

BREWSTER AND COUES AWARDS, 1978

BREWSTER AWARD 1978

PIERCE BRODKORB



In 1963, when the first part of Pierce Brodkorb's "Catalogue of Fossil Birds" was published, it instantly became the standard work in paleornithology. Each succeeding part has been eagerly awaited, not only by paleornithologists, but also by many others in the related fields of systematics, evolution, and nomenclature of birds. Brodkorb has a prodigious knowledge of fossil birds, and has studied and reevaluated many previously described taxa. Thus, although the "Catalogue" is necessarily in large part a compilation based on existing literature, a substantial portion of that literature came from Professor Brodkorb's own pen. He and his students have been for many years among the most productive sources of new information about avian fossils, especially those of the New World. No fewer than 25 of the recognized genera in the four non-passerine volumes of the "Catalogue" bear Brodkorb's name as author.

Brodkorb is also a serious student of the intricacies of zoological nomenclature. The International Code of Zoological Nomenclature has mandated the determination of priority of usage of names at the family level. Brodkorb has won our gratitude for his willingness to undertake this difficult, time-consuming, and unpopular kind of research, and to incorporate his findings in his "Catalogue." He has produced, in a phrase, an indispensable reference work.

A paleornithologist worthy of the name must do more than just look at bones and books—he must try to place his findings within the context of the broad patterns of the origin and evolution of birds. Professor Brodkorb has done just that by summarizing his views in a chapter of "Avian Biology" (Academic Press, 1971).

As we find ourselves in a period of almost turbulent reexamination of the relationships of the higher categories of birds, the importance of fossil evidence is gaining new appreciation. Pierce Brodkorb's outstanding contributions to this aspect of ornithology well merit his receipt of the Brewster Award for 1978.

COUES AWARD 1978

JOSEPH J. HICKEY



More than any other individual, Joseph Hickey is responsible for pinpointing, documenting, and publicizing the deleterious effects of pesticides on breeding populations of raptors. In the late 1950's, he was among the first to appreciate the relationship between urban use of DDT and the catastrophic drops in robin populations. Shortly thereafter, he and his students documented the disappearance of Peregrines from the eastern United States.

Subsequently, Hickey organized a conference to assess Peregrine populations on a world-wide basis, and edited its proceedings. Later, he showed that Peregrines were threatened by pesticides, and that egg-shell thinning and reduced reproductive success were correlated with high residues of DDE in Herring Gull eggs. Hickey has thus played a pioneering and pivotal role in virtually all aspects of research linking pesticide residues with decreased reproduction in birds.

Recognizing the importance of his and others' findings, Hickey actively turned his attention to publicizing the adverse effects on birds of the use of pesticides, through speeches, popular articles, and testimony in the famous Wisconsin hearings on the banning of DDT.

Considered in historical perspective, Hickey's contribution to basic ornithological knowledge and his willingness to take a strong scientific stand on the basis of his results stand as examples to be emulated by future researchers, and are ample justification for his designation as recipient of the 1978 Coues Award.