

Stephen Howell Jenkins, '68

Longtime University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) biology professor **Stephen Howell Jenkins** died at home on October 3, 2024. Born in Plattsburgh, New York, Steve grew up in Salem, New York, where a curiosity about the natural world took hold while he went on hikes with his father and his brother, Wally. The family subsequently moved to Boston and then Toledo, Ohio, where he attended DeVilbiss High School, and where he was a National Merit Scholar and Valedictorian. At Dartmouth, he majored in biology and was active for all four years in the Outing Club and the Dartmouth Religious Liberals group, where he served as treasurer. His roommates remember him as “a quiet and kind man, very easy going and an excellent friend and roommate.” Because of his opposition to the U.S. role in the war, he registered as a conscientious objector and would remain committed to the principle of nonviolence throughout his life. He taught high school in Detroit for several years; while teaching there he was inspired by the first Earth Day in 1970.

In 1969, he married Katherine Pleiss, a classmate from DeVilbiss High, and began graduate studies at Harvard University, where he earned a PhD in Behavioral Ecology. In 1974, the couple moved to Reno, where Steve took a post as a professor at UNR. One of Steve's most profound legacies is the hundreds of students he taught and mentored over his 37 years at the university. He taught a wide range of classes including introductory biology, ecology, mammalogy and research design, and served as graduate advisor to more than 30 students, many of whom he would remain close to as they moved on in the world of science. In much of his teaching, he worked to pass on his own belief that critical thinking is not just a fundamental tenet of sound science, but a broader force for good. He shaped others beyond his own classroom with his book *How Science Works*, an effort to demystify the scientific process for nonspecialists. Steve's dedication to his students was recognized with the UNR College of Science LeMay Award for Excellence in Teaching, as well as the Graduate Student Association Vada Trimble Outstanding Mentor Award, which honors an individual who has been a true friend and advocate for graduate students. Following his retirement in 2011, Steve wrote a second book, *Tools for Critical Thinking in Biology*, and devoted himself to birdwatching excursions and travel with Kathie throughout the Truckee Meadows, the Sierra and the West.

Steve's grandfather Ralph, Class of 1914 and father Ward, Class of 1942 preceded Steve at Dartmouth. He is survived by Kathie, his brother Wally, son Matt, and grandsons Miles and Marcus.

