

THE  
UNIVERSITY  
OF RHODE ISLAND

University of Rhode Island  
DigitalCommons@URI

---

Graduate School of Oceanography Faculty  
Publications

Graduate School of Oceanography

---

2013

## John H. Steele, 1926–2013

Elizabeth Turner

Eileen E. Hofmann

*See next page for additional authors*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/gsofacpubs>

Terms of Use

All rights reserved under copyright.

---

### Citation/Publisher Attribution

Elizabeth Turner, Eileen E. Hofmann, Dian J. Gifford, Dale B. Haidvogel. (2013). "John H. Steele, 1926–2013." *Oceanography*, 26(4), 11.

Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5670/oceanog.2013.85>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School of Oceanography at DigitalCommons@URI. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate School of Oceanography Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@URI. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@etal.uri.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@etal.uri.edu).

---

**Authors**

Elizabeth Turner, Eileen E. Hofmann, Dian J. Gifford, and Dale B. Haidvogel

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE OCEANOGRAPHY SOCIETY

# Oceanography

#### CITATION

Turner, E., E.E. Hofmann, D.J. Gifford, and D.B. Haidvogel. 2013. Dedication: John H. Steele, 1926–2013. *Oceanography* 26(4):11, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5670/oceanog.2013.85>.

#### DOI

<http://dx.doi.org/10.5670/oceanog.2013.85>

#### COPYRIGHT

This article has been published in *Oceanography*, Volume 26, Number 4, a quarterly journal of The Oceanography Society. Copyright 2013 by The Oceanography Society. All rights reserved.

#### USAGE

Permission is granted to copy this article for use in teaching and research. Republication, systematic reproduction, or collective redistribution of any portion of this article by photocopy machine, reposting, or other means is permitted only with the approval of The Oceanography Society. Send all correspondence to: [info@tos.org](mailto:info@tos.org) or The Oceanography Society, PO Box 1931, Rockville, MD 20849-1931, USA.

# John H. Steele, 1926–2013

BY ELIZABETH TURNER, EILEEN E. HOFMANN, DIAN J. GIFFORD, AND DALE B. HAIDVOGEL

This special issue of *Oceanography* is dedicated to the memory of John H. Steele, who passed away on November 4, 2013, at the age of 86. John was a seminal figure in the creation of the US Global Ocean Ecosystem Dynamics (GLOBEC) and International GLOBEC programs, and remained involved in them through his scientific endeavors and program leadership. We benefitted from his keen intellect, wide-ranging knowledge, deep insight, and unfailing good humor and gentlemanly manner.

John began his career as a mathematician, and he brought this analytical approach to marine science throughout his professional life. His 1974 treatise *The Structure of Marine Ecosystems* is a classic reference and a foundation of marine ecological modeling. In his review of the book for *Science*, Robert May wrote that the subject required “a skilled helmsman to steer between the Scylla of a multiparameter, computerized Goon Show and the Charybdis of total Abstraction. As an applied mathematician of note, and deputy director of the Marine Laboratory maintained in Aberdeen by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland, Steele is well qualified for the task.”

John was an active scientist for more than 50 years, even during his 12-year tenure as director of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. Following his retirement, he resumed an exceptionally active research career that continued until his death. His vast publication list includes such diverse topics as controls on phytoplankton production, zooplankton feeding at sea, energy flows through benthic systems, dynamics of fish populations, mesocosm studies, plankton patchiness, and, of course, his best-known works in marine ecosystem



Photo courtesy of WHOI Archives ©Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution

modeling and theoretical ecology, including comparisons between marine and terrestrial ecosystems. Although he was at the forefront of theoretical and mathematical approaches, John never lost sight of the potential impacts of his work on society at large. One of his final publications was on the application of end-to-end models in marine management.

During his long career, John received many prestigious awards, including the Alexander Agassiz Medal of the US National Academy of Sciences. He was a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the National Academy of Science, the Royal Society of Edinburgh, and the Royal Society of London. He was a longstanding US delegate to the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea.

In spite of his prodigious accomplishments, John was exceedingly humble about his own abilities and sought out collaborations with others, particularly young and upcoming scientists. A paper arising from his recent work with a group of younger collaborators appears in this issue (Ruzicka et al.). He was generous with his time and gave back to the wider community through his service as an editor and on endless committees, boards, working groups, task forces, and review panels. His energy seemed to increase with age, and he was scientifically active until the last weeks of his life.

Although we will miss John's many contributions to the GLOBEC program and to marine science in general, we celebrate his legacy. He worked throughout his life to integrate across disciplines to better understand marine ecosystem dynamics. We offer this special issue as a tribute to him. 