

2005 DORIS HUESTIS SPEIRS AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS TO CANADIAN ORNITHOLOGY

John A. Crosby

The Doris Huestis Speirs Award of the Society of Canadian Ornithologists recognizes outstanding contributions to Canadian ornithology. In 2005, the SCO/SOC is pleased to present this award to Mr. John A. Crosby on the year of his 80th birthday.

To ornithologists and nature art lovers, John Crosby is best known as the illustrator of *The Birds of Canada*, authored by the late W. Earl Godfrey. To Canadians, John's name is not familiar, but his artwork certainly is: he drew the bird plates from which etchings were made to illustrate the "bird banknotes" that the Bank of Canada issued between 1986 and 2000. Few will have appreciated the two Pine Grosbeaks illustrating the \$1000 notes, but all will remember the Belted Kingfisher, Osprey and Common Loon on the \$5, \$10 and \$20 notes, respectively. Other Canadians will remember stamps he illustrated, a 2¢ stamp showing a polar bear issued in 1953, or a 5¢ stamp of 1968 illustrating the mythical narwhal.

John was born in Toronto in 1925. He studied forestry but soon found himself more attracted to illustrating bird life. He studied birds in the field and in the collections of the Royal Ontario Museum, perfecting his art in part under the guidance of renowned bird artists James L. Baillie and Terence M. Shortt. In 1951 he joined the National Museum of Canada as Artist-Naturalist. He illustrated book and other publications on birds, mammals, mollusks and other organisms.

John's most important contributions to Canadian ornithology include his plates for *The Birds of Nova Scotia* (1961; R. W. Tufts) and *The Birds of Canada* (1966; W. E. Godfrey). John's plates for *The Birds of Nova Scotia* complemented those of the late Roger T. Peterson, first produced to illustrate *The Birds of Newfoundland* by H. S. Peters and T. D. Burleigh (1951). But John surpassed himself in the plates he drew in the early 1960's for Godfrey's *The Birds of Canada*. Critiques of the book unanimously praised the quality of the artwork. In 1967, the late George Miksch Sutton wrote in *The Wilson Bulletin*: "So exquisitely done are the eleven peeps shown on this plate [number 27] that I find myself turning to them for refreshment and inspiration... Plate 27 is the work of a genius."

John Crosby is not a trained ornithologist in the narrow sense of the word. However, few Canadians will have had a greater impact on Canadians' appreciation for birds as John has. It is in recognition of this major positive contribution that the Speirs Award is given to John A. Crosby.

Unfortunately, John is not with us today. The award will be presented to him later this fall in Ottawa, where he resides.

The D.H. Speirs Award Selection Committee for 2005 consisted of Gilles Seutin (chair), Erica Dunn, Mark Brigham and Marty Leonard.