

**Jim Olterman**  
**Colorado Wildlife Biologist, Manager, Pilot**



*The Colorado Chapter of The Wildlife Society (CCTWS) in cooperation with Robin Olterman honor Jim and his contributions to Colorado's wildlife legacy.*

Jim Olterman, a long-term Colorado Division of Wildlife biologist, passed away on 4 September 2002 while piloting a DOW plane stocking fish in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains of southeastern Colorado. His entire career was a series of successes even at the very end when his actions as a pilot saved the passenger who was riding with him, Brandon White, a Colorado DOW hatchery technician. Jim was born in the hills of east Tennessee, and if you listened carefully to him speak his “hillbilly twang” came out on occasion. During his youth, Jim gained a deep appreciation for the outdoors in general and wildlife in particular while hunting and fishing and exploring the backwoods on his Aunt Floy’s farm in rural Tennessee. He enrolled at Georgia Tech and after about 30 days he showed back up at home complaining about “all those people with slide rules”. He headed west and somehow ended up at Colorado State University where he graduated in 1968 with a degree in Wildlife Biology. After a stint in the military, where he was a decorated Vietnam Veteran and where he learned to fly, he enrolled at Oregon State and received his Masters in wildlife science.

In 1972 he became part of the largest Division of Wildlife DWM trainee class and was assigned to work in Ridgeway. Jim then moved on to become a terrestrial biologist and in 1977 became the Senior Biologist for the Southwest Region. Along the way, Jim parlayed his outstanding flying skills into also becoming the pilot/Senior Biologist for the DOW in the southwest. Finally in 1996 Jim inherited the rest of the western slope and became the Senior Biologist for the West Region. Jim showed a great deal of pride and dedication to wildlife by maintaining his peace officer commission during his 30-year career. He looked forward to working the annual big game seasons and meeting his constituents. Jim and his wife Robin were the first husband and wife law enforcement team in the DOW.



Jim's career accomplishments were many; he took a lead role in desert bighorn sheep restoration, Canada lynx reestablishment, protection of winter range for deer and elk in the southwest and transplanting Columbian sharp-tailed grouse to the southwest. Jim was passionate about wildlife and never dodged an opportunity to speak to the press, public or policy makers about his views on protecting wildlife and habitat. He had the uncanny ability to dissect complicated issues into understandable, point by point items. He was particularly passionate about the impacts of public land grazing on wildlife, not allowing people to commercialize wildlife and the disease threats posed to wildlife by game ranching.

He was also an active supporter of the Colorado Chapter of The Wildlife Society and The Wildlife Society. He served on the CCTWS Executive Board in 1979 and 1980 and encouraged his colleagues and employees to be active members of this and other professional organizations.

Jim's passing left a big and irreplaceable void -- his knowledge, his advocacy and his ability to reach out to so many constituents has been missed. Jim's main passions in life were wildlife, fishing, flying and above all, his family, including three children, Lara, Sally and Tandy and his wife Robin, the former DWM in Cortez. Rick Kahn, former CDOW Wildlife Management Supervisor, a colleague and close friend of Jim's, stated: "Jim was proud to live in Colorado, proud to be a wildlife biologist in this great state and proud to be part of the wildlife family. He was an inspiration to many who knew him. He was passionate about the resource and the people who appreciate it. Jim Olterman epitomized the professional wildlife biologist; he lost his life while doing the job he truly loved."



*The Jim Olterman Scholarship Award was created after Jim's death and has been offered annually to encourage and support wildlife undergraduate students attending school in Colorado and pursuing a career in wildlife biology and management. Since its inception in 2004, the recipient chosen by the CCTWS Board has been recognized at the CCTWS annual meeting and over \$6,000 has been awarded to students to support their educational expenses.*

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