

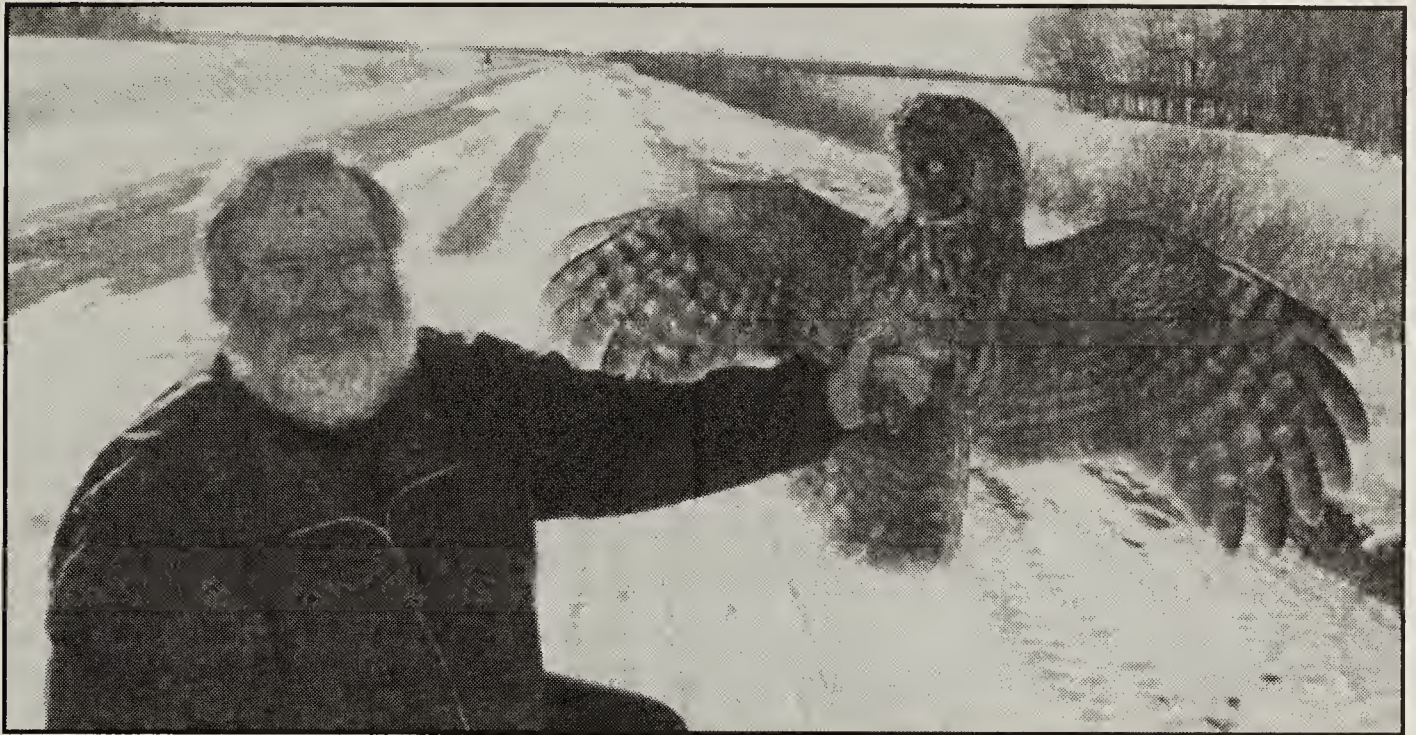
---

# IN MEMORIAM

---

## WAYNE C. HARRIS, 1951 - 2002

C. STUART HOUSTON, 863 University Drive, Saskatoon SK S7N 0J8



Wayne was Saskatchewan's "all-round naturalist" in every sense of that phrase, with remarkable skills in identifying birds, mammals, vascular plants, mosses, lichens, butterflies and other insects. He was the foremost Saskatchewan authority on rare and endangered bird species, especially the Piping Plover, Loggerhead Shrike, Greater Prairie-chicken, Sage Grouse, and Burrowing Owl. He could also identify all northern warbler songs and dialects. Few in Saskatchewan came close to sharing his wealth of knowledge across such a wide variety of topics.

Born on November 10, 1951, Wayne grew up on the family farm near Raymore, where he went to school, and then took an advanced degree in biology at the University of Saskatchewan, graduating in 1975. While still a student, Wayne began searching for owl nests in spring so I could band the nestlings when I visited the Harris farm each May. As a university student he assisted me on extensive raptor banding trips and

helped band colonial birds at Redberry Lake. Wayne obtained a banding sub-permit in 1971 and a full permit in 1985. He banded thousands of birds in his life time, including 1800 Loggerhead Shrikes.

Wayne started work for the Forestry Branch, Department of Northern Saskatchewan in 1975 and for a year worked under Alf Kabzems. Alf told me how Wayne often worked from dawn to dark, seven days a week, contrary to department protocol, and of the high quality of the work he produced. No wonder Alf thought the world of Wayne.

Through his private company, Prairie Environmental Services which began operating in March 1981, Wayne undertook studies of endangered species as well as other environmental consulting work varying from resource inventories, management planning, forest productivity and regeneration, effects of chemical use on the environment, and differences between



bird communities on conventional and organic farms. He also worked for various government departments over the years and in 1994 he took the job he had at the time of his death as Regional Ecologist for Saskatchewan Environment's grassland ecoregion based in Swift Current.

Wayne wrote *Guide to Forest Understory Vegetation* published in 1980 and was first author of *Ecological Regions of Saskatchewan* published in 1983. He wrote fifteen Prairie Provinces regional accounts for American Birds. He presented papers at conferences, such as the Endangered Species Conferences held every three years, and the two Northern Forest Owl conferences.

Wayne undertook Breeding Bird Surveys (BBS) from 1971 through 1980; one of the reasons he discontinued these was difficulty hearing higher pitches. He was observer in at least 10 surveys - the Watson BBS for 6 years, the Leroy BBS for three years and the Hudson Bay route for 1 year - and participated in many others. Each survey begins half an hour before dawn and this sometimes means hours of driving in pitch-black darkness to get there, sometimes in vain when the wind is too high to allow the count to proceed. In 1975 he was able to complete all three of the above counts.

Wayne was an active member of the Burrowing Owl Recovery Team from its inception in the late 1980s, and was well-known and respected among the landowner community. In recent years, Wayne was instrumental in getting nocturnal owl surveys underway, and helped draw up guidelines for them.

Perhaps the true measure of the indefatigability of this remarkable man is demonstrated by his contribution to Christmas Bird Counts. Guy Wapple has calculated that Wayne participated in 294 CBCs over 36 years, the highest number in Canada. His first CBC was at Raymore on

28 December 1966. In 2001 he did 13 counts; in three other years he did 12 counts, and in five others, 11 counts. Over the years, 36 different localities were involved, but Squaw Rapids, Gardiner Dam, Govenlock and Cypress Hills were regulars. The minimum distance between Cypress Hills in the southwest to his northernmost regular count at Squaw Rapids is 813 km and, not counting the distance travelled by car and on foot during each count, this involved a lot of travelling, which was followed by driving on to the next day's count, sometimes in extreme weather.

When Mary Houston edited the Saskatchewan CBCs, she commended Wayne for his "boundless enthusiasm." Carol Bjorklund and Martin Bailey point out that in 1988, Wayne identified all five falcons (gyr, peregrine, prairie, merlin, kestrel) during the Grasslands National Park CBC. His skills and wide travels are evident in his contributions to Al Smith's *Atlas of Saskatchewan Birds*, published in 1996; Wayne contributed far more sightings and breeding records than any other individual, about 20% of the total.

Wayne served as vice-president of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society (Nature Saskatchewan) from 1978 to 1981, co-editor of the *Blue Jay* with Sheila Lamont in 1981, and treasurer and part-time office manager from 1985 to 1989. From 1989 on Wayne contributed significantly to Nature Saskatchewan by publicizing, organizing and editing the Saskatchewan provincial Christmas Bird and Mammal Counts for *Blue Jay*. He was also an active participant in the Southwest Naturalists, the local society of Nature Saskatchewan in Swift Current.

Wayne died tragically on October 7, 2002. He was a principled, dedicated, scrupulously honest, and very independent man who called a spade a spade, whatever the consequences. He was generous in helping others and will be greatly missed - in part because of his unique, offbeat sense



of humor. No one can hope to replace him, but he will live on in the hearts of all that knew him.

### Acknowledgements

I acknowledge the assistance of Martin Bailey, Carol Bjorklund, Geoff Holroyd, Ron Jensen, Alf Kabzems, Louise Laurin, Sheila Lamont, Bob MacFarlane, Bev McBride, Lorne Scott, and Guy Wapple in

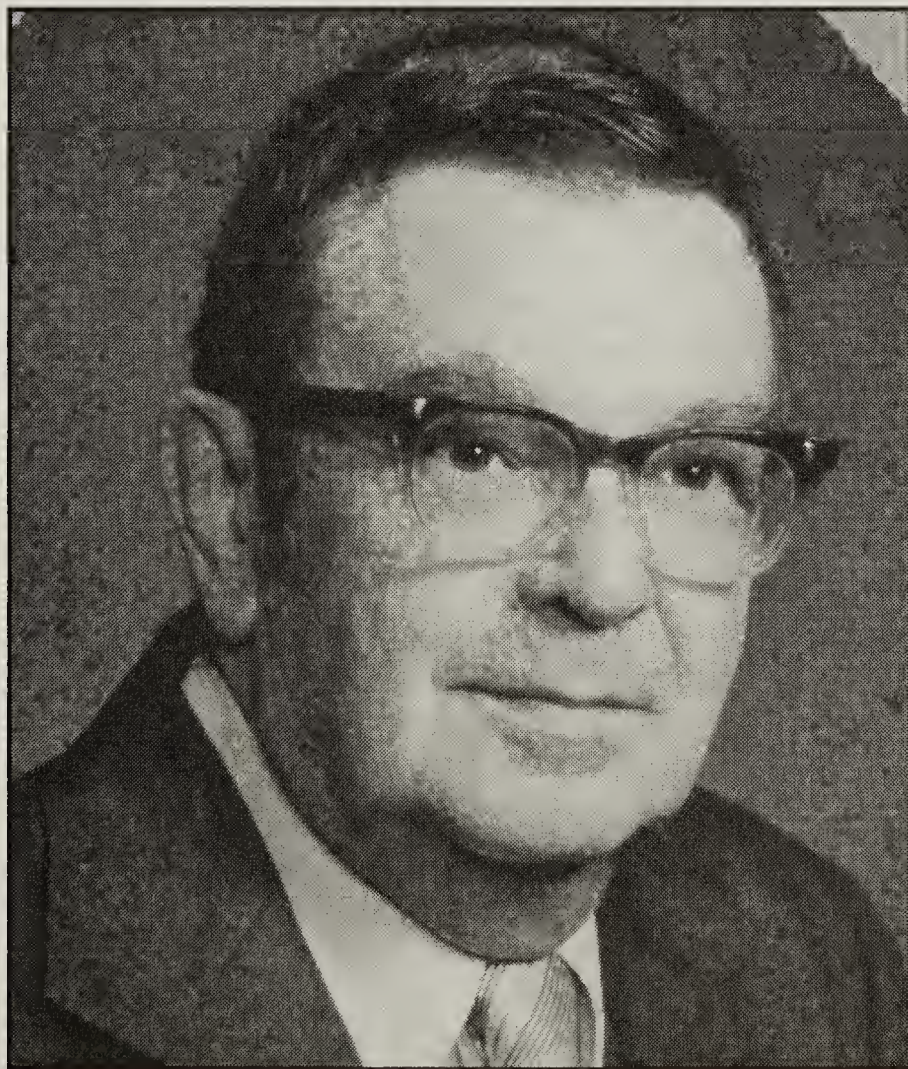
preparing this memorial. Heather Felskie kindly provided the photograph of Wayne.

Donations in Wayne's memory, payable to the Nature Conservancy of Canada, Suite 301, 1777 Victoria Avenue, Regina, SK, S4P 4K5, should mention in the accompanying letter or in the memo section at the bottom of the cheque, that they are for Wayne Harris' Prairie Conservation Fund.



# JIM ARMSTRONG WEDGWOOD, 1920-2003

J. FRANK ROY, 650 Costigan Way, Saskatoon, SK S7J 3R2



high school in Regina before moving to Saskatoon where, in 1941, he graduated with a bachelor of science degree in mechanical engineering. Except during the war years (1941-45) when he served in the Canadian navy, Jim spent his entire life in Saskatchewan.

Jim Wedgwood began taking a serious interest in birds in the 1960s, an interest which deepened with every passing year. After honing his identification skills, he was ready to share his enthusiasm and expertise with the hundreds of people who accompanied him on outings, bird counts and studies of particular species.

On January 7, 2003, Saskatchewan lost another of its native sons and one of its most ardent birders. Born in Gull Lake, Jim Wedgwood attended elementary and

For over thirty years, he organized annual field trips to Sharp-tailed Grouse dancing grounds. Piling into their cars as early as 4:00 AM, as many as 75 people would leave



the city well before dawn, following Jim as he led them to a community pasture. Before 5:00 AM, all would be settled quietly in place around a dancing ground before the birds arrived to dance. For over 20 years he also conducted Breeding Bird Surveys for Canadian Wildlife Service, and for 30 years organized or participated in Saskatoon Area Christmas, May and Fall bird counts.

By the early 1970s, Jim had begun special studies of several local species. Between 1970 and 1973, assisted by his devoted wife, Shirley, he located and mapped an amazing 141 Sharp-tailed Grouse leks (dancing grounds) in the Saskatoon birding area. They repeated the survey between 1988 and 1990. In 1971, Jim and others whom he recruited surveyed the entire city of Saskatoon to determine the number of Common Nighthawks within city limits, a study that he repeated in 1990. In 1975, he and Bernie Gollop conducted a survey of Burrowing Owls in south-central Saskatchewan, part of a Canadian Wildlife Service attempt to locate the remaining nest sites of this rapidly declining prairie species. The results were published in a major article in the March 1976 issue of *Blue Jay* (pp. 26-44). The gravity of the continuing Burrowing Owl decline was confirmed in his 1992 survey of the same area. Between 1989 and 1993, in conjunction with Canadian Wildlife Service, he organized bird surveys of the Lake Lenore, Scentgrass Lake, Redberry Lake and Sutherland Migratory Bird Sanctuaries and of the Tway National Wildlife Area.

During his busy lifetime, Jim contributed over 20 articles to *Blue Jay*, and between 1989 and 2002, more than 60 articles to Nature Notes, a weekly feature in the *Saskatoon StarPhoenix* and, later, the *Saskatoon Sun*. He lived to see his many well written species accounts in *Birds of the Saskatoon Area*, published in December 2002, just three weeks prior to his death.

Despite Jim's heavy workload as Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds,

and Director of Planning for the University of Saskatchewan, he found time to be President of the Saskatoon Natural History Society in 1968 and 1969, President of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society in 1972 and 1973, and a director of the Canadian Nature Federation in 1973. After his retirement in 1984, Jim founded the "Golden Eagles," a unique group of retired persons within the Saskatoon Nature Society committed to weekly local outings as well as longer natural history excursions throughout the province and beyond. With a regular membership of about 40, the Golden Eagles, while enjoying the company of others who love the outdoors, have volunteered actively in a wide variety of local conservation and educational projects.

Jim's leadership, his substantial contribution to ornithology and his commitment to the preservation of the natural world earned him the Cliff Shaw Award from the Saskatchewan Natural History Society in 1970 and the Meewasin Conservation Award in 1994. For nearly forty years we in the Saskatoon and Saskatchewan nature societies have been the beneficiaries of his dedication and knowledge. He has left us a legacy of caring and sharing.



## LATE WINTER

Clumps of  
crystal-white April snow  
lingering  
on May-green spruce boughs  
provide  
cool treats  
for blue-coated  
red-breasted nuthatches  
dining with needle-sharp  
black beaks.

- Victor C. Friesen