

IN MEMORIAM

CLIFFORD R. LYONS, 1942–2012

In the late 1960s a group of San Diego field ornithologists gathered regularly to discuss matters of interest in the formation of a new society dedicated to birds and bird issues in California. *California Birds* later morphed into *Western Birds*, which now is a widely respected journal circulated world-wide, and the California Field Ornithologists became the Western Field Ornithologists. Cliff Lyons was a founding member of the California Field Ornithologists. During that time it became apparent to Cliff and his contemporaries that the face of field ornithology in California was rapidly changing and records of rare birds were proliferating at an astounding rate. The need for a formal review of such records was clearly apparent. North America's first committee reviewing records of rare birds was formed by active field ornithologists throughout California in 1970. Cliff was a member of that committee until 1977 and a co-author of the California state list published in the very first issue of *California Birds* (G. McCaskie, P. Devillers, A. M. Craig, C. R. Lyons, V. P. Coughran, and J. T. Craig, 1970, A checklist of the birds of California, *Calif. Birds* 1:4–28).



Cliff passed away on 27 January 2012 in Post Mills, Vermont, at age 69 from a series of illnesses that plagued him late in his life. His vision along with that of his contemporaries helped field ornithology reach a plateau that was years ahead of its time and has since had a major influence on the formation of similar groups across the country.

I first met Cliff when I was an undergraduate student at San Diego State University in 1971 and we spent a good deal of time in the field together. Cliff and I were members of a team that included Guy McCaskie and Scott Terrill that recorded 227 species of birds in a single day from the Salton Sea to San Diego in April 1972. Cliff was very active and dedicated during those years in San Diego.

In the 1980s I had more contact with Cliff when he assisted me regularly with graduate field work in the central Sierra Nevada at Ackerson Meadows. At the time Cliff was residing in Mariposa, a short drive to my study area. He often spent the night at my cabin and we talked about a vast range of subjects often to late in the night. Those conversations had a definite influence on my thinking.

Cliff was a trained chemist who worked in private industry for many years, and he had a keen, incisive mind that could approach a problem from a perspective few of his contemporaries could match. His insight formed the basis of a lasting legacy that will not be forgotten by those who knew him.

Cliff moved to Vermont in 1990, and I rarely saw him after that, but we talked on the telephone regularly. His suffered a series of health problems that proved difficult in his later years and ultimately took his life.

I am proud to have called him a friend, and his lack of publications is not the measure of his influence on those who knew him. He took life as it came and did not complain that it did not always seem fair. He was an excellent field companion and will be sorely missed by those who knew and cared about him.

Jon Winter