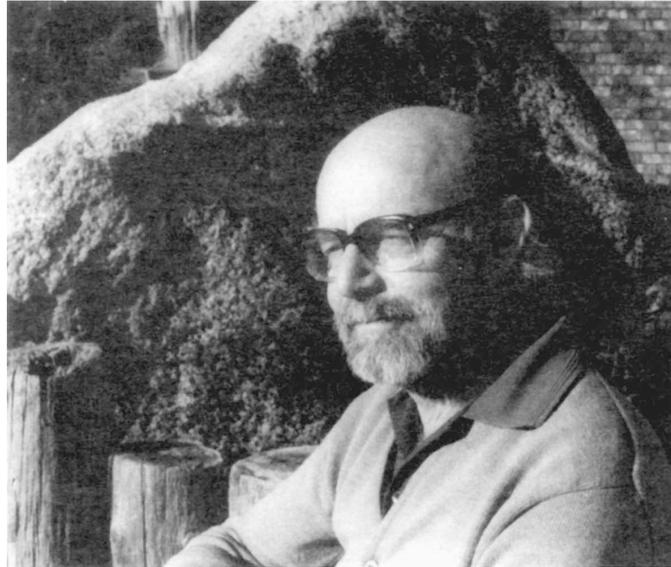


JOHN P. KELSALL (1924 – 1995)



John Kelsall

A long-time Fellow of the Arctic Institute of North America, John Kelsall, died in Vancouver, British Columbia on 24 July 1995. John was born in Nova Scotia and obtained a B.A. at Acadia University, an M.A. at the University of Toronto, and a Ph.D. at the University of Western Australia. He joined the Dominion (Canadian) Wildlife Service (CWS) in 1948, when it was a fledgling organization. From 1950 through 1959, from an office in Yellowknife (Northwest Territories), John conducted pioneer ecological studies on the great barren-ground caribou populations in northern Canada. His work culminated in a monograph published in 1968: *The Caribou: The Migratory Barren-Ground Caribou of Canada*, which won the Wildlife Society's Outstanding Publication Award and remains one of the most-quoted references in caribou literature. The monograph summarized, to the early 1960s, all that was known about the morphology, behavior, and ecology of the forest-tundra ecotype of caribou in Canada.

John and Joyce, his wife and lifelong companion, did not mind extremes. They went from the subarctic of Canada to Perth, Australia for research on a wallaby species. Then it was back to Ottawa for one year before returning "home" to the Maritimes (Sackville, New Brunswick) for four years, to study, among other things, the adaptations of ungulates to snow. Next the family moved to Edmonton where John served for 10 years as Research Manager and acting Director for the Canadian Wildlife Service. He preferred research to management and found a way to spend a year at the Marine Biological Station in Nanaimo, British Columbia, investigating the use of trace elements in feathers to identify where birds had been reared and spent the summer. His final move was west to the east shore of Howe Sound and the Delta office of CWS south of Vancouver, where he studied great blue herons and conducted a literature review of the Porcupine caribou herd in the Yukon and Alaska.

John was progressively afflicted with multiple sclerosis and confined to crutches and a wheelchair after about 1978. A heart bypass operation in 1976 was another obstacle. These health problems did not dampen his spirit or his active participation in wildlife conservation. Nor did they inhibit the thirst for travel that resulted in two trips to Africa, one to Sri Lanka, one to Scandinavia, and many trips throughout North America including Mexico.

A supportive family, which included three children, contributed immensely to John's accomplishments. Their home overlooks the ferry slip south of Vancouver.

John's interest in wildlife led him to form a consulting firm after his official retirement. His review of woodland caribou in Canada caused the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada to list western woodland caribou as "rare" and, later, as "vulnerable." John continued to serve as an active reviewer for scientific journals up to the end. One accomplishment that gave him much satisfaction was helping to develop a curriculum for the first technical school in the Northwest Territories, Thebacha College in Fort Smith.

John was a dedicated conservationist. He was active in local conservation societies up to his death. His career was aptly described by his manager in 1980:

Throughout his career Dr. Kelsall has been an energetic, imaginative, clear-thinking, and articulate researcher as well as a manager of research; in short, an outstanding performer in CWS and among wildlife scientists in general.

Don Thomas
Canadian Wildlife Service
4999 - 98 Avenue, #200
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
T6B 2X3