

# Professor's art on display at city library



Staff photo by John Zoz

Paul Johnsgard works on a sketch of a waterfowl in his Manter Hall office.

By Linda Liekhus

An exhibit of art, books, original manuscripts and wood sculpture by UNL professor, Paul Johnsgard, is on display at Bennett Martin Public Library at 14th and N streets. The exhibit, in the Heritage Room, will be displayed until May 31.

Johnsgard, a professor in the School of Life Sciences, is an artist and published author. Many of the books he has authored and illustrated are about birds and their behavior.

Johnsgard came to UNL 21 years ago with zoology and wildlife management degrees from North Dakota State University, Washington State University and Cornell University. UNL was his first teaching position after he completed a two-year fellowship at England's Bristol University. At Bristol, he completed a study of the behavior of all the waterfowl species of the world. Consequently, this research became the basis for his first book, "A Handbook of Waterfowl Behavior."

After the success of the first book, Johnsgard said he undertook several writing projects, working on as many as eight projects at a time. He has published 15 books including "Song of the North Wind," "Hummingbirds in North America" and recently, "Dragons and Unicorns," which was the first book he co-authored. His co-author was his daughter, Karin, a student at Nebraska Wesleyan University. He said he expects to have four new books out within the year.

"Most of my books are about the behavior and ecology of live animals, especially birds and mammals," he said.

Johnsgard said he spends much of his summers traveling around America and the world doing research for his books. He also researches at libraries and museums includ-

ing those at Yale and at Oxford in England. Johnsgard said his research focuses on getting data on distribution and on the specimens themselves.

He said when he is working on a book, he likes to be in total command: all the writing, drawings and photographs are his own.

Although the book market is an important consideration, when choosing the subject for a book, Johnsgard said his own interest in the subject is also a deciding factor.

He said he is more interested in studying the less known behavior aspects of a certain bird species and he prefers to study larger birds because they are easier to observe. However, of the estimated 8,600 bird species in the world, Johnsgard estimates that he has looked at only a few hundred species—so doesn't plan on running out of future "projects." He also said he probably will surpass his projected goal of 25 published books, because there are so many bird species he finds particularly interesting.

"Being an author has been a very rewarding experience," he said. "It is the obligation of the scientist to do useful research."

He said he measures his books' success in terms of his satisfaction with the work and not in the number of book sales.

Johnsgard said he also enjoys line drawing, wood sculpture and photography. These other interests have little to do with his research and they are mainly recreational activities or for self-expression, he said. Yet many of the drawings, sculptures and photographs are of birds or other animals, he said, and many of the drawings and photographs are published as part of a book.

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