



**Glenn R. VanBlaricom<sup>†</sup>**  
**1949–2020**

Our friend, mentor, advisor, and colleague, Glenn VanBlaricom, passed away peacefully at his home in Mariposa, California, on December 24, 2020, after a 19-month battle with thyroid cancer. His beloved wife, Kristina, was by his side. Among other roles, Glenn was a research marine ecologist with wide-ranging interests, expertise, and experience in coastal marine environments. He was particularly interested in the conservation and management of marine mammals, the effects of natural and anthropogenic disturbances on coastal marine ecosystems, exploited shellfish populations, and ecosystem scale effects of marine shellfish aquaculture.

Glenn Richard VanBlaricom was born in Shelton, Washington, on April 16, 1949. His passion for the outdoors and his community was revealed early in his life. He was an Eagle Scout and worked part time as a DJ, newscaster, and advertisement producer at Shelton's AM radio station KMAS from 1965 to 1972. Glenn attended Shelton High School and graduated as a National Merit Scholar in 1967. He worked summers at the Rayonier Marine Lab and received a four year scholarship to attend the University of Washington (UW). He worked summers at the Rayonier Marine Lab and was awarded a 4-year scholarship to attend the University of Washington (UW) in Seattle, where he received, in 1972, dual Bachelor's degrees in Oceanography and Zoology with Honors. Glenn then moved to California to attend graduate school as part of Dr. Paul Dayton's laboratory, where his doctoral research focused on benthic ecology. Glenn received a Ph.D. in oceanography from the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California in San Diego in 1978.

Glenn started his professional career studying a species for which he was passionate: sea otters. He worked as a wildlife biologist with the California Sea Otter Project of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service between 1977 and 1993. During this period, Glenn published seminal work on the ecology of this species, including the book "The Community Ecology of Sea Otters" - a key reference for this charismatic marine mammal. During the translocation of sea otters to San Nicolas Island, California, in 1987–1990, Glenn managed their captivity at the Monterey Bay Aquarium before their transport to the island. He was also involved in establishing and managing cleaning facilities in Alaska to rehabilitate sea otters fouled by the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill in 1989. For his work with sea otters, Glenn received a number of

<sup>†</sup>Glenn in his element—explaining abalone ecology to a marine mammal graduate student on San Nicolas Island, California, in 2005. Photograph by A. Bradford.

awards including the Special Achievement Award by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (1985, 1987), the Dr. Betty S. Davis Conservation Award (1987), and the Natural Resource Response Award for Exceptional Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior (1990).

In 1986, Glenn joined the Institute of Marine Sciences at the University of California Santa Cruz as an adjunct professor, where he started mentoring students and taught courses in kelp forest ecology. He returned to his home state of Washington in 1993 to become the Assistant Unit Leader at the Washington Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit of the U.S. Geological Survey and an Associate Professor at the School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences (SAFS) at the UW in Seattle. He was also appointed an Adjunct Professor at the College of Forest Resources at UW and at the School of the Environment at Washington State University (WSU) in Pullman.

Mentoring and teaching were among Glenn's favorite activities. He taught one of the most popular courses at SAFS for nearly 20 years, Marine Mammalogy. This class offered a relevant and hands-on introduction to marine mammal research for hundreds of students, including some who have become highly successful marine mammal scientists. In addition to marine mammalogy, Glenn taught courses in aquatic wildlife ecology at UW and WSU. Glenn was a gifted and kind mentor known for championing, taking pride in, and supporting his students in a variety of ways. Among the many gifts Glenn gave to his students was a commitment to excellence in both the production and communication of rigorous science. He was a meticulous editor and provided his students with highly thoughtful, specific, and constructive comments on their work. Throughout his career, he chaired Supervisory Committees for 42 graduate students (25 master's, 13 doctoral, and 4 master's/doctoral). Glenn's academic "lineage" stems from some of the most seminal marine ecologists.<sup>1</sup> He carried this lineage to his students, who have all taken on positions involving research, management, education, and conservation in various locations around the world. Glenn was ahead of his time when it came to promoting diversity and inclusion in science. He regularly advocated for underrepresented groups in science and included women, people of color, and foreign nationals as students in all graduate programs of which he was part.

Whereas marine mammals were one of Glenn's primary areas of research, his contributions to science were much broader. He is also known for his research on benthic ecology. Glenn led a 40-year study on the ecology and population dynamics of black abalone populations at San Nicolas Island. Although originally conceived as an investigation of the translocated sea otters' foraging effects on intertidal abalone populations, the study became particularly important when a disease decimated black abalone populations in the 1980s and 90s, resulting in the species being listed as endangered under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. He was also an important contributor in researching the impact of geoduck clam dive fisheries and mariculture on shallow water mudflat communities in Washington State.

In total, Glenn presented thousands of lectures and published nearly 90 peer-reviewed journal articles (Appendix S1) and other technical reports. He continued to work in retirement and is a coauthor on several papers in various stages of the submission process. He authored or coedited three books on sea otters (two technical, one for general audiences). Additionally, Glenn authored or coauthored more than 200 oral or poster presentations at professional research conferences, meetings, and workshops.

Glenn was also passionate about field work. For nearly all of his career, Glenn spent several weeks every year at San Nicolas Island, California, conducting abalone research and often providing his students and other collaborators the opportunity to join him and learn about a remote and dynamic ecosystem. He was also engaged in marine mammal research in other parts of the U.S. and the world, especially Alaska, Brazil, and Russia. During his travels, he formed lasting relationships with many international collaborators.

Glenn was an active member of the Society for Marine Mammalogy. He joined the Society in the 1980s and served as chair of the Society's 8th Biennial Conference in Pacific Grove in 1989, as a member of the Board of Governors for 10 years, and as Chair of the Membership Committee between 1994 and 2000. He received an Award for Excellence in Scientific Communication from the Society in 1993. Glenn was also a member of the Black Abalone Status Review Team in 2007–2008. He was the lead author of the report that led to the listing of black abalone as endangered. Later he served as the Chair of the Recovery Team for black abalone. Additionally, Glenn was a member

of the Western Gray Whale Advisory Panel of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) for a decade. This Panel was convened to facilitate protection of the critically endangered gray whale population of the coastal Russian Far East.

Glenn had many other interests. He appreciated life underwater and was a skillful scuba diver, an activity he pursued into his 60s. A scientific diver since his graduate school years, he enjoyed the diving aspects of many research projects and served as a member of the UW's Diving Control Board. Glenn was also a bird watcher and always looked for opportunities to spend time in the woods, where he enjoyed watching creatures big and small. He was also a collector of train models. Glenn had a wonderful sense of humor and valued time with the people in his life.

Glenn is survived by his wife Kristina (who participated in much of Glenn's fieldwork and birdwatching), his brother Don, his two daughters Christy Helmbrecht (husband - Justin; children - Asher, Amelia, and Jules) and Betsy Rhodea (husband - Ben; children - Chris and Leigh). In his honor, efforts are being made to establish memorial plaques on San Nicolas Island and at the University of Washington in Seattle. It was Glenn's wish to have *in memoriam* donations be sent to Doctors without Borders/Medecins sans Frontieres (<https://donate.doctorswithoutborders.org>).

Glenn will be dearly missed.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank Kristina VanBlaricom for providing details of Glenn's personal life. We also acknowledge the contributions of Glenn's graduate students and colleagues from the Washington Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, U.S. Geological Survey, and from the School of Aquatic and Fisheries Sciences, University of Washington. Many of them were unable to assist with the writing of this article but shared the sentiments expressed here.

## ENDNOTE

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