornithology of the Canadian Arctic. In addition to birds, his activities in the north have embraced archaeology and surveying as well as studies of mammals.

Born in 1911 in Northampton, England, and educated at Harrow and Cambridge, Tom Manning first came to Canada in 1933 to spend two years in a geographical and biological survey of Southampton Island in the North West Territories. That expedition was sponsored by the Royal Geographic Society and involved collecting birds and mammals for the British Museum. From 1936 to 1941 he led the British Canadian Arctic Expedition to Southampton and Baffin Islands and Repulse Bay. During this time he surveyed the last uncharted coastlines of Foxe Basin. In 1942 he joined the Royal Canadian Navy and among other activities advised on the construction of arctic airfields. After the war, he worked in the north with the Canadian Geodetic Survey, the Defence Research Board, the National Museum of Canada, and the Canadian Wildlife Service. In 1955-56 he was executive director of the Arctic Institute of North America.

A majority of Manning's 50 or more publications deal with biology. Representative examples of his ornithological work include: The birds of Banks Island (1956, with Hohn and MacPherson); a biological investigation of Prince of Wales Island (1961 with MacPherson) and geographical and sexual variation in the Long-tailed Jaeger (1964). Not satisfied to simply record occurrences of birds and mammals, Manning was interested in the origins of variation and patterns of post-glacial dispersal. For the time he worked, he had an unusual appreciation of statistics in biology. Other studies, published as recently as 1982, were concerned with variation in weight loss of eggs of passerines before and after incubation.

Tom Manning has received many honours for his scientific contributions to arctic biology and geography. In 1944 he received the Bruce Medal from the Scottish Geographic Society, followed by the Patron's Medal of the Royal Geographic Society in 1948. In 1974 he was made an officer of the Order of Canada, and in

1977 he received the Massey Medal of the Royal Canadian Geographic Society. McMaster University conferred on him an Honorary Doctorate of Laws in 1979.

Here is a man who began his career with arctic explorations on foot, with dog teams and small boats in unknown territory, undaunted by the dangers and hardships he encountered. A man of many interests, his efforts turned increasingly to biological study and birds in particular. Later we find him at a computer studying biological variation. It is fitting that we should now honour Thomas Henry Manning for the groundwork he laid in our understanding of birds of the Canadian north.

Thomas Manning died on November 8, 1998 – his obituary can be found at:
<http://pubs.aina.ucalgary.ca/arctic/Arctic52-1-104.pdf>