

HARRY R. PAINTON AWARD

The Harry R. Painton Award is presented bi-annually to the most outstanding paper published in *The Condor* during the preceding 4 years. The award for 1989 was given to John M. Marzluff and Russell P. Balda for "Pairing patterns and fitness in a free-ranging population of Pinyon Jays: What do they reveal about mate choice?" which appeared in *The Condor*, 90:201–213. The citation is as follows:

The Pinyon Jay (*Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*) is unique among jays for its highly colonial nesting habits, its dependence throughout most of its range on pine nuts, and its ability to store and recover these and other foods. Balda, his colleagues in the southwest, and his students including Marzluff, have taken full advantage of the opportunity for long-term study of this unusual species. In the present paper Marzluff and Balda have collaborated in the analysis of an enormous body of data to which they and their co-workers have contributed and which covers (so far) 14 years. A total of 141 pairs of jays were captured (usually repeatedly), marked, weighed

and measured, and pairing patterns were determined. Birds banded as juveniles provided a population sample of known age. Characteristics of mated pairs and offspring were noted and their breeding success monitored. Using this information, the authors discuss assortative pairing in relation to age and body size, the characters used in mate choice, and the possible effects of pairing patterns on fitness of the mates as parents and fitness of their offspring. Marzluff and Balda have processed and analyzed their data with a rare combination of appropriate statistical tests, ecological and behavioral insights gained from field experience, almost infinite patience and perseverance, and unswerving objectivity. The latter quality is especially notable in that alternative interpretations are consistently presented, the evidence weighed, and cautious, well-reasoned conclusions provided. This thorough analysis of a large body of significant information, painstakingly gathered, constitutes an important contribution to the field of behavioral ecology and a worthy recipient of the Harry R. Painton Award.