

## IN MEMORIAM

Kenneth Carroll Parkes (1922 – 2007)

*Ron Pittaway*

Kenneth C. Parkes, Curator Emeritus of Birds at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, died on 16 July 2007 at the age of 84. He was born on 8 August 1922 in Hackensack, New Jersey. He grew up in the New York City area and was interested in birds at 6 years of age.

Ken Parkes was one of the important North American ornithologists of the twentieth century, publishing more than 500 articles. Birders learned more from him than from most professional ornithologists because he published regularly in birding magazines and ornithological journals, including three articles in *Ontario Birds* (Parkes 1985, 1988a, 1996).

After obtaining a doctorate degree in ornithology from Cornell University, he joined the Carnegie Museum as Assistant Curator of Birds in 1953, becoming Curator in 1965 when he succeeded the legendary Clyde Todd, author of *Birds of the Labrador Peninsula*. Ken Parkes retired at age 74 on 1 January 1997, but unfortunately illness prevented him from doing much

ornithological work after retirement.

For me, Ken Parkes's most important paper was "An approach to the study of molts and plumages" coauthored with Philip S. Humphrey (Humphrey and Parkes 1959). The Humphrey and Parkes system can be used anywhere in the world because it is not linked to age, season or the breeding cycle. Once mastered, it is a joy to use.

His authoritative articles on aging, plumage and molt terminology, and subspecies particularly interested me. However, he also was an authority on hybrid warblers and Neotropical birds, and he birded in 35 countries. One publication that I learned much from was his detailed review of the "Identification Guide to North American Passerines" by Pyle *et al.* (1987) in the *Auk* (Parkes 1988b).

Ken Parkes was the conscience of editors, ornithologists and birders. He often wrote letters to editors of birding journals correcting errors. The late Earl Godfrey, National Museum of Canada, told me that Ken Parkes was very "strict" about publishing accurate information on birds.

The Carnegie Museum is a long-time institutional member of the Ontario Field Ornithologists and Ken Parkes was an avid reader of *Ontario Birds* and *OFO News*. I feel fortunate to have benefited from discussions with him and to have corresponded with him. He always answered my questions quickly. Ornithology and birding lost a great member with the passing of Kenneth C. Parkes.

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### Acknowledgements

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