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Eugene Kridler- Memorium

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Founded in 1925

Western Regional News

Eugene Kridler

It is my sad duty to report the passing of Eugene (Gene) Kridler (permit # 08485) on May 14, 2007. A note on his long career in banding appears in *NABB* 29:211 in 2004, and more recently a summary of a CD presentation on Eugene's accomplishments appeared in *NABB* 32:13 in 2007. Thus, this obituary will highlight other aspects of his career.

Born on December 30, 1919, in Milwaukee, he was educated in Wisconsin schools. Like many young men, Gene joined the CCC from 1937-1939 and then enlisted in the U.S. Army's Light Horse Calvary which was later converted to Field Artillery. Gene's regiment served in the European theatre for 2.5 years, earning four battle stars.

After his discharge in 1945, he used the G.I. Bill to attend the universities of Wisconsin, Montana, and Utah State, where he earned his B.S. in Forestry and Wildlife Management in 1951. In between, he married Edna Ida Syring in Milwaukee on May 27, 1947.

Gene's career as a wildlife biologist took the Kridler family to National Wildlife Refugees all across the western states and eventually to Hawaii. In 1964 he became the Wildlife Administrator and Manager for the Hawaii and the Western Pacific Region and the Hawaiian Islands, which covered over three million square miles and over 2,000 islands in the Pacific. His passion for and knowledge of this area provided the impetus for the creation of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument in 2006. Under his leadership, ten refuges were established in the Pacific, leading to the preservation of critical habitat for many endangered species.

Realizing the importance of many of Hawaii's endemic wildlife, Gene accepted an appointment as Director of Endangered Species, where he helped put together teams of researchers to evaluate the status of native forest birds, a precursor to the GAP analysis.

Gene began his banding career for the USFWS with waterfowl studies and banded 50,000 bird before receiving his Master permit in 1959 (#08485). He served as WBBA president from 1963 to 1964. After his start with waterfowl, he branched out and began banding songbirds for longevity and migration studies. By 2004, he had banded 100,000 birds.

Gene "retired" in 1979, receiving the U.S. Secretary of the Interior Meritorious Service Award. The Kridlers moved to Diamond Point, and then Sequim, WA, in 1990. Gene continued to make himself available for baseline research and banded another 10,000 birds. He was banding a few days before his death. He also continued as an activist on behalf of conservation and was active with the Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society.

Gene is survived by his wife Edna, sons Gene in Hawaii and Jim in Virginia, and three grandsons.

A memorial service was held at the Dungeness Audubon Center at Railroad Bridge Park on May 20. In lieu of flowers or gifts, the family suggests memorials to River Center Foundation Endowment Fund, Dungeness River Audubon Center, P.O. Box 3007, Sequim, WA 98382.

Walter Sakai
WBBA President