

IN MEMORIAM

EDWARD C. (TED) BEEDY, 1950–2025

Edward C. Beedy, a >40-year WFO member, passed away suddenly on 28 March 2025 at the age of 75. Ted, as he was universally known, was a highly respected, dedicated, and visionary wildlife biologist, ornithologist, environmental consultant, conservationist, and birder who lived nearly his whole life in northern California.

Ted's professional and volunteer work produced many important and long-lasting benefits for birds and their habitats in California. His research and conservation accomplishments are too many to list completely here, but a few key ones must be noted. More information is in a commendation in support of Ted's and his spouse Susan Sanders' receipt of the Central Valley Bird Club's 2024 Conservation Award (Central Valley Birds 27:120–122).

Ted was born in Piedmont, Alameda County, where he showed an early interest in birds and nature, starting as a toddler feeding the ducks at Lake Merritt. At age 7 his family moved to Korbel near Blue Lake in Humboldt County, where his father managed the town's lumber mill. Life in Korbel, on the banks of the Mad River, surrounded by dense forest, was ideal for Ted, who was never a city boy. He received his Boy Scout birdwatching/nature merit badge at age 12, and was an earnest high school and undergraduate college student, annotating his Peterson's field guide with new lifers.

Ted received his bachelor's, master's, and Ph.D. degrees at the University of California, Davis. His master's work was on birds of the Sierra Nevada, based on studies conducted at The Cedars, a forest property near Donner summit where Ted spent every summer. Ted's Ph.D. thesis, *Bird Community Structure in Coniferous Forest of Yosemite National Park, California*, was completed in 1982.

Ted maintained a lifelong interest in Sierran birds and published several widely read books on the region, including *Discovering Sierra Birds* with Stephen Granholm and more recently *Birds of the Sierra Nevada: Their Natural History, Status, and Distribution* with Ed Pandolfino, both illustrated by Keith Hansen. Ed Pandolfino remembers the years he and Ted spent working together as a remarkably easy collaboration: "Ted brought no trace of ego to the process, always open to edits and suggestions, making our time working together among my favorite memories."

Ted worked for nearly 40 years as an environmental consultant, first for Jones & Stokes Associates (now ICF International) and later on his own. His first major assignment was leading the assessment of the effects of the use of selenium-contaminated agricultural drainage water, then prevalent, on wildlife at Kesterson National Wildlife Refuge in the San Joaquin Valley. Despite intensive pressure to ignore and whitewash the problem, Ted led studies on the Tricolored Blackbird and waterbirds that documented massive nesting failures and developmental abnormalities. The findings were pivotal in eliminating the use of drainage water at the refuge and its discharge to the San Joaquin River.

Ted's work on the tricolor at Kesterson ignited a lifelong dedication to research and conservation of the species. He authored and co-authored at least 10 publications on the Tricolored Blackbird's population history and status, survey techniques, habi-



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tat requirements, and conservation. Ted and William Hamilton designed and managed the first statewide Tricolored Blackbird surveys in California in 1994, which have continued as the primary basis for assessing the species' population status.

Ted also co-authored the first *Birds of the World* account of the tricolor and then led two account updates, most recently in 2023. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's managing editor of the *Birds of the World* called it "an exemplary work that is one of the most engaging, useful, and comprehensive of the series. It is packed with the sort of insight and passion that truly reflects Ted's commitment to conservation and his lifetime of study." In honor of Ted, the *Birds of the World* account is being made freely available to the public (i.e., without subscription) and now carries a dedication to him.

In the early 1990s, Ted led the wildlife analysis for the Mono Lake Water Rights Environmental Impact Report. Mono Lake was then in danger of becoming a "dead sea" because of the concentration of alkaline salts and other chemicals resulting from long-term diversions of its tributary streams by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. The report supported the State Water Board's determination to require some flow be released from the tributaries, to reverse the past effects of diversions on the lake's level and on wildlife, including gulls, grebes, phalaropes, the Snowy Plover, migratory ducks, and riparian wildlife. Ted's historical analysis showed much greater waterfowl use of the lake was when alkalinity levels were lower. This information was a key basis for the Water Board's historic 1994 Public Trust ruling mandating flow releases from Mono Lake's tributaries to safeguard the lake.

Another major accomplishment was the establishment of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area near Davis in the Central Valley. Ted and colleague Steve Chainey recognized the opportunity to use floodwaters to create managed wildlife habitat in the bypass. They led a campaign to establish a state wildlife area and prepared the initial acquisition, restoration, and management plan to show its feasibility. Despite initial opposition, Ted and Steve convinced congressman Vic Fazio and local elected officials to support the effort, and the wildlife area was dedicated in 1997 by president Bill Clinton. Subsequently it has grown to 16,000 acres. It hosts large, diverse populations of waterbirds and other wildlife, as well as thousands of birders, wildlife sightseers, hunters, and school children annually.

In more recent years, Ted provided his expertise in biological resources to major conservation-planning efforts in Placer and Nevada counties. He taught classes at Sierra College and workshops for the Wildlife Society. He regularly led birding field trips for Sierra Foothills Audubon, the Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua, and the Central Valley Bird Symposium. He also was a highly skilled birder and bird photographer, traveled extensively, and organized birding trips in Central and South America. As Keith Hansen noted, "whether we were in his back yard in the Sierra, the Central Valley, at Point Reyes, Mono Lake, or in the jungles of Trinidad and Tobago, Ted was sharp, observant and patient with his sightings. He was a pleasure to spend time with and share in the wonders of birding. I will miss him greatly."

Ted was dedicated and disciplined, but also gentle and fun-loving, and had a great sense of humor. I worked nearly daily with Ted for 20 years and then regularly for 20 more, and I never heard a cross word from him. He was a collaborator, a natural and skilled teacher and mentor, a caring and supportive friend. Those of us who knew and worked with Ted were given a great gift. Many others who didn't know him have benefited from his life's work. We shall miss him tremendously but will see his legacy continue in the places he saved and helped create, and in those he taught and inspired.

Ted is survived by his wife, Susan Sanders, children Josiah (Abby) and Katrina Beedy, and grandchildren Lacey and Leo, to whom he was dedicated.

Daniel A. Airola