

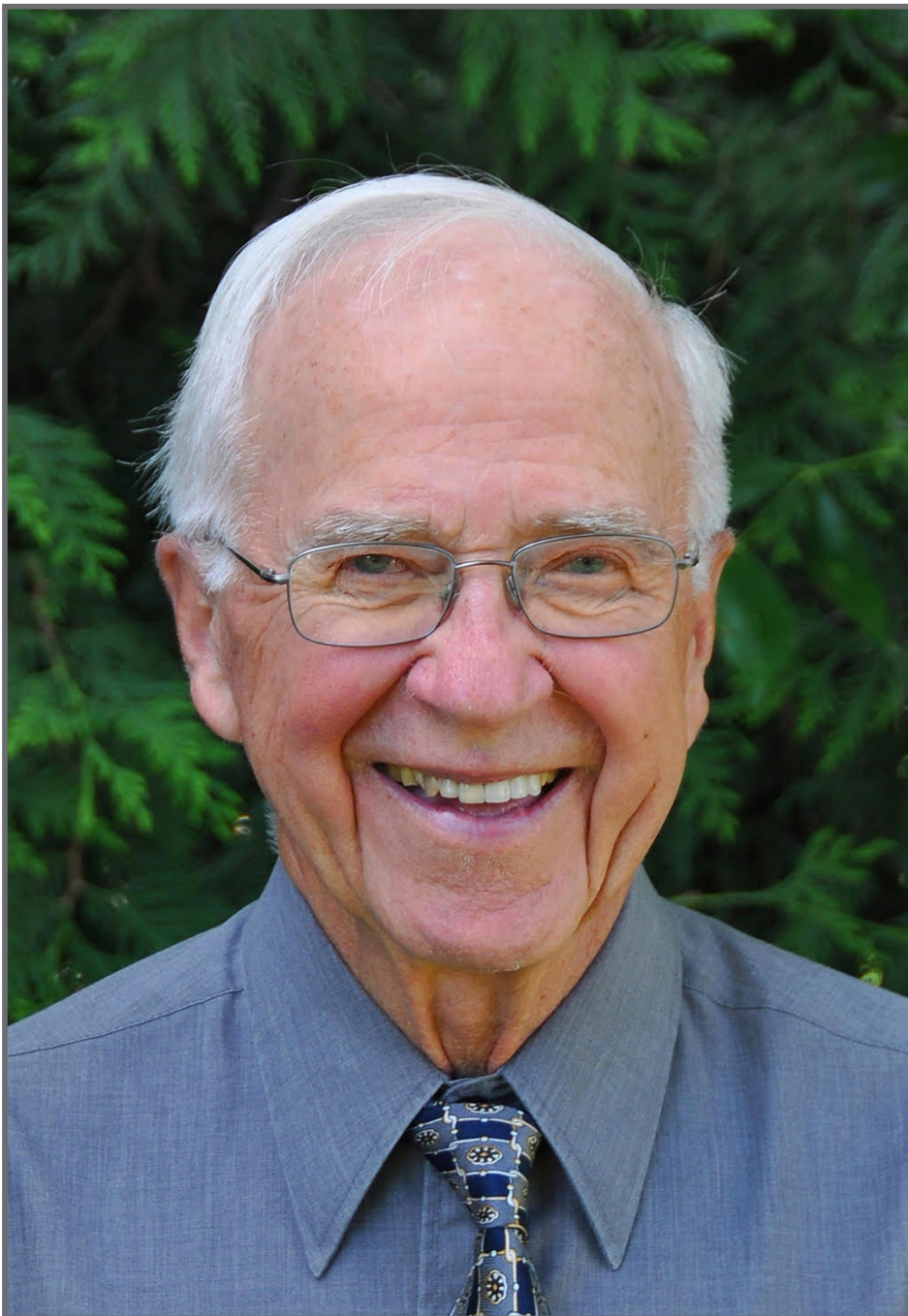
IN MEMORIAM: J. FRANK ROY

Donna Bruce with help from
C. Stuart Houston
Saskatoon, SK

With the recent passing of Frank Roy, the society has lost a long-time member, a talented volunteer, a great friend, and a wonderful mentor.

Born and raised on a farm near Tullis, Saskatchewan in 1928, Frank was always fascinated by birds. He credited his parents, his uncle Steve West, aunt Lill Verrault and the local pharmacist, Frank Grose, for encouraging and nurturing his interest. In 1942, His aunt Lill happened to read a column by A.G. Lawrence in the Winnipeg Free Press, lauding a bird list written by Isabel Priestly in Yorkton. Aunt Lill was one of hundreds that week who sent 25 cents to the address provided, Box 642, Yorkton, SK, to obtain a copy of the Yorkton list. She added a second 25 cents for her nephew, Frank. Many people also sent in interesting notes about their observations, which the Grade 10 boy at Box 642 Yorkton (Stuart Houston), who had mimeographed the requested bird list, passed on to Isabel Priestly. She felt they merited printing in a new magazine, which she called *Blue Jay*. Frank treasured each issue of *Blue Jay*, and he and Stuart (who had hand-coloured the title on the first few issues in blue pencil crayon) soon became pen pals and lifelong friends. When the Saskatchewan Natural History Society was established in 1949 and took over responsibility for *Blue Jay*, Frank's membership was a given.

Frank's other love was teaching. With a B.A. from the University of Saskatchewan and a year in the College of Education, he took a teaching position in Meadow Lake in 1949. He finished his B.Ed.



while teaching there, then moved to Saskatoon in 1954, moved to Saskatoon. Frank's teaching career was rounded out with the completion of an M.A. in English in 1968, a three-year placement at the Canadian Military Base in Lahr, West Germany in 1978, three more years back in Saskatoon at Walter Murray Collegiate, as well as lecturing in English teaching methods at the university and serving on

the provincial Rhodes scholarship committee.

One of Frank's great gifts was his generous interest in others, and desire to bring people and nature together. In addition to teaching English, he developed and delivered outdoor education programs at City Park for 25 years, and students were always welcome to join him on bird hikes around the edges of classes. He also found many kindred spirits in

Saskatoon, and helped to establish the Saskatoon Natural History Society, becoming its first Vice-President in 1956. The following year he became second Vice-President of the provincial society and, in 1958, he served as President of both the provincial and the Saskatoon society.

Throughout his life, Frank continued as an active volunteer and supporter of both societies. As business manager of the provincial society, he was the “expeditor of mails” — distributing *Blue Jay*, which he considered a critical part of the society’s operations. He was an active member of the Grasslands National Park committee and worked for the establishment of Athabasca Sand Dunes Provincial Park. At the local level, he organized the first May Bird Count, and was an active count participant and promoter. Frank is one of Saskatchewan’s top three participants in the annual Breeding Bird Survey, having completed 59 counts, and also spent four summers working on bird surveys in the southern prairies and the Canadian Arctic for the Canadian Wildlife Service.

Frank treasured nature outings, and was much loved as a leader or companion. Beyond having a “good ear” and tremendous knowledge of birds, Frank was an enthusiastic mentor. As one member aptly described it, “taking a walk with Frank was like taking a master class in birding.” In retirement, the frequency of Frank’s outings increased with the emergence of the Golden Eagles, whose Thursday outings have continued since 1984. Frank also led innumerable bird hikes and tours of Western Canada, worked with guides in Kenya and teachers in Gambia to expand their knowledge of African birds, and gave many memorable presentations about nature and his travels. He also chaired the 1987 Canadian Nature

Federation conference, held in Saskatoon.

The majority of Frank’s time after retirement was devoted to sharing his interests with others. The Saskatoon Society’s Nature Notes, which began in 1989, benefitted both from his fine writing skills and his enthusiastic mentorship. *Birds of the Elbow*, published by Nature Saskatchewan in 1996, was Frank’s homage to his home territory — a wonderfully written account of 301 species, with a historical perspective on the region’s environment, wildlife, and loss of habitat. This was the first of the provincial society publications to use colour photographs, something Frank valued greatly as a way to engage readers. He then spent six years as one of the editors of *Birds of the Saskatoon Area*, published in 2002. Most significant was the achievement of something he had envisioned back in September 1958, during his presidency of the provincial society — publication of *Birds of Saskatchewan*. With Al Smith and Stuart Houston, and supported by a host of other volunteers, Frank spent 10 years working through species accounts and, to his delight, through hundreds of wonderful photos that would accompany them. He wanted the book to be beautiful as well as informative, and believed it would be of even greater value in 100 years than in 2019, as a record of the past and a benchmark of environmental change.

Frank didn’t like to draw attention to his awards, but there were many. In 1983, he received the first Joseph Duffy Memorial Award for excellence in the teaching of language arts; in 1992, the first St. Thomas More Distinguished Alumnus Award, and the Meewasin Conservation Award (for leadership in conservation and environmental education); in 1993, Fellow of the Saskatchewan

Natural History Society; in 1998, the Saskatchewan Natural History Society’s Conservation Award; in 2002, the Queen’s Jubilee Medal; in 2005, an honorary Doctor of Laws from the University of Saskatchewan, and Saskatchewan’s highest honour, the Order of Merit. In 2009, he was selected as one of 100 most distinguished graduates of the College of Arts and Science, University of Saskatchewan. In 2018, Frank, together with *Birds of Saskatchewan* co-editors Al Smith and Stuart Houston, was again a recipient of Nature Saskatchewan’s Conservation Award. 🐦

I first met Frank on 18 May 1963, a day that will be indelibly etched in my mind. My mother, the late Emma Legge Smith, was always eager to cultivate my interests by enlisting the help of those who could be mentors. As she saw my attention turn from horses to birds, she asked the Saskatoon Natural History Society if I could participate in the annual Saskatoon May Day Count. I was assigned to the area southwest of Saskatoon under the leadership of Frank Roy. One of the first birds we saw was a Golden-crowned Sparrow — a significant rarity even to this day. If I was not fully aware of its scarcity, I was soon made aware by the tremendous enthusiasm of our leader. If it wasn't for the combination of seeing many wonderful birds that day, and the boundless joy that Frank exuded, I may have written the day off as "sort of fun". Instead I was hooked! I owe him so very much.

– Al Smith