

A 'gracious man' and ... 'excellent' teacher

By Eric Bollinger

I was hired at Eastern Illinois University as Barrie Hunt's replacement in 1990 after he retired. Those were impossible shoes to fill. He left an outstanding study skin collection that he put together on his own as well as a legacy of excellent instruction in both ornithology and ecology. Barrie was very gracious in helping me get my feet on the ground at Eastern including taking me around to all the local birding hotspots. In addition, for many years after I arrived at E.I.U., Barrie

was nice enough to host a bird banding demonstration lab at his home. At the end of the lab, Barrie's wife, Shirley, would always bring out hot doughnuts for the students. It was always the students' favorite lab. He was an excellent field ornithologist and a warm, kind, generous person.

— Eric Bollinger is a professor of biology at Eastern Illinois University

"Friends, colleagues recall the nature of Barrie Hunt"

By Tim Zgonina

There was something allegorical, those who knew him agreed, in the fact that Barrie Hunt left this world on the fall migration.

Hunt – teacher, ornithologist, and conservationist – died at the age of 77 on the first day of autumn in 2009, during the height of the seasonal flight of the birds he loved over the places he loved.

Barrie Hunt was the dean of Coles County birders – a combination of learning, experience and field skills surpassed by no other local birder and admired by all of them.

"When it came to ornithology, I don't think I know anyone who had the depth of knowledge he had," said David Mott, a close friend and site superintendent at Douglas-Hart Nature Center in Mattoon, where Hunt was a long-time presence.

Barrie was equally admired for his own nature.

"What struck me most about Barrie was his great personal integrity," said Ruth Riegel, a student of Hunt during the years when he taught ornithology and biology at Eastern Illinois University from 1967 to his retirement in 1989. "In class he was very intimidating – he took what he did extremely seriously and did not tolerate people who did not put in the effort – but in the field he was very patient with those who were less experienced than he was, and it was always lovely to go out with him."

Hunt graduated from Asheville School in North Carolina and earned degrees from Miami University and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He was a U.S. Air Force pilot and taught in Kenosha, Wis., and at Eastern. He served on the boards of the Illinois Audubon Society and the Douglas-Hart Foundation.

Hunt also served on the editorial advisory board for the Illinois Ornithological Society and wrote two articles for the *Meadowlark*, examining migratory patterns of birds in spring and fall in the Illinois/Indiana region (see *Meadowlark* 11:88-93 and *Meadowlark* 5:122-128). He also wrote articles for a variety of other scientific birding journals on topics such as DDT poisoning in robins and wing chord differences in Common Grackles, as well as extreme nesting dates for the

Mourning Dove in Illinois, which was published in *Wilson Bulletin* 90:458-60.

Hunt regularly contributed his bird sightings from the Charleston, Illinois, area to all of the various Illinois birding journals for at least 40 years. He was also a bird bander.

One of his most gratifying accomplishments was his establishment of Warbler Woods, an Illinois Department of Natural Resources-recognized 200-acre nature preserve located west of Illinois Route 130 off Daileyville Road between Fox Ridge State Park and Charleston.

As demanding as Hunt was as an ornithologist, however, he was as patient with youngsters and inexperienced birders. Hunt started the tradition of Thursday morning bird walks at the Douglas-Hart Nature Center during the spring and fall migration seasons, where birders of any level of experience can walk the trails of the preserve with veterans and sharpen their skills.

Barrie got his doctorate at the University of Wisconsin, and his teachers had been the students of Aldo Leopold, author of "A Sand County Almanac," one of the primers of the land stewardship and environmental movements in the United States in the 20th century, Mott said. "Those people were his teachers. Most of his beliefs about conservation and wildlife management came in a direct line from Aldo Leopold."

About 15 years ago, Hunt was diagnosed with chronic lymphocytic leukemia – a type of cancer of the blood and bone marrow.

"He was so courageous and strong willed in his battle with his disease," Mott said. He just refused to give up. So many times when he would go for his chemo it would take him a couple of days to bounce back, but he didn't want help. He wanted to stand on his own legs. The last four or five months it was difficult for him to be confined indoors. He was an outdoorsman."

— Tim Zgonina is a staff writer at the *Mattoon Journal Gazette*, which granted permission to publish this piece in *Meadowlark*. It was originally published on 1 October 2009.