

Joe Hickey, Birder

by Michael Harwood

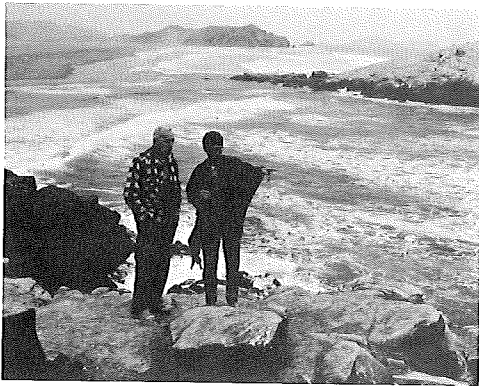
A boyhood pleasure grew to a lifelong profession

JOSEPH J. HICKEY doesn't like to answer the question, "What are your accomplishments?" He thinks it's "an affront to modesty." He is only marginally less embarrassed when someone else tries to answer the question *for* him; but to sum him up very briefly, Joe Hickey is at 74 going on 75 one of the major figures in North American conservation. A courtly raconteur and a gregarious, enthusiastic traveler, he is author of a popular book about bird watching, author of more than a hundred technical papers, Fellow of the American Ornithologists' Union, a founder of The Nature Conservancy, for many years (though now retired) professor of wildlife ecology at the University of Wisconsin, key researcher into the effects of organochlorine pesticides on birds, organizer and chairman of a pathfinding international scientific conference on the peregrine falcon when that species was in

Daniel W. Anderson

Ornithologist Joseph Hickey views California's redwoods in 1975.





Libby Sale

Hickey and researcher Jerry McGahan on a 1961 Andean condor project in Peru.

its greatest difficulty, editor of the proceedings of that conference, and chairman of the subsequent conference that designed the scheme for bringing about the peregrine's recovery in the United States.

Despite such accomplishments, he has not achieved much fame outside professional conservation circles. That's due in part to his ideas about self-importance. Before an interviewer has a chance to pose a single question, for example, Hickey is likely to start touting the work of someone else. It is his nature to be generous, to boost, to encourage others. "He's erudite," says a friend of many years' standing, "he's extremely meticulous, and he shares this erudition and eye for detail with everyone who asks for his help. He's concerned about other people—old friends and young students coming up. I sent him a paper recently for his comments, and he was so detailed there were literally footnotes on footnotes."

That brings up another reason for Hickey's relative obscurity: carefulness. Those who, like him, are committed to being *scientists*, in the purest sense of the word, do not normally find themselves in the limelight, or seek it. Their love of science, their respect for the scientific process, has nourished an inclination not to lead public cavalry charges against this or that Enemy of Wildlife but rather—if the occasion arises—to help expose such enemies as may exist by doing responsible research. So Joe Hickey represents a key segment of the planet's defenders of wildlife, albeit a segment that is occasionally unpopular with some of the other defenders because of a supposed "fuddy-duddy" cautiousness about good, conclusive data and the like.

The prime example is the DDT question. Hickey's detective work and his scientific leadership in the matter of DDT and birds may have been his most impor-

tant contribution to the cause of conservation. It led to discovery of the crash of the North American peregrine falcon population. Because of that discovery biologists were eventually able to nail the organochlorine DDE—long-lived breakdown product of DDT—as a very dangerous and widespread substance in the environment, which led to the ban on DDT in the United States. The story is worth repeating now, for other organochlorines are still being used in this country, and more are in use abroad, including pesticides that can't be used here but are nonetheless produced in this country and exported—and then returned to America on imported food. Furthermore, persistent efforts are being made to "Bring Back DDT and Wipe Out a Decade of Regulatory Excess," as a headline in *Barron's* urged last summer.

Hickey likes to say that it was the women who got him going on the detective work. "The women" included not only Rachel Carson, whose book, *Silent Spring*, appeared when the detective work was well under way, but also a host of angry suburban housewives who kept telephoning him in Madison, Wisconsin, and sending him the dead birds they found each time their communities were sprayed with DDT back in the '50s and '60s.

By the late 1950s Dutch elm disease had reached the Middle West, and the urban Middle West had a lot of tree communities consisting only of planted elms. So when DDT was used to protect elms from the disease there, all the trees in a given neighborhood might be sprayed, the birds would feed constantly in an environment saturated with pesticide, and many of them would die. Enter the women. "The suburbs of our big cities—Chicago, Milwaukee, Madison—these are populated mostly by college graduates, and this is one of the best-educated groups of women in the world. When they began to report that these birds had died, the scientific community paid no attention to them," recalls Hickey. He relishes this aspect of the story. He has a high regard for women, beginning with the mother and sister who made his career possible and including his first wife and long-time editor, Peggy Brooks Hickey. "To me," he says, "one of the great satisfactions in life now is to see women coming to be regarded as co-equals to us males." He believes it was because of their gender that the women were being largely ignored when they connected their dead birds to DDT spraying.

At first he was skeptical himself. But as

a scientist Hickey likes to treat such accusations as hypotheses to be tested, and skepticism is a key stock in his trade. "In '58 I got down to one of these suburbs in Illinois—to a funeral. I'm sitting out on a porch, waiting to go down to the church, and here's a tree loaded with mulberries—and *there isn't a single robin around*. So at lunch after the funeral I said to the minister, 'I didn't see any robins around.' 'Oh,' he said, 'they were here early in the spring, but I think they all went north.' I said to myself, 'There's something wrong here. Maybe those women are right.'

"I hadn't been involved with pesticides. But I *had* been involved with toxic chemicals during wartime, in the medical school of the University of Chicago." That autumn of 1958 he did some lab work, testing for an "LD-50"—the dose of DDT lethal to 50 percent of the robins that ingested it. At the same time he tested a second pesticide, which among other things served as a control. He found an LD-50 for DDT, all right, but he couldn't kill robins with the second compound, methoxychlor.

"Then the next spring I set up a study where one of my students would census two 25-acre tracts in each of three different cities or towns that did not spray, and two more in each of three others that were using DDT. We had to drop one plot on a technicality, so we had five controls and six sprayed plots. We had quite a good deal of variation on the sprayed plots, which was very puzzling at the start. In the wealthier communities, where they'd been spraying quite a while, everything was way down. 'Silent Spring' was there: let's say 90 percent of the whole bird population was wiped out. But it wasn't like that at some of these other places, and what we found was that the density of birds in these places was correlated with the number of trees sprayed per acre. Such a correlation could only have occurred by chance maybe once in a thousand times."

That same spring, the Wisconsin campus was sprayed, as well as Maple Bluff, on the other side of Madison from where Hickey lived. "Everything was dying over there, and those women were calling me up. On the campus we made a very careful survey of the surviving robins; we figured that we had probably killed 86 to 88 percent of them. We had wiped out all of the yellow warblers. We had wiped out our only pair of screech owls."

Hickey was now convinced of the harm DDT could do locally. But like everyone else at the time, he hadn't the faintest



Daniel W. Anderson

Professor Hickey inspects some skins in a University of Wisconsin lab in 1969 before beginning one of his lectures on principles of wildlife ecology.

idea of how widespread and persistent DDT's effects could be as it broke down in the environment. The next lesson was soon delivered. "In '62 I went to the International Ornithological Congress at Cornell, and I heard somebody say that there had been practically no peregrine falcons raised in the Northeast that year. I don't know how many people in the room that rumor had been through before it reached me; it was about eighth-hand, and I didn't think much about it. But the next year in an issue of *Bird Study* (published by the British Trust for Ornithology) I read Derek Ratcliffe's description of the peregrine population crash in Britain. I thought, 'My God, I wonder if there is something to that rumor.' I immediately set out to test the truth of it."

Years before—in 1942, to be exact—Hickey had published a major paper on the peregrine falcon in North America east of the Rockies. In it, among other things, he enumerated (and to do so, collected precise information about) the active peregrine eyries—nest sites. He thus had in his files a Baedeker to places where peregrines ought to be found in the 1960s, because in normal circumstances peregrines return breeding season after breeding season to occupy favored eyries, and whenever such eyries are vacated because of death, other peregrines tend to move in. So if someone were now to check, say, the eyries that were known in 1939 and 1940 along the Appalachian chain, the findings would give a good indication of the species' status in the East.

Hickey himself had commitments in Europe during much of 1964, but he was

able to organize a field research team headed by Daniel D. Berger, who ran the Cedar Grove Ornithological Station in Wisconsin. They worked out a schedule that took Berger and a colleague from Alabama to New Hampshire, putting them at each of 133 traditional peregrine eyries when the fresh whitewash of excrement below nest ledges and the clamorous activity of young birds would make the presence of breeding peregrines most conspicuous. Not one peregrine was found.

That same summer, talking to various European ornithologists, Hickey began to get an inkling that the peregrine crash was showing up all over the continent. What was happening to cause such a widespread disaster? "I knew that Ratcliffe thought it was pesticides, but that was just an hypothesis as far as I was concerned." There still wasn't much in the literature about what happened to DDT and the other organochlorine pesticides once they got into the food chain, and the papers that had appeared were very local in scope. To be sure, they demonstrated that even a very light application of an organochlorine pesticide became increasingly concentrated as it moved up the food chain from predator to larger predator until it actually did harm to certain creatures that ingested it. But from such geographically limited observations, Hickey thought, one could not extrapolate effects on a species population "of a whole country, or maybe two continents, and say that the whole ecosystem is poisoned and it's showing up in the peregrines."

At the same time, he was under some pressure to take a public position on

DDT. He refused. "You can't come out and take a position and then try to prove that you're *right*. You can't go before an audience that is going to applaud you because you're proving that *they're* right."

There were things that *could* be done, however. In particular, information, observations, and hypotheses could be exposed and tested. Within a year Hickey organized and chaired an international conference on the peregrine at the University of Wisconsin, where the assembled scientists made plain that the population crash had occurred throughout much of Europe and North America. In some regions, as one participant summarized the situation, "the decrease has been 100 percent; reductions of 90 percent and 80 percent are not uncommon." Heavy use of organochlorine pesticides was suspected to be the major culprit everywhere. But if so, how did the pesticides produce the peregrine's collapse? The collapse was mostly the result of breeding failure, and the British, says Hickey, "convinced the Americans that the phenomenon was probably due to something we had completely overlooked: eggshell breakage. The purpose of our meeting had been to crystallize hypotheses that we could test. So here was an hypothesis, and gee, fellows went right to work on it."

In short order, Ratcliffe and then Hickey and a Hickey student, Daniel W. Anderson, discovered by examining various egg collections that the shells of peregrine eggs laid in Britain, Massachusetts, and California from 1947 on had been dramatically thinner than those of eggs collected before 1947. Similar changes and timing were found in the eggs of other raptor species in which local populations had declined suddenly and alarmingly, including the osprey and bald eagle.

This all had coincided with the start of widespread use of DDT as a pesticide. However, there was still a puzzle. DDT as such doesn't last long after it has been applied, but deteriorates into other compounds—notably DDE, which *does* remain in the environment, for years. So Hickey and Anderson set about investigating DDE's effects in nature. They checked eggshell thickness and egg contents in gull colonies on the Great Lakes and along the Atlantic coast. They found that the correlation between DDE levels in the eggs and thinning of eggshells was precise and convincing. Other researchers then fed DDE to captive birds and produced the same physiological effects that were being found in wild birds loaded with the compound.

Eventually biologists discovered that

the compound affected the metabolism and hormone levels of birds, thereby skewing not only the process of calcium deposition in eggshells—which explained the eggshell-thinning—but also the creatures' physiology and behavior at many points in the breeding cycle. DDT had been nailed, and nailed solid.

There is nothing of the fuddy-duddy in Joe Hickey at nearly 75, and I daresay there never was. He's a city boy, born in Harlem in 1907, raised in the Bronx—in the Hunt's Point neighborhood, across the East River from what is today LaGuardia airport. More than a little of New York City's side-street accents can be heard in his speech even now, and a touch of Irish too; his grandparents were Irish immigrants.

"Hunt's Point was really the edge of the city," he recalls. "We played a lot in the local woods, which were only about two or three blocks away from my house. We built fires and roasted potatoes and got blackened by getting too close to the fire. This was an area that had been platted but hadn't been built up. Some of it was second-growth forest, I realize now, but it was very wild to us. One of the boys, Eddie, was Irish, and one afternoon—this must have been in December when it was getting dark early—the wind came whistling through the trees, and Eddie yelled, 'The ban-shee!'" Hickey laughs delightedly. "We all scared out in different directions.

"There was a nice place where one of the boys and I used to go. We would sit in a little valley, below some white clover—which indicates a soil disturbance, by the way. There was lovely sand there, and we just sat and talked. We called it 'the little valley of peace and gossip.' We were only 11 years of age—something like that."

Like many boys, Hickey and his pals were introduced to bird watching by their scoutmaster. The scoutmaster had binoculars, but as far as Hickey can recall none of the scouts ever was allowed to use those. They did all their bird watching with the naked eye. Their basic reference book was a hand-me-down copy of Chester A. Reed's *Bird Guide: Land Birds East of the Rockies*—not much bigger than a deck of cards, not very detailed, but with illustrations in color. "Then I rescued—believe it or not, from a garbage can—a copy, much torn, of volume one of *The Birds of New York State*. We tore out the plates, scissored out the birds, wrote the names on the back of each one in ink, and put them in an envelope, which was carried in the Reed *Bird Guide*.

"The first bird-lister we ever met, other than our scoutmaster, was absolutely a



Courtesy Joseph J. Hickey

At two and a half, a future birder watches the birdie in Harlem.

shock to us. That anybody should be interested in birds outside of scouting! And here was this man in a derby, vandyke beard, carrying a gold-headed cane. I guess I was in the eighth grade, 14 years of age. We had come up to the Bronx Park to look at the birds in the birdhouse, one cage of which held North American birds. That was the one we were interested in. Not the toucans. Fox sparrows and swamp sparrows and things like that. So this man was looking at a chickadee in Bronx Park, and we boys came up to him and we stood there looking at the chickadee too, and then we walked along with him. He apparently knew a lot more about birds than our scoutmaster, and we were asking him questions. I'd be peeking into the envelope and I'd say, 'Have you ever seen an *ivory gull*?' He was most impressed.

"We came back to the birdhouse to get warm, and there we met two other local birders. One of them took me aside and said, 'What kind of glasses [birder shorthand for binoculars] do you have?' 'Well, we don't have glasses.' He said, 'Why, how do you see the *warblers*?' I said, 'We climb up in a tree and we wait there for them.' That's what we *did*. Up *high* too. Just great. You'd get, you know, Cape May warbler, right *there*. 'Well,' he said, 'my brother and I have an old pair of glasses. Give me your address; I'm going to send it to you.' And he did—a pair of two-power binocs, opera glasses."

This encounter not only doubled the bird-watching range of Hickey and his friends but also brought them into the circle of experienced Bronx birders and enlarged their knowledge of the good

birding spots around the city. They joined the Linnaean Society of New York, which met, as it still does, twice a month at the American Museum of Natural History. That introduced them to some of the leading natural scientists of the day. Among them was Ludlow Griscom, the patron saint of bird-finding as a competitive sport. Griscom had a powerful influence on many birders. Before long Hickey and company founded the Bronx County Bird Club, which became the citadel of the young birding hotshots in New York. The members included such luminaries-to-be as Hickey's schoolmate, Allan Cruickshank, and Roger Tory Peterson.

Birds would eventually take Joe Hickey a long way from the Bronx. One key to the exit was a formal education. His family did not have, as he puts it, an educational tradition. His father drove a truck for a silk importer, and his mother was a dressmaker. But his mother, who had only been to elementary school, "was the most important person in my life, because she *knew* that you had to have an education. All the family strategy about my education was the result of her determination that the *boy* got the education, not the girl. My sister, who was really a better scholar than I, was allowed only to go through junior high, and then she had to go to work, to help support the family and to leave elbow-room for me to get an education. She took this cheerfully." Hickey has admired her for it ever since.

He went to public high school in the Bronx and then took a degree in history at New York University. As a member of the NYU track team he was the IC4A indoor and outdoor mile champion in 1929. After graduation in 1930, he became assistant track coach at NYU, where he stayed for three years. Next he went to work for Consolidated Edison, first as a clerk and then as a wholesale power salesman in Manhattan. "I had 66 customers in the city. These were all large buildings, like the Hotel Mayflower and the Century Apartments, and they had or they could have their own power plants, so they were given the VIP treatment by Con Edison. I gave them ideas on how to cut down on their bills and things like that." It was a *job*—this was the Depression—and it was an easy job, Hickey says, but a "lousy one," too. The only way he could advance farther up the company ladder was to earn a degree in electrical engineering, and he was not interested in that.

Meanwhile he had become a prominent part of the New York amateur birding

establishment, and by 1938 he was president of the Linnaean Society. He was growing sophisticated about the bird-watching hobby, in part because of his exposure to the professionals at the American Museum of Natural History—and to one in particular, the German ornithologist Ernst Mayr, who had recently joined the museum staff. “He had the Germanic point of view,” says Hickey, “that everyone should have A Problem to work on.” Young hotshots like Joe Hickey weren’t at first tuned to Problems—gaps in scientific knowledge that bird students ought to be trying to fill. Basically they had cut their ornithological teeth on the competitive aspect of birding: *My list of the birds I’ve seen is bigger than your list; the rare bird I found is rarer than the rare bird you found.* Mayr organized a monthly seminar, where he and about a dozen other men reviewed the literature appearing in ornithological journals. “For the first two years he did all the reviewing himself—it was all German literature, by the way.” Hickey grins. “So there’s where I started to get ideas, and other people in that group also went on to become professional ornithologists.”

Hickey spent many of his lunch hours with the staff of the National Audubon Society—more chances to talk about Problems, as well as opportunities to court the Audubon librarian, pretty Peggy Brooks. “I had unofficial lending privileges in that library,” he says; he went through it one book at a time, reading as he rode the subway from one Con Edison customer to another. He read 36 volumes of the magazine *British Birds*, for example, “and at the end I was a walking encyclopedia of British ornithology.”

In 1940, his 33rd year, Joe Hickey went back to NYU for a year as a night student to earn a degree in biology. He hadn’t decided what if anything he would undertake in the way of graduate work. But Richard Pough, one of his friends at Audubon, helped solve that by introducing him to Aldo Leopold, who was head of the department of wildlife management at the University of Wisconsin. Leopold offered Hickey a project—in fact, hired him as a research assistant to do it: a study of potential wildlife habitat on submarginal farm land in southwestern Wisconsin. That became Hickey’s thesis subject.

Ask Hickey today about Leopold’s influence on him, and there is a pause—and almost a whistle—before he begins. “Boy. Well, he certainly gave me my chance to get into the scientific community. I worked under his direction for a year and a half,



Allan D. Cruickshank

At 32, an enthusiastic amateur seeks peregrines on the Hudson.

during which I wrote my master’s thesis. So I got a master’s degree, which was my first step toward earning professional status, and I was able to go on and get a Ph.D. under Josselyn Van Tyne at Michigan—which in 1940, when I was going to night school, I never dreamed about.”

Perhaps an even more important influence at the time was provided by Peggy Brooks. A graduate of Mount Holyoke College, she had been a writer for the *Stamford Advocate* in Connecticut before joining National Audubon as librarian. Eventually she began writing for William Vogt, who was editor of *Bird-Lore*, predecessor of the present *Audubon* and *American Birds* magazines. After Vogt moved on, she became acting editor. John Baker, then president of National Audubon, “wouldn’t give her the full title,” says Joe Hickey, rankled even now by Baker’s male chauvinism, “but he let her do all the work. Then at the start of the war they began losing employees, and she took on other jobs. When she left they hired five people to replace her.

“We were never engaged, but we had an understanding that if I ever got a decent job we would get married. I came out to Madison a week before Pearl Harbor. I had a 1937 Ford with pretty well-worn tires—and not much money. The night before I left, Peggy had dinner with me, and she said, ‘I don’t like the idea of you driving all the way out to Wisconsin on those tires.’ So she took me to a service station and bought me four brand-new tires. That shows you the sort of girl she was.” The research job didn’t pay much, but in all other respects it qualified as “decent,” and in June, 1942,

Peggy Brooks and Joe Hickey were married in Madison, with the Aldo Leopolds standing up for them.

No sooner were they on their honeymoon than Peggy began to prod her husband about a project he had taken up in New York and then dropped—the writing of *A Guide to Bird Watching*. “I was really fed up with the list-chasing horizons of most bird clubs,” Hickey recalls. He had written an article for *Bird-Lore*, “The Amateur Ornithologist and His Bird Club,” in which he tried to do for other amateur birders a little of what Ernst Mayr had done for him—lift the hobby of birding above the level of list-chasing. He had also been engaged in the same sort of enterprise as an exemplar in his own bird study and as a mentor while president of the Linnaean Society. “Bill Vogt was suggesting things for everybody to write,” says Hickey. “He was the one who suggested the *Field Guide* to Roger Peterson, of course, and he suggested I try writing a book.” But having produced a rough draft of a single chapter, Hickey had made the mistake of showing it to a potential publisher, who apparently found the lack of polish unpromising and turned down the idea. Now, with Peggy’s encouragement and the help of her editing, and with the blessings of Leopold, who allowed time for the work, Hickey began again. In 1943 *A Guide to Bird Watching* was published by Oxford University Press.

It opened with vintage Hickey—formal but at ease, learned but witty and slightly self-mocking: “Bird watching is old enough to have stood the test of time, young enough to lie within the age of exploration. By some it is regarded as a mild paralysis of the central nervous system, which can be cured only by rising at dawn and sitting in a bog. Others regard it as a harmless occupation of children, into which maiden aunts may sometimes relapse.”

The *Guide* proceeded to demonstrate that such clichéd impressions were altogether unwarranted and that the watching of birds was a pursuit worthy of the most intelligent, active, and energetic among us—full of drama and of Problems to be solved. Hickey introduced the basic literature and bird-watching equipment, some of the history and conventions of ornithology, the key ornithological organizations, tricks that help the bird watcher become a good observer and note-taker, and went on from such basics to advanced methods of bird study and the many possibilities for the amateur to make major contributions. He laced his message with hundreds of his and other bird-

ers' experiences and with many specific questions that waited to be answered. Nothing like his *Guide* had ever appeared in this country, and nothing like it has been published since. Although its sales have been modest—fewer than 40,000 copies—it has been slightly revised twice, has gone into three editions (the latest issued by Dover Press) and is still in print nearly 40 years after it was written.

But Hickey downplays its impact on the American birding community. "Once in a while I meet somebody who says, 'I want to tell you how much I appreciated *A Guide to Bird Watching*. It showed me something that I didn't know about.' And these of course are professional ornithologists talking." He laughs. "I guess I don't feel that the book ever caught on in terms of developing a lot of good amateur ornithologists. I was against list-chasing, and I argued that 'bird watching'—which is a British term that has to do with counting and observing birds—provided more lasting satisfaction than listing. But bird listing is far bigger now than it was when I was a boy. Of course that's partly due to my good friend Roger Peterson, but it's also due to the ability of Americans to travel around by automobiles. So if someone today tells you he's a 'bird watcher,' he may well be a lister. Bird watching in the British sense of the term certainly failed over here."

After the year and a half studying under Leopold, Joe did "war work" for a year at the University of Chicago medical school, testing toxic chemicals, while his wife took a job with World Book Encyclopedia. In 1944 they moved to Ann Arbor, Joe began work on his Ph.D. at the University of Michigan, and Peggy took on another editorial assignment, this time helping to produce a dictionary of English proverbs. When the war was over, the Hickeys went east. Joe had a Guggenheim fellowship, and he used it to finance the writing of his doctoral dissertation, "Survival Studies of Banded Birds." Peggy assisted him. They spent more than a year culling data from the bird-banding files at the Patuxent laboratory of the Fish and Wildlife Service in Laurel, Maryland.

In 1948, with the Ph.D. and a six-month-old daughter they returned to the University of Wisconsin. Leopold had asked Joe to join him in the department of wildlife management. Leopold was to retire in three years, "and I was to be broken in by that time. I was not a game manager, by any means, but he thought he could do it. He died in *four months*. It was a disaster—in more ways than one. It was a disaster



Courtesy Joseph J. Hickey

Hickey six years ago at Horicon Marsh, famed Wisconsin waterfowl refuge.

to me to lose what were going to be three wonderful years of working under him. In addition, those of us who were very close to him were all perfectly convinced that where his real intellectual strengths lay was in his essays, and we were telling him, 'For gosh sakes, stop fooling around trying to be a scientist. Get your essays out.'"

Leopold, like Hickey, had been turned down by the first New York publisher he approached. Hickey put him in touch with Phillip Vaudrin, trade editor at Oxford University Press, who had handled Hickey's *Guide*. Vaudrin accepted the manuscript a week before Leopold died. With the help of Hickey and then of a Leopold son, Luna, Oxford went ahead with the publishing of what has become famous as *A Sand County Almanac*.

Wildlife management might not seem the ideal field for a true ornithologist, since to most of us it reeks of gunpowder. But Leopold himself, says Joe Hickey, "was a game manager who was most interested in ornithology. He was interested in mammalogy, too, but his hobby was songbirds. He had a wonderful time, spring after spring, getting up early to see what hour they started to sing. He died with a paper on that subject all but done. The notes he left on bird song were ultimately rescued, and under my direction one of my grad students prepared the paper. We made the two of them co-authors."

Hickey taught in the department of wildlife management—which eventually became wildlife ecology—for 29 years

and for a while was chairman of the department. He loved working with students. "I know people in major universities who regard teaching as a chore, taking away from research, but I regard it as a great challenge. I tried to make my courses enjoyable intellectual experiences. So I gradually put into my introductory course all the gimmicks I could think of. I used a lot of illustrative material, and I prided myself on giving a 16-week course in which the lights were never on. I had bird specimens out. I had a tape-recorder going before and after class; when you came into class there were new bird songs going, and as soon as the lecture ended, I'd press the button and they'd be hearing *loons* and so on. And I would put my jokes—corny as they were—in the first third of the lecture. So people would come in in a relaxed condition, because they wanted to be there. In my last semester I had 475 students in that course. I cut down the size by lecturing three times a day."

In 1976 Peggy died, after a difficult battle with cancer; she and Joe had been married six months short of 35 years. He retired from teaching the next year. Retirement and widowhood might have slowed a man of less robust spirit. But in 1978 Joe married Lola Gordon, the trim, active, handsome widow of a professor at the medical school, and he has continued to live up to a reputation for being ready to travel from Madison to almost any ornithological meeting at the drop of an invitation. He serves on the boards of several organizations, including the National Audubon Society and the Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology.

His current project is a publications history of the Wildlife Society. He is also preparing to write a paper on the longevity of blue jays—not only for its own scientific sake but also, it would appear, as a tip of the hat to Peggy Hickey. After she arrived, a new mother, in Madison in 1948, she began a long-term backyard banding project with jays. The results were left unpublished. Joe is transferring her data to computer cards for analysis, and his paper will bring her work to fruition. And that seems characteristic—the meticulousness, the acknowledgment of a debt, the boosting of someone else.

Michael Harwood is an environmental journalist who lives in Washington, Connecticut. His most recent book, On the Road With John James Audubon, written with his wife, Mary Durant, won the John Burroughs Medal for distinguished nature writing.