



## Thomas J. Cade

January 10, 1928 – February 6, 2019

Thomas Joseph Cade was professor in the Section of Ecology and Systematics at Cornell, and a renowned research director and conservation leader at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, from 1967 through 1984. He died on February 6, 2019 at the age of 91. He was best known for his pioneering work in the captive-breeding, wild releasing, and eventual recovery of the Peregrine Falcon in North America, and his establishment of The Peregrine Fund, a globally focused not-for-profit conservation institute now based in Boise, Idaho.

Cade was born on January 10, 1928, in San Angelo, Texas. His father, Ernest, was a lawyer, and his mother, Ethel (Bomar) Cade, was a homemaker. Cade became interested in falconry after reading a *National Geographic* article about it in the 1930s. Cade recalled during an interview in 2008 that his interest accelerated at age 15, when a Peregrine Falcon zoomed overhead while he and a friend were hiking at the San Dimas Reservoir in Southern California. “It whistled over our heads” before snatching an American Coot off the water. “It sounded like an artillery shell passing over us.”

Cade served in the U. S. Army in 1946 and 1947, and graduated from the University of Alaska in 1951. At UCLA, he earned his M.A. in 1955, and his Ph.D. in 1958. He then moved to the University of California at Berkeley for an NSF-funded postdoctoral fellowship, after which he joined the faculty of Syracuse University. In 1952, immediately after college, Cade had married Renetta Mae Bennewater, and the couple remained closely bonded for the rest of Cade’s life.

In 1967, Cade was recruited to join the faculty at Cornell University, during the period when raptor populations across the United States were plummeting as a result of widespread use of the pesticide DDT. Among the terms of his move to Ithaca, Cornell had agreed to construct a raptor-breeding barn to accommodate his expanding efforts to breed Peregrine Falcons in captivity. Cade’s “Hawk Barn” was located on the grounds of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, where Cade would serve as research director in addition to his faculty

appointment in Cornell's Section of Ecology and Systematics, which later became today's Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology.

Cade was convinced that once the threats of DDT and related organochlorine pesticides could be eliminated, peregrines could be reintroduced successfully across their former range. However, getting his captive falcons to pair and produce viable eggs proved elusive until a colleague of Cade's, Heinz K. Meng at the State University of New York at New Paltz, finally succeeded in breeding a pair of Peregrine Falcons in 1971. Meng lent the birds to Cade, and by 1973 that pair, together with two other pairs, had produced 20 young falcons. Cade's historic captive-breeding program was launched.

Even before DDT was banned in the United States in 1972, Cade began rallying falconers, conservation activists, business leaders, philanthropists, and even city governments to invest in hands-on efforts to restore Peregrine Falcon populations across North America, one pair at a time. In 1970, Cade launched a nonprofit organization called The Peregrine Fund, together with his friends and supporters Frank Bond, Robert Berry, and James Weaver. Based at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, Cade was the organization's founding chairman even as he continued his teaching and research obligations at Cornell.

Cade's vision for success of the Peregrine Falcon recovery effort centered on large cities, where tall buildings provided manmade versions of the tall cliffs that Peregrines require for successful breeding throughout their worldwide range. Cities also provided crucial food sources in the form of abundant domestic pigeons, concentrations of migratory birds, and countless other urban creatures. Through two decades of work, Cade and his colleagues placed more than 1,600 peregrine falcons all over the eastern U.S. By 1991, 10 adult pairs were nesting in New York City, in places that included a ledge outside New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center and the tower of the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine. By 1999, the continent-wide restoration effort in concert with the DDT ban had become so successful that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service removed Peregrine Falcon from the Endangered Species list.

During his years at Cornell, Cade was an influential instructor in a large undergraduate course, *The Vertebrates*, which he helped to develop soon after his arrival in Ithaca. In the mid-1980s, Cade left Cornell in order to move his extensive breeding operation and The Peregrine Fund to the newly built World Center for Birds of Prey in Boise, Idaho. Cade, as an emeritus professor at Cornell University, finished his academic career at Boise State University, retiring in 1993.

The Peregrine Fund remains a vital organization dedicated to worldwide raptor conservation and public education. The World Center for Birds of Prey remains an equally important attraction in Boise that offers educational programs and viewing opportunities for the public. The Center is also home to the Archives of Falconry, a sport that was immensely important to Tom throughout his life. Tom authored and coauthored many articles and books, including *The Falcons of the World* and *Return of the Peregrine*.

Cade was the recipient of numerous conservation and falconry awards, including the prestigious Elliot Coues Award from the American Ornithologists' Union (1984) and the Arthur A. Allen Award from the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology (1989). Throughout his career, he was an outspoken advocate for all birds of prey, for science-based solutions in conservation biology, and for tenacious, hands-on conservation actions that produced results. In his later years, Cade was also a crusader for the wholesale removal of lead from all recreational uses, given its well-documented threats to the health of all wildlife as well as to humans. In 2015, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, through the generosity of the Bobolink Foundation, established the Tom J. Cade Fund for Youth Education to support youth programs in learning about birds.

Tom's no-nonsense character and strong conservation convictions were accompanied by an extremely warm personality and a trademark, freely afforded smile. He is survived by his wife and close companion of 67 years, Renetta Cade, whose support of Tom's passions, adventures, misadventures, and living-room falcons he openly cherished. He is also survived by five children; Marla Cade (Tom Bussoletti), Brian Cade (Amy), Cheryl Albaugh, Tom Cade, and Drew Cade (Becky); eight grandchildren, and five great grandchildren.

*Written by John W. Fitzpatrick and Willy E. Bemis*