

# resolution of respect

A. STARKER LEOPOLD, 1913–1983



A. Starker Leopold, one of the most influential figures in ecology and environmental policy, died suddenly at his Berkeley, California home on 23 August 1983 at age 69. He is survived by his immediate family—his wife Elizabeth, a son, Fredrick Starker Leopold, a daughter, Sarah Leopold Klock, and three grandchildren. Starker was born in Burlington, Iowa on 23 October 1913, the oldest of the famous family of Aldo and Estella Leopold. All five of the sibs became accomplished naturalists, and three, including Starker, were elected to the National Academy of Sciences. Starker followed most closely in his father's footsteps by pursuing a career in wildlife ecology and management, although, like his father, his influence and philosophy extended to the full range of man's relationship to the environment.

Starker was educated at the University of Wisconsin where he received a B.S. in 1936, did graduate work at Yale University School of Forestry in 1936–1937, and the University of California, Berkeley where he earned his Ph.D. in Zoology in 1944 under the direction of Joseph Grinnell and Alden H. Miller in the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology. He worked for the U.S. Soil Conservation Service as a biologist in 1931–1933 and for the Missouri Conservation Commission from 1939 to 1944. He then worked in Mexico for the Conservation Section of the Pan-American Union until 1946, when he returned to Berkeley as an Assistant Professor of Zoology and Conservation in the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology. He became full professor in 1957, was Associate Director of the Museum from 1958 to 1965 and Acting Director in 1965. He was Assistant to the Chancellor, Berkeley campus, 1960 to 1963, and Director, Sagehen Creek Field Station, 1965 to 1979. With the late Paul R. Needham he established the Wildlife–Fisheries Unit to emphasize teaching and research on management of wildlife resources. In 1967 he moved to the Department of Forestry and Resource Management where he was Professor of Zoology and Forestry until his retirement in 1978, when he assumed emeritus status. He remained professionally active until the day of his death.

Starker's contributions to science were abundant and varied, including 115 papers and 5 books. He began his scientific career working on wild turkeys, and demonstrated that failure of early transplant attempts were largely attributable to the extensive interbreeding of wild and domestic stock with loss of wild characteristics. Subsequent transplanting of live-trapped wildstock has resulted in re-establishment of turkeys to the original range, and extension into areas beyond the original boundaries. His next undertaking, the study of game birds and mammals in Mexico, culminated in the publication of *Wildlife in Mexico*, perhaps his major scientific achievement. Then followed major studies of mule deer, wildlife in Alaska, African wildlife conservation, and, near the end of his career, California Quail. Two of his books, *Wildlife in Mexico* and *The California Quail*, received the Outstanding Publication of the Year award from the Wildlife Society. His approach to science was that of a field naturalist, blending careful observation of details in the wild with a talent for integrating the detail into function of the whole system. Throughout his career, he never had a laboratory other than nature's own.

Starker's major legacy is likely to be his influence on environmental policies. Named as chairman of Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall's advisory committee to the Department of Interior in the Kennedy administration in 1962, he was instrumental in producing three major policy reviews with far-reaching impact: wildlife management in national parks, predator and rodent control, and management of the wildlife refuge system. These reports established the ecological basis of management, and presaged the ecological awareness and environmental movement in the late 1960's and early 1970's. He continued as an advisor to the National Park Service, and was active in African wildlife management and wildlife conservation throughout the world. Hardly a wildlife issue arose that he was not consulted about, and his network of contacts was immense, based on a long record of professional activity. During his career he was President of the Northern Division and President of the Board of Governors, Cooper Ornithological Society; member of the Board of Governors, Nature Conservancy; Vice President and Board of Directors, Sierra Club; Member of Council, Wilderness Society; President and member of the Board of Trustees, California Academy of Sciences; consultant to the California Water Quality Board and the Tanzania National Parks; member, San Francisco Bay Commission and Marine Mammals Commission, and of the Board of Advisors, National Wildlife Federation. In addition he served on numerous official and unofficial review and advisory committees.

Starker's successes in the policy area derived from a positive attitude, a talent for reducing problems to the basic issues, and an ability to articulate those issues in straightforward language. If there was common ground upon which consensus could be achieved, Starker would find it. He had a sense of presence that was unmistakable despite a low-key, understated delivery. He was not flamboyant, or a flashy orator. He maintained a quiet dignity and preferred common sense over the technically elegant.

The same traits made him an effective teacher. His preference for living examples from the real world over abstract concepts proved extremely popular with students satiated with the latter. Starker's total commitment to and enduring optimism for sound conservation and wise environmental policy inspired many students to change direction.

Starker idolized his father, and he emulated Aldo while establishing his own unique direction. Aldo's approach was intellectual, and philosophical, and his forte was the written word. Starker's was more emotional and his contributions were on the field of action. While Aldo wrote the credo, Starker embedded it in policies and institutions, and translated the poetry of Aldo into the language of everyman. Each was right for his own time. Both were avid connoisseurs of ethical sport, and they had no difficulty reconciling their pursuit of hunting and fishing with a deep appreciation of the intricate beauty of nature, a fact conveniently overlooked by wildlife protectionist groups that claim them as patrons.

Starker garnered many awards; he was a Guggenheim Fellow, Knapp Professor (visiting) at the University of Wisconsin, Visiting Distinguished Professor at New Mexico State University, received an honorary doctorate from Occidental College and a Berkeley Citation from the University of California at retirement. He received the Department of the Interior Conservation Award, Aldo Leopold Medal of the Wildlife Society, Audubon Society Medal, California Academy of Sciences Fellows Medal, Winchester Award for Professional Wildlife Management, AIBS Distinguished Service Award,

and the Browning Medal of the Smithsonian Institution. He was a long-time member of the Bohemian Club. He was elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 1970 (one of the first two conservationists so honored), and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1981.

Those of us who knew Starker well will remember most clearly his personal traits. While the public man was known for his accomplishments and successes, those of us close to him were aware that he had full measure of adversities and disappointments. He carried these stoically and without complaint. He suffered from a bad back for years, but endured without letting on. He was reticent about discussing his problems and brushed them off with his stock comment, "What a mess!" at the first polite interval.

Starker was a good, loyal, unassuming friend. He loved companionship with conversation, food, and drink, and was at his best in the field around a campfire. His cabin at Sagehen Creek Field Station was notable for an outdoor kitchen centered on a fire ring, and a privy. He was never without the lightweight binoculars around his neck ready to check out the evening's arrivals in the meadow. He hunted and fished to the end.

Starker accomplished his death with the same quiet dignity that he lived his life. Characteristically, he wanted no memorial service. Memorial contributions may be made to the Wildlife and Fisheries Graduate Student Fund, U.C. Berkeley Foundation, 2440 Bancroft Way, Berkeley, CA 94720.

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