



Douglas L. Gilbert
1923 – 1980

Douglas L. Gilbert Award for Outstanding Achievements in Wildlife Sciences

Douglas L. Gilbert was born and raised in southern Colorado. After graduation from Huerfano Count High School in 1941, he entered the Army Air Force. Following the conclusion of World War II, he entered Colorado A&M (Colorado State University) in 1946. He completed a B.S. degree in Game Management in 1950 and continued with a M.S. program on Black Bear, finishing in 1951.

Upon graduation, he joined the Colorado Game and Fish Department as a research biologist, focusing on furbearers and bear research. In 1952, he served as a temporary instructor in Wildlife Management at Colorado State University. Doug returned to Colorado Game and Fish Department in 1953 as a wildlife educator in the Grand Junction area, where he developed his skills in communication through television, radio, and popular articles in newspapers and magazines. In 1955, he left to teach at the University of Montana and returned to join the faculty in wildlife biology at CSU in 1956. In 1962, he obtained his Ph.D. degree from the University of Michigan. Doug was on the faculty in wildlife through 1969. He then moved to Cornell University for two years, returning to CSU in 1971 to serve as assistant dean of the College of Forestry and Natural Resources (1971-1975) and as professor and head, Department of Fishery and Wildlife Biology from 1975 until his death from cancer in 1980.

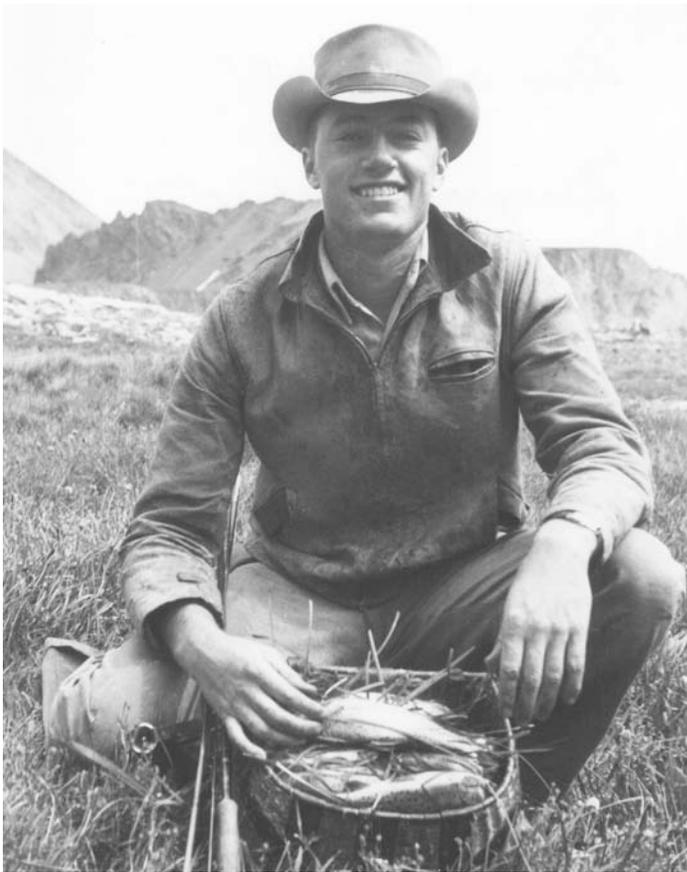
Doug Gilbert was highly regarded as a professional by his peers. He was active in The Wildlife Society and the National Wildlife Federation. He earned numerous awards, including the Conservation Education Award from TWS, the Outstanding Educator Award, the American Motors Conservation Award for Professionals, and the Outstanding Professional Wildlife Biologist, Central Mountains and Plains Section, TWS. He wrote about professionalism in articles to several journals and the TWS newsletter.

Doug Gilbert expanded our awareness of the importance of public relations with his book “Natural Resources and Public Relations”, now in its third edition. He had numerous scientific publications and co-edited “Big Game of North America” published by the Wildlife Management Institute.

Doug came from a rich background in wildlife and natural resources, and he passed that tradition on to his peers and students. He was one of eight children of Minnie and Paul Gilbert, one of the first employees of the U.S. Forest Service in southern Colorado. Three of his brothers also have had successful careers in natural resources. He loved to be outside; and to hunt, fish and botanize.

Personally I remember my uncle as a positive, enthusiastic individual who liked people and the profession. He could hold his own in a poker game, and was a better cribbage player than most.

James R. Gilbert
January 6, 2005



Douglas Gilbert, circa 1944

Who Was Douglas L. Gilbert?

You should meet Doug Gilbert, for whom the TWS Colorado Chapter's Highest Award is named. Too late, you say? Although he died at 55 in 1980, you can still know Doug from his imprints on the wildlife profession and on persons he influenced.

Doug was a mentor. As a professor and head of the Fishery and Wildlife Biology Department at Colorado State University (CSU), he made sure that new graduate students had lodging and start-up help. Doug and his wife Dorothy welcomed new faculty with a home-baked pie and valuable advice on everything from medical services to how to prepare for Colorado winters.

Doug Gilbert epitomized Brokaw's "The Greatest Generation" — a youth in the Depression, a soldier in World War II, college student on the G.I. Bill, and professional in wildlife in the era of scientific, social and environmental progress of the 1960 – 1970's.

He was a native of La Veta, Colorado and obtained his BS and MS degrees at CSU and his PhD at the University of Michigan. His nationally-adopted seminal textbook, Public Relations in Natural Resources Management, foreshadowed today's "Human Dimensions" by 25 years. Doug paved the way for a more interactive and positive relationship among the stewards, users, and owners of natural resources.

Dr. Gilbert taught at Cornell, Montana, and Colorado State Universities, and was Assistant Dean of Natural Resources at CSU. He also worked for the Colorado Division of Wildlife and was a national leader in organizations such as the National Wildlife Federation and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and a charter member of the TWS Colorado Chapter.

Doug loved his family, encouraged his students, deflected credit to others, admitted his mistakes, and cherished the natural world. We miss Douglas L. Gilbert, but celebrate the influence of a great person.

By Dale Hein, 1998 Recipient of the Douglas L. Gilbert Award