



## John Henry Fitch

March 1, 1944 - April 20, 2022

Dr. John H. Fitch, 78, of rural Fort Collins, CO passed away suddenly at his home on April 20, 2022. John was born March 1, 1944 in Medford, Oregon and was the son of Dr. Henry S. Fitch and Virginia R. Fitch. Although born in Oregon, he spent much of his childhood growing up on the University of Kansas Fitch Natural History Reservation near Lawrence, KS.

Upon graduation from Lawrence High School, attended the University of Kansas, graduating in 1966 with a double major in anthropology and zoology. He was then hired for three years by the Smithsonian Institution to work on their Pacific Ocean Biological Survey Program. For this, he helped with the banding and tracking of pelagic sea birds over a large area encompassing the Central Pacific.

He then attended Michigan State University where he received his M.S. and PhD degrees, finishing in 1975. He served as a faculty fellow and environmental science advisor in the Executive Office of the President during the Carter Administration. John also served as chief scientist of the Massachusetts Audubon Society, as president of The Conservancy of Southwest Florida, and as a founding faculty member of Florida Gulf Coast University.

After moving to Fort Collins, CO, in retirement, John established a working

relationship with Colorado State University. He was a nature enthusiast who loved the mountains west of town where he lived in a sustainable home of his own design.

John is survived by his life partner, Gail Powell, a sister Alice Fitch Echelle, a brother Chet Fitch, and 2 daughters, Mary and Elizabeth.

No memorial services are currently planned, but a private service will be held with family at a later date.

The family of John would appreciate you taking the time to leave an online condolence, or even just type in your name, on the "Tribute Wall" (blue tab above this obituary), to let us know you visited this page. Thank you.

# Tribute Wall

TZ

“ I was dr johns chiropractor in ft collins we became fast friends and shared many ommon interests from kayaking and wildlife exploring to bbqing sal.on on his pellet unit i was his unofficial private student and became privy to many of his experiences re his early job banding birds and the reasons behind this project to his time aiding president carter and him sharing a letter from the pres i was grateful for him and who he is my best wishes to his family. Thomas zeiler d c Phd qme i might add bfd lol love you john

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**Thomas Zeiler** - March 03 at 12:24 PM

RS

“ So sad to see this! Dr. Fitch played a huge role in my education at FGCU and was one of my favorite professors of all times! I sadly was just looking him up to touch base and tell him how well I was doing with the lessons he taught me.... May he R.I.P. and my condolences go out to the family!

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**Robert Sullivan** - April 02, 2025 at 01:21 PM

GP

“ John was the love of my life. He was a kind and gentle soul...a gentleman's gentleman. His consideration for the planet was unbounded, focusing his life's work on sustainability. To that end, he built his sustainable, lovely home on Roan Mountain above Loveland, Colorado. We often sat on the deck, watching sunrises or sunsets or just enjoying the beauty that spread below us and on the surrounding mountains to either side of his home. Sometimes deer would graze on the natural grass in the front yard, or turkeys would peck at their reflection in the patio door off the dining room. There was a never ending medley of life which visited us.

When he was in the South Pacific, he delivered a baby to a Samoan woman because the medicine men of the village had gone to the aid of someone in another village. He was always ready to step up and help wherever he could.

He was taken, suddenly, unexpectedly. There was no hint of any issue as we ate dinner until his plate went skidding across the room and crashing to the floor. When I looked at him, I realized he was in trouble, called 911 and with the aid of the operator, performed CPR until the first responders arrived. They worked on him valiantly, but he never responded.

There will always be a hole in my heart for this sweet, loving man.  
Gail Powell

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**Gail Powell** - May 08, 2022 at 01:55 PM

TZ

John was and will always be a n important person in my lifes  
experience my best to you Gail

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**Thomas Zeiler** - March 03 at 12:28 PM

DM

“ I met John when we were both 12 years old in Lawrence, Kansas. Both sons of University biologists, we formed a connection which lasted more than 60 years. In high school we shared a locker, were in many of the same classes and spent numerous weekends at each other's houses and on biology field trips. At the University of Kansas we were both biology students. Sometimes we would study together at his place on the KU Natural History Reservation, where his father, Henry, was in charge. I remember an afternoon studying English Lit. with John, floating in a rowboat on the pond about a quarter mile from his house. It was idyllic.

I remember a field trip we took to Blue Rapids, an abandoned gypsum mine in NE Kansas. John had managed to secure a Natural History Museum field vehicle for the two of us. As we drove along a muddy road, not slowly, suddenly the hood of the carryall came unlatched and blew back against the window, rendering us blind. John was trying to wind down his window so he could put his head out to see while standing on the breaks. We stopped safely, shacking with adrenaline; John turned to me and said "Dan, will you please get out and close the hood".

John liked adventure, a little excitement was just his cup of tea. After university our lives diverged somewhat, but we had occasional visits and remained in contact until a couple of years ago. John's enthusiasm for conservation and preservation of the natural environment was evident in everything he said and did.

He will be missed.

Dan Michener

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Dan Michener - May 06, 2022 at 03:52 PM

GP

Dan, John told me of you and your "escapades" together. I know your loss of this very special soul is as great as mine.

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Gail L Powell - May 12, 2022 at 06:01 PM

RA

*Dear Gail, I met you once or twice when we all lived in Florida. John and I collaborated on a few student projects together. We moved back to Colorado the same summer you did (I live in Durango). I hadn't heard from John in a few years, so I decided to look him up and found his obituary. I'm very grateful for your post and for letting us all know his passing was so sudden. John was a wonderful mentor, and I sought advice from him when I encountered some difficult circumstances in my current post. He offered nonjudgemental sound advice, which was of great help. He was a kind soul, and will be greatly missed by many. My deepest condolences on your loss, despite this post being so late.*

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**Rebecca A.** - June 04, 2024 at 08:42 PM

JH

*“ John was a dynamic and wonderful man who had a generous spirit and presence. Although I had not met his father, I knew his father's legacy as a mammalogist and used the “Fitch Trap” in a number of projects in the PNW. My studies with the Fitch Trap created an instant connection with John. Shortly after John and I met he treated my wife and I to a wonderful dinner at his beautiful home, and he shared his passion for sustainability and conservation with us, which was so wonderfully displayed in his life and in his home and property. I feel fortunate to have had the chance to know John a bit, and my condolences go out to his family and friends.*

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**John Hayes** - May 03, 2022 at 02:34 PM

SF

*“ John was a man with an amazing passion for life and the earth. I knew him through a spirituality book group and visited his beautiful sustainable home several times. He was a force to be reckoned with. My deepest sympathy to his nearest and dearest Sue Ferguson*

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**Susan Ferguson** - May 03, 2022 at 09:00 AM

BD

“ John was full of knowledge, full of life, and full of hope for a more sustainable world. Prior to his retirement from Florida Gulf Coast University, John bought property above Redstone Canyon and asked if our sustainable design class at CSU could help him with design ideas, sustainable material choices, energy systems, etc. it turned out to be a great learning experience for John, the students, and the many who visited John’s special home. That experience allowed John and I to become good friends - he stayed at our house during construction (and during a fire evacuation) and became an eager board member of our Institute for the Built Environment at CSU. I’m so sorry to hear of John’s sudden passing - he had much more to give and to live for. The book he published about his sustainable house is one of the ways that John’s meaningful life will live on.  
Brian Dunbar

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**brian dunbar** - May 01, 2022 at 11:59 PM

BH

“ John was a delightful person who enjoyed sharing his experiences and insights into nature with our men's discussion group and during many informal lunches. Loved his mountain home and all its meaning. He greatly influenced my life and behavior. He made our lives and community better.

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**Bob Hoel** - May 01, 2022 at 03:20 PM



“ I met John a year and half ago through Gail who was my neighbor. He was always joyful, full of curiosity, interesting to talk about a variety of topics. His dedication to conservation and our planet were evident his lifestyle and book he wrote on building his energy efficient house and sustainability for our earth. My condolences to Gail and John’s family for your loss and love in your great memories of him.

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**Doug Houston** - April 29, 2022 at 10:47 PM



“ Ethan and I met John kayaking on the reservoir. He was such a kind, knowledgeable man. We spent time up at his house in Redstone canyon. He built that house and was so proud of it. He loved living in the middle of nature, watching the deer, coyotes and all the other critters up there. He loved kayaking the reservoir and biking. He truly was a kind and wonderful soul. You will be missed John.

Sue Gannett

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**Sue Gannett** - April 28, 2022 at 07:32 PM



“ John was a wonderful guy with a spirit and zest for life. We were friends and enjoyed walking and biking together. His favorite restaurant always cooked fish! That was always his favorite meal-fish. His home in the mountains was his pride and joy. We spent many evenings listening to the wind in the trees and admiring the view. He will be greatly missed!

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**Janet Kask** - April 28, 2022 at 05:26 PM



“ *I met John about a year and a half ago. He was such a wonderful, kind soul. The life that he led was so fascinating. I pray for his family to find peace. He will be truly missed in this world.*

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**Pam Hiss** - April 28, 2022 at 04:31 PM

TZ

*I was Johns chiropractor and we quickly became friends I always told him I was his eager student and he would respond and you have taught me many things we kayaked the horsetooth and ate BBQ salmon and later had a wee shot of makers mark he will be always in my memories. TZ DC*

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**T w zeiler** - April 20, 2025 at 08:20 PM