

# IN MEMORIAM: SALLY HOYT SPOFFORD, 1914–2002

TOM J. CADE AND LLOYD F. KIFF

*The Peregrine Fund, 5668 Flying Hawk Lane, Boise, Idaho 83709, USA*

Dr. Sally Hoyt Spofford, AOU member from 1940 and Elective Member from 1978, died on 26 October 2002, at a hospital in Tucson, following an accidental fall sustained along the path to her bird feeders. Born Sarah E. Foresman in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, on 11 April 1914, Sally was the daughter of John H. and Julia E. Foresman and acquired her love of birds from them. After schooling in Williamsport, she enrolled in biology at Wilson College in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, leading to senior honors work in ornithology in 1935. She obtained her MS degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1936 and then returned to Wilson College as an instructor in biology and psychology.

At the urging of her biology professor, Dr. E. Grace White, Sally entered Cornell University Graduate School in 1939. There she met John Southgate Y. Hoyt, another graduate student, and they were married in 1942.

During World War II, Sally was a civilian medical technician in Army hospitals in Charleston, South Carolina, and Memphis, Tennessee. The Hoyts returned to Cornell in 1946 to complete their Ph.D. studies and bought a small home on Fall Creek in Etna, New York, a few miles from the campus. It was a stimulating time at Fernow Hall where Professor Arthur A. Allen's group was then housed in the Department of Conservation. Fellow graduate students included Dean Amadon, Gardiner Bump, Lawrence Grinnell, Oliver Hewitt, Brina Kessel,

Heinz Meng, Kenneth Parkes, Allan R. Philips, John Trainer, and Dwain Warner.

Sally and South each earned their Ph.D. in ornithology in 1948. Her dissertation was "A reference book and bibliography of ornithological techniques." Shortly thereafter, South became seriously ill, and Sally spent most of her time nursing him until he died of cancer in 1951 (*Auk* 69:225–226).

Sally remained in Etna and worked as an assistant to Arthur A. Allen. In 1956, when Allen and Peter Paul Kellogg moved their operations off campus to the new Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology at Sapsucker Woods, Sally became the administrative assistant, the heart and soul of the laboratory, a position she held until retirement in 1969. She basically kept the place running for the rest of the staff and students, who increased greatly after the arrival of Bill Dilger and Tom Cade. There were 20 or more graduate students contending for office or research space and seeking Sally's help. She conducted birding walks in Sapsucker Woods Sanctuary and was heard regularly on the statewide WHCU radio program, "Know your Birds," which originated from the Laboratory on tape.

Although primarily an educator and popularizer of birds, Sally's main scientific contributions centered on her collaborative studies of the Pileated Woodpecker, drawing on her late husband's unpublished dissertation (*Ecology* 38:246–256), and a series of 50 short papers on various aspects of bird behavior. She was

a coauthor of two popular books on birds: *Enjoying Birds in Upstate New York* (1963) with O. S. Pettingill, Jr. and *Enjoying Birds Around New York City* (1966) with Pettingill and R. S. Arbib.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Dr. Walter R. Spofford, a neuroanatomist at the Upstate New York Medical School at Syracuse and ardent raptor biologist, was a frequent visitor to Sapsucker Woods. He found a kindred spirit in Sally; they were married in 1964. Following their retirements, they moved to Rancho Aguila in Cave Creek Canyon, Arizona, in 1972. Their new home was strategically located for viewing a rich assortment of Chiricahuan wildlife, from black bears, coati-mundis, peccaries, and coral snakes, to the dozen species of hummingbirds attracted to her feeders. Open to the public each day from 7:30 AM to 5:30 PM, Rancho Aguila became a mecca for 3,000 to 6,000 birders and wildlife enthusiasts each year. (See Paul Zimmermann's informative tribute to Sally and her "Avian Eden" in *Wild Bird*, May/June 2002).

During the 1960s to 1980s, Sally and Spoff made extended birding trips to Africa and Alaska, sometimes with Tom Cade, documented with some 40,000 color slides. In Zimbabwe they studied the rich association of eagles in the Matopos region with Val Gargett. Another African friend, Leslie Brown, dedicated *British Birds of Prey* (1976) to "Spoff and Sally." In Alaska they helped with surveys of Peregrine Falcon, Gyrfalcon, and Golden Eagle populations in the Alaska Range and on the Arctic Slope.

After Spoff's death in 1995 (*Auk* 113:933–934), Sally generously donated his entire slide collection, fully labeled and indexed, to The Peregrine Fund at the World Center for Birds of Prey in Boise, Idaho. That impressive collection includes historical images from the 1930s and 1940s of many of the eyries formerly occupied by the eastern "duck hawks." Their personal libraries, some 600 books and thousands of journals, including several rare and historical volumes on birds of prey and falconry, were also donated to The Peregrine Fund.

Sally and Spoff, true friends and colleagues for nearly 50 years, are remembered at the World Center for their many contributions to raptor study and conservation. At the recently completed Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, the Director's office has been named in her honor, thanks to a gift from one of Sally's dear friends. Sally and Spoff are also remembered for the Etna Nature Preserve, a tract of land along Fall Creek, which they donated to the Finger Lakes Land Trust in 1991. They also donated land in Cave Creek to The Nature Conservancy.

Sally's sudden passing has been deeply felt. It may seem odd to lament that an 88-year-old woman died before her time, but based on recent visits, we truly believe that Sally had the potential for more good years. Her abiding enthusiasm for her birds, and for the people who came to her backyard to watch them, make her accidental death even sadder.