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In Memorium

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IN MEMORIAM

DR. DANIEL W. SPEAKE (1926-2019)

Dan Speake was born in 1926 in Decatur, Alabama, where he grew up roaming the woods hunting and “catching snakes and turtles,” passions that were developed young and stayed with him throughout his life. Dr. Speake was a noted wildlife researcher and Auburn University professor who was known throughout the wildlife fraternity as an extraordinary naturalist and researcher. He was passionate about his work. His teaching and research spanned over 40 years and included major contributions on bobwhite quail, eastern wild turkey, and eastern indigo snake.

After a stint in the Navy during World War II, Dan went to Auburn University on the GI bill, eventually earning a PhD working on bobwhite quail in the Alabama piedmont. He became the Assistant Leader and later, the Unit Leader, for the Alabama Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit at Auburn from 1955-1995. In Dan’s words, there was a “technology explosion” in the 1970s with the advent of radio telemetry. He was a pioneer in many ways, but certainly in the use of radio transmitters on wildlife. He and his students were the first to document double brooding in quail in 1987, as well as second brood production in eastern wild turkeys in 1991. His cutting-edge research allowed monitoring of wildlife populations as never before, leading to better management practices and resulting in the recovery of the wild turkey in Alabama, as well as other states.

His research with nongame and endangered species in the 1970s was at a time when very little research was supported for nongame wildlife. He established the first eastern indigo snake captive breeding program in the United States and continued this research into the 1980s with reintroductions throughout south Alabama and other states in efforts to re-establish a viable population of the endangered species. He developed and used one of the first cameras to be put down gopher holes, revealing for the first time the long list of animals that were dependent on this environment. He was known far and wide for his collection of live snakes, most notably “Bubba,” who was a huge eastern diamondback he donated to the Montgomery Zoo when he retired. Those of us fortunate enough to have spent time with him roaming the woods of the South remember how he always travelled with a pillowcase in the event he needed a way to carry some “ready” species of snake back to Auburn.

Dan was the recipient of 19 wildlife awards, including the Special Recognition Service Award from The Wildlife Society for his leadership on wild turkey research. He received the coveted Henry S. Mosby Award in 1991, presented by the National Wild Turkey Federation, for his extraordinary accomplishments in wild turkey research. At the time of this award, he was only the fifth recipient to receive this special recognition.

Dr. Speake had a long relationship with Tall Timbers Research Station. He took his upland wildlife class on an extended field trip there for many years. He served on the Board of Trustees of Tall Timbers from 1990-1993 and several of his last graduate students did their field work there, including an award-winning study on turkey poult mortality published in 1995. He authored or co-authored numerous publications on quail including some of the earliest work on brood habitat use, effects of pen-raised birds on wild populations, hunter and covey interactions, and supplemental feeding, some of which is published in previous Quail Symposium Proceedings. Perhaps his most enduring legacy is that he along with Dr. Lee Stribling were co-founders of the Albany Quail Project in 1992.

Dr. Speake was a colorful character who enjoyed his life and life’s work. When you were with him, it was impossible not to go along for the ride. He had many sayings, but some of the best remembered are that he “knew a lot more about turkeys than he could prove” and “if you don’t know what your data is telling you before you analyze it, it don’t mean nothing.”

The twinkle in his eye never faltered and his wonderful sense of humor never left. The many wonderful stories will linger on and he will be remembered fondly by the many students and wildlife workers that he trained for the wildlife profession. They truly broke the mold when they made Dr. Speake.

—Mark Sasser, Alabama Regional Biologist, Tall Timbers Game Bird Program and D. Clay Sisson, Albany Quail Project Director, Tall Timbers Game Bird Program

ALVA GREGORY (1964–2019)

Alva Gregory worked for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) for 31 years. He began his career on Beaver River Wildlife Management Area (WMA), transferred to Packsaddle WMA, and finally transferred to the ODWC office in Woodward as the Northwestern Oklahoma Habitat Coordinator. In his time in Woodward he built relationships with landowners that allowed for the improvement of habitat for numerous species including bobwhite quail, scaled quail, and lesser prairie chickens. Alva worked tirelessly to promote reconnecting upland bird species to the landscape in agricultural and cattle production areas. Northwestern Oklahoma is known by many as true quail country, and without the influence of Alva Gregory, I am not sure that would be the case. I often tell people if you see a property in northwestern Oklahoma that has no cedar trees, you have Alva to thank for it.

In 2018 alone Alva met with more than 37 landowners in 16 counties impacting more than 45,414 acres. He also gave presentations to the Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Wild Turkey Federation, Dewey County Commissioners, and NW Cattlemen's Association, and assisted with 4 field days by Oklahoma State University's Extension Office.

Alva was previously recognized as Wildlife Technician of the year in 2007, Habitat Coordinator of the year in 2013, and recipient of the Oklahoma Chapter of the Wildlife Society's Oklahoma award for his outstanding contributions to wildlife management in 2018. He received the NBCI Firebird award posthumously in 2019. His special interests included hunting, fishing, watching and playing sports, raising and training horses, working with cattle on his favorite horse, Chigger, and cutting down and milling cedar trees. He was also a member of the American Quarter Horse Association, the board of the Oklahoma Prescribed Burn Association, and president of the Vici Rodeo Club.

On May 1st, 2019 northwestern Oklahoma lost one of its greatest wildlife warriors. Alva passed away at the age of 55.

—*Tell Judkins, Upland Game Biologist, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation*

RUSSELL STEVENS (1964–2021)

Russell worked as a Wildlife/Range Consultant for the Noble Research Institute for 32 years. He was a member of the Society for Range Management, Wildlife Society, Oklahoma Prescribed Burn Association, and the Oklahoma Wildlife Management Association. Russell was a published author for several range management articles. He published *The Feral Hog of Oklahoma* and co-authored two publications with Chuck Coffey: *Trees, Shrubs and Woody Vines: A Pictorial Guide* and *Grasses of Southern Oklahoma*. In 2015, he received the Outstanding Alumnus Award from the Agriculture Department at Angelo State University. Russell's faith was exemplified through all of his vocations and was the driving factor for all he did. Russell was an advocate for all wildlife and their management, helping landowners bridge the gap between ranching and conservation.

He passed away Wednesday, June 23, 2021 at the age of 57 surrounded by his family.

—*Tell Judkins, Upland Game Biologist, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation*

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