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James “Jim” H. Cowan, Jr. 1954 – 2021

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OBITUARY



JAMES "JIM" H. COWAN, JR.
1954–2021

James Howard Cowan, Jr. passed away on 11 August 2021 at the age of 67 in Baton Rouge, LA. Jim was born to James Howard Cowan, Sr. and Imelda Lee "Patsy" Cowan on 9 March 1954 in Fayetteville, North Carolina. His family later moved to Tampa, FL, but he spent his formative years in Virginia Beach, VA. Jim was an avid football player who later fell in love with sportfishing, particularly along the Outer Banks of North Carolina. He earned a B.S. (1976) and an M.S. (1981) in Biological Sciences from Old Dominion University, where he worked with Ray Birdsong. He earned an M.S. in Applied Statistics and a Ph.D. (1985) in Marine Science from Louisiana State University (LSU), where he worked on Gulf of Mexico (GOM) ichthyoplankton. Jim was a postdoctoral scientist at the LSU Coastal Ecology Institute and later at the Chesapeake Biological Laboratory in Solomons, MD, where he worked with Ed Houde on fish early life history and recruitment dynamics. His first faculty job was in the Department of Marine Sciences at the University of South Alabama, with a joint appointment as a Senior Marine Scientist at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab. In 2001, Jim returned to LSU, where he earned the title of E.L. Abraham Distinguished Professor in 2012.

Jim's teaching and research efforts in the field of fisheries science made him well-known in the GOM region, nationally, and internationally. He created and taught a range of fisheries-related courses, including Fish Recruitment, Estuarine Ecology, Field and Lab Methods, Fisheries Oceanography, and Physical Oceanography. Jim advised dozens of Ph.D. and M.S. students, who now hold academic, agency, or non-governmental organization positions around the globe. Jim's early career was focused on fish early life history and the recruitment problem, but later in his career much of his and his students' research centered on reef fish ecology. Red Snapper was often a feature of Jim's later research; his 2007 co-edited book on Red Snapper ecology remains on many bookshelves today. Jim also co-edited two other books, co-authored seven book chapters, and authored or co-authored over 150 scientific articles. He was an active member of the American Fisheries Society (AFS) and was a past president of its Early Life History Section. In 2007, Jim was given the AFS Award of Excellence in Fisheries Management "for inspirational leadership in the fishery profession and substantial achievements for AFS and the fisheries resource."

Jim served in various scientific advisory capacities with the GOM Fishery Management Council, including stints as the chair to its Reef Fish and Coastal Migratory Pelagics Stock Assessment Panels, and was a longtime member of the Gulf Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee. In addition, he served on several National Research Council study committees and technical review panels, as well as review panels for various National Science Foundation programs. Lastly, Jim served as a U.S. delegate to the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea and the Pacific Marine Sciences Organization.

In addition to Jim's many scientific accomplishments, he was also a good friend and gracious host to many. When Jim's name would come up in conversation, it was inevitably followed by someone fondly describing how Jim had taken them to sample Cajun dancing, jazz music, Louisiana cuisine, literature, or fishing somewhere for something. We all have anecdotes about our

adventures with Jim. Many of us not only worked with Jim for decades but also called him a good friend. Jim will be missed both for his science and for his welcoming comradery. His former students have expressed their gratitude for Jim's encouragement, drive, and accessibility. In the end, perhaps Jim's greatest legacy in the realm of fisheries is the goodwill he fostered among scientists, managers, and fishers, among whom he was well-regarded as an honest broker who aimed to keep politics out of the science.

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