

## Washington Biologists' Field Club

Shad Bake, 30 April 2022

### Remembering Walter Bulmer

Walter was born in Connecticut in 1942 and grew up in Fairfield Connecticut close to the shore of Long Island Sound. His mother told me that, as a boy, Walt would bring home frogs, toads, snakes and turtles. He had a bird nest collection with eggs. He loved birds. On several occasions Walt met Roger Tory Peterson who also lived in Connecticut, and discussed birds with him.

Walt completed the Bachelor's degree at Salem College in West Virginia, then moved to Arizona where he did his Master's degree work at the University of Arizona. His thesis research was on the life history of the red-faced warbler. Much of the field work was done while camped out in the Chiricahua Mountains. He spent most of the next two years on Navy ships as a Smithsonian employee collecting and banding pelagic seabirds on tiny islands and atolls, on what was known as the Pacific Project.

In 1967 Walt began his Ph.D. work at the University of Connecticut in Storrs. That is where I met him, and that was the beginning of a 54-year friendship. Yes, that is a long time. Yet two members of this Club knew Walt even longer! Don Wilson was a classmate of Walt in a mammalogy course whose instructor was Al Gardner. Walt and I hit it off immediately and did lots of field work together. He taught me lots of vertebrate biology.

After completing his Ph.D. coursework requirements, Walt moved to the Washington, DC area to be near the National Museum of Natural History. He intended to study the food in the numerous stomach samples that he and others had taken on the Pacific Project to see how diet varied over a year. What he learned was that the material was all classified and unavailable. He never completed the Ph.D. He began teaching at Northern Virginia Community College where he had a 40-year career. His Vertebrate Zoology course launched numerous students into careers in Biology. Walt led, or he and I co-led, student trips to the West Indies, Bahamas, and most countries in Central America. For 30 years there was an annual trip with his class to the Dismal Swamp of Virginia where students camped and collected vertebrates.

Walt was nominated for membership in the Washington Biologists' Field Club in 1998. He was a regular at work days, shad bakes, and oyster roasts, and often provided the boat to get to Plummers Island. He was Club Secretary for 14 years and President for three.

Walter died November 29, 2021, at the age of 79. The cause of death was cancer. He is survived by his wife Judy, two sons Anthony and Michael, and a daughter Michelle. A lovely service was held that was attended by a number of Club members.

Ralph Eckerlin