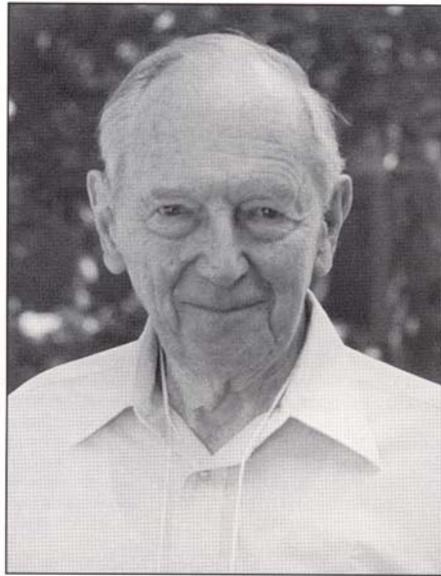


1998 DORIS HUESTIS SPEIRS AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS IN
CANADIAN ORNITHOLOGY

Ian McTaggart-Cowan



IAN MCTAGGART-COWAN

The Society of Canadian Ornithologists presented its most prestigious award “The Doris Huestis Speirs Award” to Dr. IAN MCTAGGART-COWAN, Dean Emeritus (Graduate Studies) and professor of Zoology (retired) of University of British Columbia, on 4 August 1998 within the science program of the S.C.O. annual meeting in Vancouver, B.C. The award honours Dr. Cowan’s outstanding lifetime contribution to Canadian ornithology, spanning seven decades, with major achievements in avian science, research, conservation and environmental education and management. Dr. Cowan is presently active in the completion of the fourth and final volume of “The Birds of British Columbia”, one of the most comprehensive regional reviews of birds and their distribution produced in North America.

Ian McTaggart-Cowan is distinguished for his scientific work in vertebrate zoology, on mammals and birds, and for his mastery of both university teaching and administration, a rare combination of talents. Although better known as a mammalogist, Dr. Cowan’s contributions in ornithology are also impressive, including publications on birds, supervision and encouragement of graduate students, and conservation activities. He has been characterized as “Dean of Vertebrate Zoologists” in Canada, a fitting title. He started publishing on birds in the 1930s and is still at it. His more than 260 publications include at least 40 explicitly on birds, in primary avian journals as well as government series and books. These works covered general biology, systematics, distribution, parasites and disease, and conservation (see selected list). Many other publications are concerned

with conservation of wildlife and habitats, and management of environmental impacts in resource development. His Doris H. Speirs Lecture entitled "Moments from the education of an ornithologist" (below) gives glimpses of the range of his knowledge of birds – and the people who study them. He served on many conservation bodies, in and outside government, in Canada and the U.S.A., e.g. former Vice-President of the IUCN, current chair of B.C. Habitat Conservation Board. Dr. Cowan received many honours and awards, none previously for his work and support of ornithology alone. His influence on avian science and conservation, directly and indirectly, in this country, has been immense.

Ian McTaggart Cowan was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1910, and raised in B.C. He studied zoology at U.B.C. (B.Sc. 1932) and University of California (Ph.D.1935). Birds captured his interest early, and the addiction remains. By age sixteen he had collected in North Vancouver every owl species then born in B.C., and 72 years later he is still working on birds. Dr. Cowan's first position as biologist was with the B.C. Provincial Museum (1935-40), after which he taught zoology at U.B.C. In 1954 he became Head of Zoology department, in 1964 Dean of Graduate Studies, at U.B.C. In 1978-85 he was Chancellor of University of Victoria.

His influence in vertebrate zoology, particularly mammals and birds, was enormous. He supervised more than 100 graduate students, a number of these in ornithology. During the 1940s and 1950s he encouraged and directed a large proportion of the people who later were active in bird work in government and universities. These included Art Benson, Joe Bryant, Alex Dzubin, Tony Erskine, Richard Fyfe, Bob Harris, Ernie Kuyt, Ron Mackay, David Munro, Lawson Sugden, Ernie Taylor, John Tener, Kees Vermeer, and others, in C.W.S.. Charlie Guiguet and Wayne Campbell at the Provincial Museum, and most B.C. provincial biologists of that period. University luminaries included Jean Bédard, Jim Bendell, Rudi Drent, Dave Fowle, Peter Grant, Bob Weeden, and Fred Zwickel, with Steve Johnson notable among consultants. Dr. Cowan also excelled as a public educator responsible (among many other presentations) for 65 television programs under "The Web of Life" and "The Living Sea" by-lines, and six teaching films on animal behaviour (Encyclopaedia Cinematographica, Gottingen; with Dr. V. Geist). His influence in ornithology extended far beyond his publications, catalysing growth of avian study in British Columbia and across Canada.

Dr. Cowan has been honoured across North America for his scientific and conservation achievements (see *Who's Who in Canada* for a fuller summary) - Officer of the Order of Canada 197Z; Fellow of Royal Society of Canada and other scientific societies; honorary doctorates from five universities (1971-86); and various awards from wildlife associations. He served as president or Chairman of many associations Dr. Cowan stands out as a model to us, as scientist, conservationist and teacher.

The Speirs Award honours lifetime achievement in Canadian ornithology. Dr. Cowan's contributions include an array of works furthering knowledge of birds in British Columbia and Canada. Avian scientists, conservationists, and animal ecologists throughout North America have benefited from his efforts and those of the people he trained and encouraged. The Society of Canadian Ornithologists takes great pleasure in presenting the 1998 Doris Huestis Speirs Award to

Ian McTaggart-Cowan for his outstanding contributions to Canadian Ornithology and conservation.