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## In Memoriam Robert N. Randall, October 26, 1915 - January 30, 2007

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## *In Memoriam*

**Robert N. Randall**

October 26, 1915 - January 30, 2007



Robert N. Randall was born 26 October 1915 in Georgetown, Colorado, where his father was the owner and editor of the local newspaper. He attended Colorado State College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts (now Colorado State University), where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in forestry. Early in his career, he worked for the U.S. Forest Service, the Soil Conservation Service (now Natural Resources Conservation Service), the Bureau of Biological Survey (now the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), and the Colorado Game and Fish Department (now Colorado Division of Wildlife). During World War II, he joined the Armed Services and served with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in northern Manitoba (Churchill) and in the China-Burma-India Theater of Operation. After being honorably discharged from the military, he received an appointment with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

He married Tella (Sue) DeNeal Hottle on 15 August 1941 at Glenwood Springs, Colorado. In 1948, they moved to Bismarck, North Dakota, where Bob assumed supervision of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service's water development projects in the Dakotas until his retirement in 1973. Bob always had a great interest in the outdoors. He was an avid birdwatcher since high school, an interest that began long before many would have considered birding as a hobby. Bob was an incessant record keeper, and his detailed notes include nearly 75 years of bird observations dating back to his teenage years in Colorado in the 1930's. He was a charter member of the Bismarck-Mandan Bird Club, which he helped found in 1952, and he will be remembered fondly by many as the father of birding for the Bismarck/Mandan area. Between 1963 and 1995, he banded over 20,000 birds (mostly in his yard), making him one of the most productive bird banders in North Dakota's history. For over 50 years, Bob helped document birds on the Amoco Oil Refinery Refuge in Mandan. He also helped re-establish a breeding population of Canada geese on this site. Bob compiled data for every Christmas Bird Count in Bismarck from 1948 to 2006, an impressive 59 years of service and dedication to North Dakota's bird resources. He also was interested in rocks and minerals and built on a collection he had inherited from his father and grandfather. Bob was an active member in the Central Dakota Gem and Mineral Society and served as treasurer for the Rocky Mountain Federation of Mineralogical Societies for three years. He also was a member of the North Dakota Paleontological Society and a member of the Bismarck Lions Club.

Bob was a charter member of the North Dakota Natural Science Society (now Great Plains Natural Science Society), and he served on the executive board as a councilman in 1971-1972 and 1982-1983. He was one of the most prolific and enduring contributors to this society's journal, the *Prairie Naturalist*. To my knowledge, no other author has contributed more manuscripts to this journal than Bob Randall. His most notable contributions were his statewide summaries of North Dakota's Christmas Bird Counts, which he published annually since 1966 (Randall 1969), the inaugural year of the *Prairie Naturalist*.

For his contributions to ornithology in North Dakota, Bob will be remembered among his contemporaries who passed before him, including Robert E. Stewart, Ann and Robert Gammell, Orin A. Stevens, and Ed Bry. In 1952, Bob developed a provisional bird checklist for North Dakota, which helped lay the groundwork for future state bird checklists. Over the years, Bob assembled an impressive list of state bird records for North Dakota. He recorded the first North Dakota nesting records for the Bell's vireo in July 1954 (Stewart 1975) and the yellow-billed cuckoo in June 1956 (Gatz et al. 1981). In July and August 1978, Bob helped to document the first and only nesting record of a tricolored heron in North Dakota (Schmidt 1979), which at the time was over 965 km north of the nearest known nesting record in the nation. Bob also is credited with fourth state record of a white-eyed vireo in

May 1971 (Randall 1971), the first state record of a Pinyon jay in October 1979 (Randall et al. 1980), and the first state record of a house finch in February 1980 (Serr 1980).

Among his friends, Bob Randall will be remembered as a caring, gentle man. Bob was one of those rare individuals who had a keen awareness of everyone around him. In social settings, he would make sure that everyone was comfortable, and it was always clear that he was genuinely concerned about everyone. Those who knew him will greatly miss his gentle nature and enthusiasm for birds. He never got caught up in all of his achievements. He had a sense of balance to his life which was evident in his many interests including birding and bird banding, rocks and minerals, paleontology, gardening, and stamp collecting. He was active in his church and was a loving family man. He had a rich historical perspective of birdlife and birding in North Dakota since the late 1940's, and everyone looked to him for insight about birds. He always took the time to listen and to help.

Bob Randall passed away on 30 January 2007 at the age of 91. Although his health had deteriorated in recent years, it did not deter him from his passion for birds. He continued to compile Christmas Bird Counts locally and for the state up to the time of his death. Bob will be greatly missed by his family, colleagues, and friends. Bob is survived by his son and daughter-in-law, Robert and Joni Randall, and his three granddaughters, Kelly, Casey, and Lauren, all of Burnsville, Minnesota; and a daughter-in-law, Wanda Randall of Bullhead City, Arizona. He was preceded in death by his wife, Sue, and his son, Daniel.--*Clark Talkington, 1701 1st Street NE, Mandan, ND 58554. E-mail address: ctalkington@bis.midco.net*

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*Editor's note: The staff of The Prairie Naturalist will miss Bob Randall. His dealings with us were always prompt and cordial. We thank Clark Talkington for writing such a nice In Memoriam for Bob. Lawrence Igl has agreed to summarize the North Dakota Christmas Bird Counts for submission to The Prairie Naturalist. We plan to have a short biography for Larry when the first summary is published.*

*Elmer J. Finck, Editor*