



**JAMES F. AKERS**

1920-1978

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In a tragic drowning accident, James F. Akers lost his life in Delaware Bay off Cape May Point, New Jersey, on September 30, 1978. In his passing, Jim left behind a host of friends and admirers, each of whom had gained through their association with him some knowledge, some insight, some pleasure, and some greater appreciation for birds, wildlife, and nature in general. Jim's keen interest in birds began as a teenager in East Cleveland, Ohio. He pursued birding as a hobby regularly and enthusiastically thereafter, both in the field and as an avid reader. During his high school days and while attending Adelbert College of Case Western Reserve University where he earned his B. S. in Biology, he was a member of the Kirtland Bird Club. After serving in the Army Air Corps during World War II he resumed active birding with the club while living in the Cleveland area. He often led the Sunday morning birdwalks in the various metropolitan parks sponsored by the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, and he initiated a similar program in Elyria, Ohio, in 1948 where he was living at that time.

In 1959 Jim's career as an Air Traffic Controller with the Federal Aviation Administration brought him to the National Aviation Facilities Experimental Center near Pomona, New Jersey, opening up for him a whole new birding world.

Jim was a tireless worker and supporter for the causes in which he believed so deeply — not only in birding, but in nature, in conservation, and in environmental protection. Always active in the National Audubon Society, having participated in Christmas Bird Counts all of his adult life and contributing field notes regularly for *American Birds*, Jim helped organize and establish the very active Atlantic Chapter of New Jersey Audubon where he served as an officer. He was also a founder of the Atlantic County Citizen's Council on the Environment, a group which accomplished much in promoting environmental awareness. He served as a Scoutmaster and a Merit Badge Counselor for the Boy Scouts. He was a Fellow in the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club, presented a slide program to that club about his trip to Peru, and participated in many club activities, especially field trips. He was a major contributor to the DVOC birding hot line for sightings in South Jersey. He worked closely with the staff of the Brigantine National Wildlife Refuge and frequently led tour groups there. Other organizations Jim supported include the Nature Conservancy, the Wilderness Society, the World Wildlife Fund, the Sierra Club, Defenders of Wildlife, the National Wildlife Federation, the Cousteau Society, the Avian Rehabilitation Center, and various state and local groups.

Jim Akers' expertise in field birding was legendary throughout South Jersey and the Delaware Valley. He possessed an uncanny skill in finding hard-to-see birds. His exceptionally keen sense of hearing, combined with his ability to spot and identify birds quickly and correctly, earned for him an enviable reputation as "the" person to see for complete and current information on birds in South Jersey. But Jim was more than the expert. He was always willing, indeed eager, to share his knowledge with anyone who asked. He enjoyed helping others. He frequently volunteered his assistance, generously offered his time, his advice, and his friendship to visitors as well as to interested local folks, neophytes as well as experienced birders.

It was my good fortune to bird frequently with Jim throughout New Jersey and neighboring states and to travel with him to bird such places as Florida, Texas, Illinois, the West Coast, Costa Rica, Peru, Kenya, and Tanzania. It was always a pleasure to be with him, share experiences, and later on to reminisce about incidents and pleasures we had shared together.

Jim Akers contributed much during his lifetime. He is sorely missed by the very many friends he left behind. He is survived by his wife, Jean, his son, Fred, and his daughter, Lynne.

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