



## OBITUARY

### Colin Tubbs (1937-1997)



▲ 41. Colin Tubbs at Denny Wood, New Forest, Hampshire, April 1986 (*Jenni Tubbs*)

With Colin Tubbs' death from cancer on 17th October 1997, the wildlife conservation movement and ornithology have lost one of their most effective campaigners. Born in Portsmouth, Colin left Portsmouth Grammar School aged 16, taking a number of short-term jobs, including two years as a forest worker on a Hampshire estate, followed by National Service in the Dorset Regiment (1955-57). Joining The Nature Conservancy in 1960 as New Forest summer warden, he continued with the Conservancy and its successors, subsequently becoming senior Hampshire and Isle of Wight officer based in Lyndhurst, until his early retirement in 1993.

The ornithological and conservation seeds had been sown at an early age; he was writing about the birds of Langstone and Portsmouth Harbours at 13, becoming a founder member of what became known as The Portsmouth Group and initiating one of the first long series of wildfowl and wader counts in the UK—a forerunner of the Wetland Birds Survey. He began studying Common Buzzards *Buteo buteo*, Red-backed Shrikes *Lanius collurio* and Dartford Warblers *Sylvia undata* during camping expeditions to the New Forest; the Forest, on which he was to become an acknowledged authority, was his first love.

Early fieldwork set the pattern for his lifelong ornithological interests in wildfowl—especially Brent Geese *Branta bernicla*—waders and raptors, to which many of his publications are devoted. Without formal academic training, Colin's activities spanned the amateur/professional divide as if it was non-existent. His professional role was characterised by his selfless and successful advocacy, at numerous public enquiries, on behalf of Hampshire and Isle of Wight wildlife sites. Most were won by the simple expedient of meticulous preparation so that he knew more about the conservation case than did the opposition.

Colin wrote four books: *The New Forest: an ecological history* (1968), *The Buzzard* (1974), *The New Forest* (1986) and *The Solent* (in course of publication). Additionally, he produced, occasionally co-authored by his wife Jenni, at least 86 academic papers and comparable publications, as well as many articles in popular journals, magazines and newspapers. Birds of estuaries and raptors featured in a wide range of ornithological studies; papers in *British Birds* contained much of his Dartford Warbler work, including national breeding censuses, and studies of New Forest buzzard ecology.

After retirement, besides continuing to devote himself to writing and despite ill-health, Colin's horizons expanded. He was partly instrumental in setting up a Europe-wide Forum concerned with pastoral agriculture and nature conservation; he was a Director and Treasurer of the associated limited company at the time of his death. He saw pastoralism as the key to retention of wildlife sites such as the New Forest.

We extend our deepest sympathy to Jenni, his family and his many friends.  
*NORMAN PRATT and EDDIE WISEMAN*

---