

BREWSTER AWARD 1979

WILLIAM R. DAWSON



Through more than 25 years, William R. Dawson has maintained a steady flow of highly original and often landmark contributions to our knowledge of the physiological ecology of North American birds, emphasizing energetics, thermo-regulation, and water metabolism. His methods of investigation have featured a blend of sensitive field observations and clear-cut laboratory techniques that have helped him to recognize key questions about the physiological adjustments of birds to their environments, and have enabled him to answer these questions in ways that appeal to both physiologists and ecologists. These characteristics have conferred on his published work a distinctive hallmark, and a scope equalled in the work of but a handful of his contemporaries. Periodically, he has paused to reflect on the state of the art in his several fields of interest, and to record his viewpoints in the form of review papers that have significantly influenced the development of various lines of scientific inquiry. His work has also ramified far beyond the formal limits recognized by the Brewster Award, and has included pioneering investigations of the physiological ecology of reptiles and of Australasian marsupials and birds. These comparative investigations have elegantly illuminated many of the processes involved in functional revolution that led to the differentiation of birds and mammals from reptilian progenitors, and have thus advanced our understanding of the evolution of birds themselves. In sum, because of the many refreshing insights that he has provided and the many things that he has taught us about the ways in which birds cope physiologically with their environments, William R. Dawson has earned our most special esteem.