

In Memoriam

Richard Tompkins Paul

26 April 1946 – 11 November 2005

Bird conservation in the Tampa Bay region of Florida lost a powerful ally with the death of Richard T. Paul of Tampa on 11 November 2005. He was 59. From 1972 until his retirement in 2003, Rich was an ornithologist for Audubon. Although he studied Greater Flamingos and White-crowned Pigeons in the West Indies, Golden Eagles in Wyoming, and Reddish Egrets in Florida, where most of Rich's life and work was spent. Beginning in 1980 and beyond his "retirement," Rich guarded wading bird rookeries along the central and southern Gulf coast of Florida, within Audubon's Florida Coastal Islands Sanctuaries. These sanctuaries, consisting of both public and privately owned islands, were carefully monitored and regularly patrolled by Rich and others to control raccoon depredation and human- and dog-disturbance during the critical nesting season. Rich expanded the scope of the sanctuaries from nine islands in 1980 to 50 by 2003, supporting nearly 50,000 pairs of 25 species of colonial breeders. Paramount among these were the two islands, known as Alafia Bank, owned by Mosaic Fertilizer at the mouth of the Alafia River south of Tampa. The islands and a new environmental education center built nearby have been named for Rich, in honor of his decades of dedication to the birds and their habitat here.

Rich reveled in sharing both John James Audubon's birthday and Roger Tory Peterson's initials. He was born in Princeton, New Jersey, the home of W.E.D. Scott, who

first surveyed the great colonial bird rookeries along Florida's Gulf coast in the 1880s and documented their decimation by plume hunters over the next several decades. Rich delighted in entertaining friends with bad puns or jokes such as: "What do you call a boomerang that doesn't come back? A stick."

Rich was the summer seasonal editor of the Florida region for *American Birds*, *Field Notes*, and *North American Birds* from 1983 through 2000, in the final years co-authored with Ann Schnapf, whom he married. He co-authored with Peter Lowther the Reddish Egret account for the *Birds of North America* series, and he helped to document the first nesting record of Elegant Tern away from the Pacific coast, on one of his sanctuary islands in Tampa Bay in May–June 2002. Among numerous awards presented to Rich during his long career, he was posthumously presented with Audubon's Guy Bradley Award for Lifetime Achievement at a memorial service in November 2005.

Rich is survived by his wife Ann, son David, daughter Laura, parents George and Doris, one brother, one sister, and two stepsons. He will also be terribly missed by a great many friends and admirers.

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Bill Pranty

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