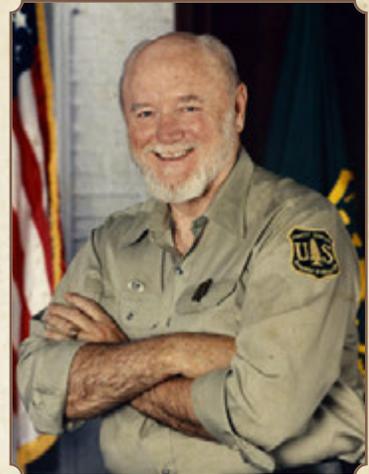


2018 INDUCTEES

JACK WARD THOMAS

1934-2016



You think you know Jack Ward Thomas, but you don't.

You don't know that he was a child of the Dust Bowl, born in powder-dry Handley, Texas. Thomas never shook childhood memories of his time spent indoors, and under a table draped with a damp tablecloth to keep the dust at bay.

No, you don't know Jack Ward Thomas if you never heard him quote poet T.S. Eliot. Or didn't know that he led the U.S. Forest Service research at Amherst, where he earned his Ph.D, and where he'd rest in the university cemetery leaning against Emily Dickinson's tombstone.

The thing is, Thomas earned his doctorate in land-use planning with a dissertation on song-bird habitat requirements in suburban areas of New England. Pretty much in cemeteries—because that's where the open spaces existed.

That observation led to Thomas's "Invite Wildlife to Your Backyard," one of the most popular articles on wildlife ever written. National Wildlife Federation reprints run into the millions.

When he moved to Oregon in 1974, it was as the chief research wildlife biologist and program leader at the USFS Forestry and Range Sciences Laboratory. There Thomas established the Starkey Experimental Forest Elk Project—an ambitious elk ecology study. He also led a wildlife conservation planning effort that was the intellectual cornerstone of Thomas's hallmark achievement: ecosystem management.

The Jack Ward Thomas you know really emerged in the early 1990s when he was embroiled in the era's white-hot political issue:

the conservation of old-growth ecosystems and spotted owl habitat in the Pacific Northwest.

With logging jobs already sagging, the timber industries laid the blame for 30,000 lost jobs at the perch of the federally protected northern spotted owl.

In the midst of the political firefights, President Bill Clinton tapped Thomas to develop a forest plan focused on old-growth ecosystems.

Two years later, in 1993, President Clinton appointed Thomas the thirteenth chief of the USFS—and the first whose career centered on wildlife research.

With Thomas at the helm, the Northwest Forest Plan was adopted in 1994, but the spotted owl controversy smoldered on. Still, Thomas never backed away.

"We don't just manage land," he said at the time. "We're supposed to be leaders. Conservation leaders. Leaders in protecting and improving the lands."

Upon his USFS retirement in 1996, Thomas joined the University of Montana's College of Forestry and Conservation as the Boone and Crockett Professor of Wildlife Conservation. Beloved by his students, he held the position for 10 years.

For Thomas, ecosystem management was the big picture. "We need to be prepared to move into the 21st century," he'd tell his colleagues, "or we'll be left in the dust."

Know this: from the get-go, Jack Ward Thomas understood that was no place to be. ❧

