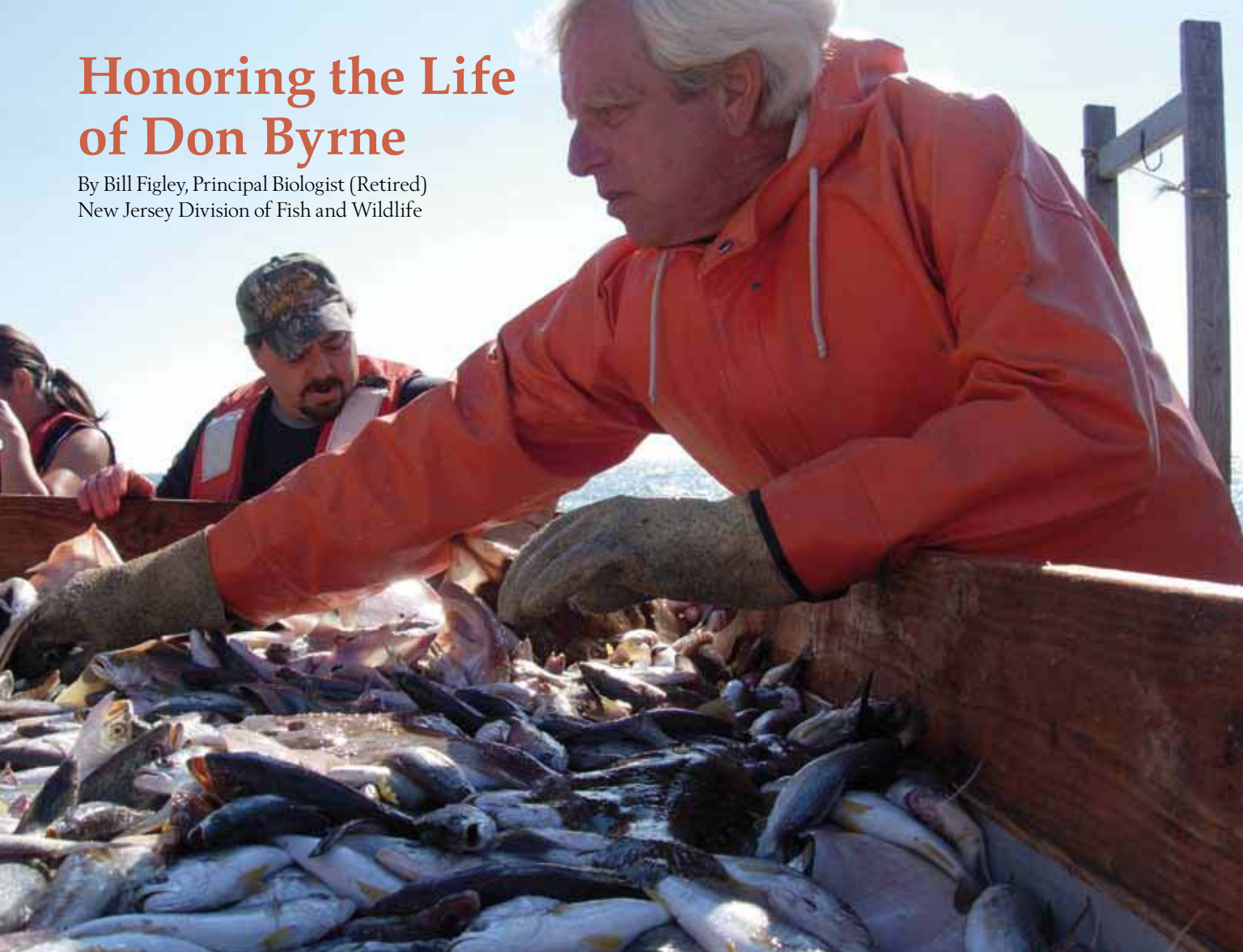


# Honoring the Life of Don Byrne

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New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife



New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife mourns the loss of an outstanding fisheries biologist. Don Byrne, born October 26, 1949 in Teaneck, New Jersey died suddenly of a heart attack on June 28, 2010 at his home in Port Republic.

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**Don loved the outdoors. Most of his life was spent enjoying nature, in general, and studying marine fish, in particular.**

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He graduated from the University of Virginia with a B.A. degree in biology, then attained an M.S. degree in Marine Science from the Virginia Institute of Marine Science. His professional career began in 1976 with Ichthyological Associates, an environmental consulting firm. In 1980, he came to work for the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife where he spent the next 30 years as a marine fisheries biologist based at the Nacote Creek Research Station, located near the mouth of the Mullica River.

Don's primary job with the Bureau of Marine Fisheries was, as he put it, "to count the fishes in the sea" which he accomplished through the Ocean Stock Assessment Program. This survey employed a commercial trawler to drag a large net across the sea floor at numerous predetermined locations collecting samples of most of the fish species found

along the Jersey coast. This intensive survey was conducted five times each year. By analyzing each catch, Don could determine population trends in our local fish stocks. Such information is essential to manage fisheries important to both recreational and commercial fishermen.



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## Running the trawl survey involved more than just knowing how to handle nets and identify fish; it also required one of Don's greatest skills—the ability to get along well with people.

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With a limited professional staff, he had to rely upon dozens of volunteers to get the job done. Workers and volunteers often described his work ethic and excellent relationship with the crew as both serious and humorous, exacting, demanding yet forgiving, precise but practical, hard working and caring. Many volunteers returned for trawl survey, cruise after cruise—proof of Don's engaging spirit.

Don's other Fish and Wildlife responsibilities included reviewing environmental impacts of coastal development projects, documenting state streams that support herring spawning runs and representing New Jersey in the coastal management of lobster.

His passion for marine science was also evident in the volunteer hours he spent with local area students who shared his enthusiasm. Whether being a mentor to science fair students or exciting them through hands-on interactions using local fish species, Don was never too busy to help a possible future marine biologist.

Outdoor pursuits extended beyond his professional career. Don loved flower and vegetable gardening, preferring a shovel over faster methods. Family vacations included kayaking, hiking and camping in national parks and beachcombing the Outer Banks of North Carolina. He regularly played league volleyball and rode his bike to work daily.

Don was married to his wife Becky, a grade school teacher, for 39 years. His two daughters inherited their father's love of nature and both currently work for Fish and Wildlife. Daughter Karen Leskie is the Aquatic Education Coordinator with the Office of Information and Education whose husband, Joe Leskie, is the Bureau of Wildlife Management's southern region Deer Research Project biologist. Daughter Nancy Byrne is a clerical worker with the Bureau of Marine Fisheries and is studying for her master's degree in library science.

The Division of Fish and Wildlife and the many volunteers, friends and family will surely miss this beloved fisheries biologist.

