

C. STUART HOUSTON OF SASKATOON HONOURED

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In the decades since he began helping Isabel Priestly publish the fledgling *Blue Jay*, Dr. C. Stuart Houston has received much recognition for his contributions to North American ornithology. His honours include the Canadian Wildlife Federation's Roland Michener Conservation Award and the Canadian Nature Federation's Douglas H. Pimlott Award, the latter awarded jointly to Stuart and Mary Houston "for outstanding and enduring achievement in wildlife conservation." When the Saskatchewan Natural History Society created a new class of membership, "Fellow," to mark long service and contribution to its work, Stuart and Mary Houston were among the first named.

In 1989, Stuart has been three times singled out for special recognition. He was elected a Fellow of the American Ornithologists' Union — 14th from Canada and the only amateur to be so recognised. The Society of Canadian Ornithologists named him recipient of its Doris Huestis Speirs Award, citing his many years of birdbanding and numerous papers and books — particularly those on naturalists of the Franklin expeditions, which have achieved international recognition and citations of excellence.

This year as well, the Manitoba Naturalists' Society presented to Stuart its prestigious Ralph D. Bird Award, for a lifetime of work for wildlife and conservation and for achievements reaching far beyond the Prairies.

Following are excerpts from the offi-

cial presentation, written and delivered by Ardythe McMaster, SNHS Regional Director from Manitoba.

"On the windswept grasslands of Canadian prairies can be found the steps of a rare prairie species, the Prairie Naturalist... In the paths of giants can be found impressive evidence of their talents for keen and careful observation, their abilities to recruit, organise and coordinate others to assist and their energies to record and publish their findings. In their giant footsteps other naturalists may follow, their ways set by those who have gone before and shown the way.

"Once upon a time, as all good stories begin, when one Isabel Priestly moved...to Yorkton, she encouraged...to start a naturalists' bulletin there... She began to write a small bulletin issued every four months... named her bulletin *Blue Jay*, after a noisy, lively, gossipy Thornton W. Massess character, Sammy Jay, who 'spreading the news.' Stuart Houston was just a kid growing up in Yorkton that time. He was its first secretary-treasurer; he mimeographed the bulletin for circulation, and he and his bulletin helped Isabel Priestly by crayoning colour covers of her infant publication. What a start for these two young fledglings! *Blue Jay*, 'a journal of natural history and conservation for Saskatchewan and adjacent regions' has grown to become one of the outstanding natural history journals on the continent,

Stuart Houston, a regular *Blue Jay* contributor over the years, has grown to become this prairie giant we honour...known (like *Blue Jay*) across the continent...

"It would be true...to say that he works natural history in his spare time, but it could be...equally accurate to say that he breathes in his spare time! In broad terms he could be described as an ornithologist with a particular interest in raptors and colonial nesters, but this description would be too narrow, even though we know that he has banded about 5000 Great Horned Owls, and that Stuart Houston's total birds banded is just short of 100,000! He is keenly interested in the changing patterns of bird distribution, reflecting as they do the changing face of the prairies. He has researched and written about many early prairie naturalists and their work. His work heightens our interest and heightens our appreciation for the rich treasure left by these pioneer men and women... In all Stuart Houston has published over 250 books on ornithological and natural history topics!

But how wrong...to think of [him] limited in his study typing out articles... picture him arriving home from the air-traffic from a business meeting early on a Monday morning, gathering lunches, tools, shovels, and a herd of young chicks one third his age to spend the day waiting in nest boxes for Burrowing Owls a couple of hundred miles away. Or building nest platforms for Ferruginous Hawks or Ospreys. Or climbing up tall trees, or rappelling down steep cliffs, to deliver raptor nestlings. Think also of [him] as the control centre for a huge network of people who work with and for him, a mentor who encourages and challenges, and who inspires by example...

Mary Houston...needs..mention here, as cook, clerk, stenographer, social secretary, deputy, research assistant,



*C. Stuart Houston receives
Ralph D. Bird Award*

data compiler, gracious hostess, companion and friend, she is the outstanding example of the woman behind the successful man, and Stuart himself would be the first to agree. A naturalist in her own right, Mary runs...bluebird nestlines, bands passerines in her backyard traps, and annually coordinates the Saskatchewan Christmas bird and mammal counts...

"As our Society honours Stuart Houston and his work...we recognise that both we and the award are honoured by the stature of the recipient...[who reminds us] of our heritage, our common goals, our potential, our challenge...[whose] footsteps [invite] us to follow, to get in on the excitement, to join in the fun. There is a giant among us: Stuart Houston."