

# In Memoriam: Steven Bruce Kimple (1941-2024)

November 4, 2024

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California Department of Fish and Game Wildlife Biologist (retired) Steven Kimple passed away peacefully at home on May 20, 2024 with family beside him. Preceded in death by his wife, Brenda, he is survived by sons Bret and Freedom, and grandchildren Ruby and Kirpal. Steve was born in Salem, Oregon and received his BS in Biology at Oregon State University (OSU) where he was a gymnast and an active member of Sigma Chi. Upon graduation in 1963, Steve entered the U.S. Marine Corps as a Second

Lieutenant, served in the first American combat battalion to land in Viet Nam in 1965, and was awarded the Bronze Star and Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry for heroism under fire.

Despite stepping on a landmine and many months convalescing, Steve returned to active duty and completed flight school. As a Naval Aviator he piloted F4 Phantoms for the Marine Corps. After 10 years, Major Steven B. Kimple retired from military service and became a Wildlife Biologist with the California Department of Fish and Game. His first assignment was in Orange County, working as the area biologist for then Field Supervisor, the late, Ronald F. Hein. While stationed in Orange County, Steve worked on a variety of projects, including wetland management and enhancement, deer herd management issues (including the infamous Tenaja Antlerless Hunt), planned and participated in numerous mountain lion track surveys, and assisted with several bighorn sheep capture projects. Steve eventually transferred northward, and became the Santa Barbara-Ventura County Unit Manager. During that assignment, he played a pivotal role in formulating plans to reestablish bighorn sheep in the western transverse range of Ventura County and, specifically at San Rafael Peak, where he worked tirelessly with personnel representing the US Forest Service and Ventura County to ensure logistical issues were addressed and project implementation occurred. Steve also played a primary role in the follow-up of that successful translocation, participated in numerous telemetry flights, and retrieved the carcasses and ascertained the cause of mortality of numerous bighorn sheep—most of which were killed by mountain lions. The timely and successful retrieval of those carcasses and the subsequent determination of cause-of-death was facilitated by the close working relationship Steve had developed with the Aviation Unit of the Ventura County Sheriff's Department.

Steve also was an integral part of the California Condor Recovery Program, which brought the remaining 22 wild condors into a captive breeding program in the 1980s. The program has been successful, with nearly 350 condors alive today, and many of which were hatched in captivity and then released into the wild. In 1987, another move northward landed Steve at the Elkhorn Slough Ecological Reserve (now the Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve) near Monterey, California, where he was the reserve manager for another decade before retiring from CDFG in 1997. Following retirement, Steve and Brenda once again moved northward, and settled in Bend, Oregon.

Gregarious, generous, tolerant and, perhaps above all, humble, Steve was quick with a smile or joke. One of his most entertaining tales revolved around the description of his first carrier-based takeoff; those of you that heard that story will recall the detail (and humor) that he related therein. Steve enjoyed skiing, golfing, fly fishing, birdwatching, backpacking, bike touring, international travel and along with Benda, he remained active in wildlife conservation activities for 25 years during retirement. Steve's dedication and service to wildlife conservation and to his country should not be forgotten.—*Friends and Colleagues of Steven B. Kimple*