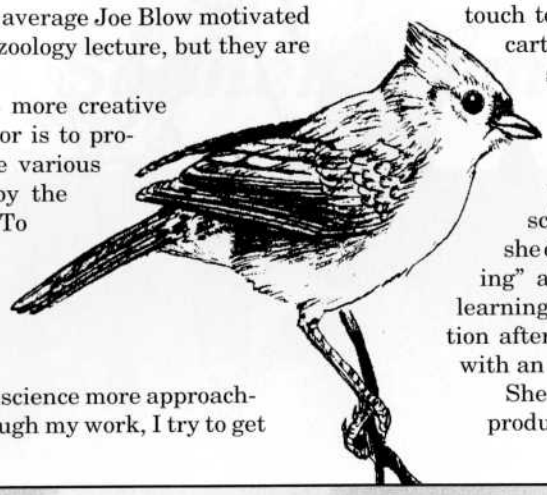
Her fliers might not get the average Joe Blow motivated enough to run out to the next zoology lecture, but they are bound to get his attention.

One of Coral McCallister's more creative "duties" as biological illustrator is to produce circulars advertising the various visiting lecturers presented by the OU department of zoology. To pique interest, her promotional pieces often feature whimsical critters uttering farcical, fantastical or otherwise humorous statements.



"One of my goals is to make science more approachable," says McCallister. "Through my work, I try to get away from (science) being a mystery."

McCallister, who spends the majority of her time doing more "serious" work for the department—producing slides, photographs and graphs and executing detailed illustrations and drawings—credits zoology professor Douglas Mock with giving her the idea to produce the cartoons. Mock asked McCallister to produce a series of cartoons illustrating certain behavioral characteristics of cattle egrets.

"At first, we wondered if the cartoons were academic enough," McCallister recalls. "But we found that they helped make understandable complex behaviors. The cartoons are a good way to visually represent something that really sticks with people." The cartoons, she notes, have been especially helpful when used to complement lectures delivered to non-English-speaking people, who may have problems catching all of the nuances of the English language.

The illustrator enjoys adding a personal touch to her cartoons. For instance, one recent cartoon featured a lab assistant wearing a T-shirt with a Grateful Dead theme.

McCallister has served the zoology department as biological illustrator for eight years. She originally came to OU with the intention of pursuing a degree in science, but after three years realized that she did not have the prerequisite "math-crunching" ability. She spent the next three years learning the graphic arts, taking her current position after receiving a bachelor of fine arts degree with an emphasis on design.

She currently spends about half of her time producing graphs, a quarter on slides and photographs, and the remainder on illustrations. One of her "odd jobs" is teaching undergraduates to use the darkroom.

While enjoying the diversity, she admits that the drawing and illustrating "keep me going.

"I try to make this job one that grows with me," McCallister says. "Before I came, this was a high-turnover position." She is grateful that her boss, zoology chair James Thompson, supports her efforts to expand the job.

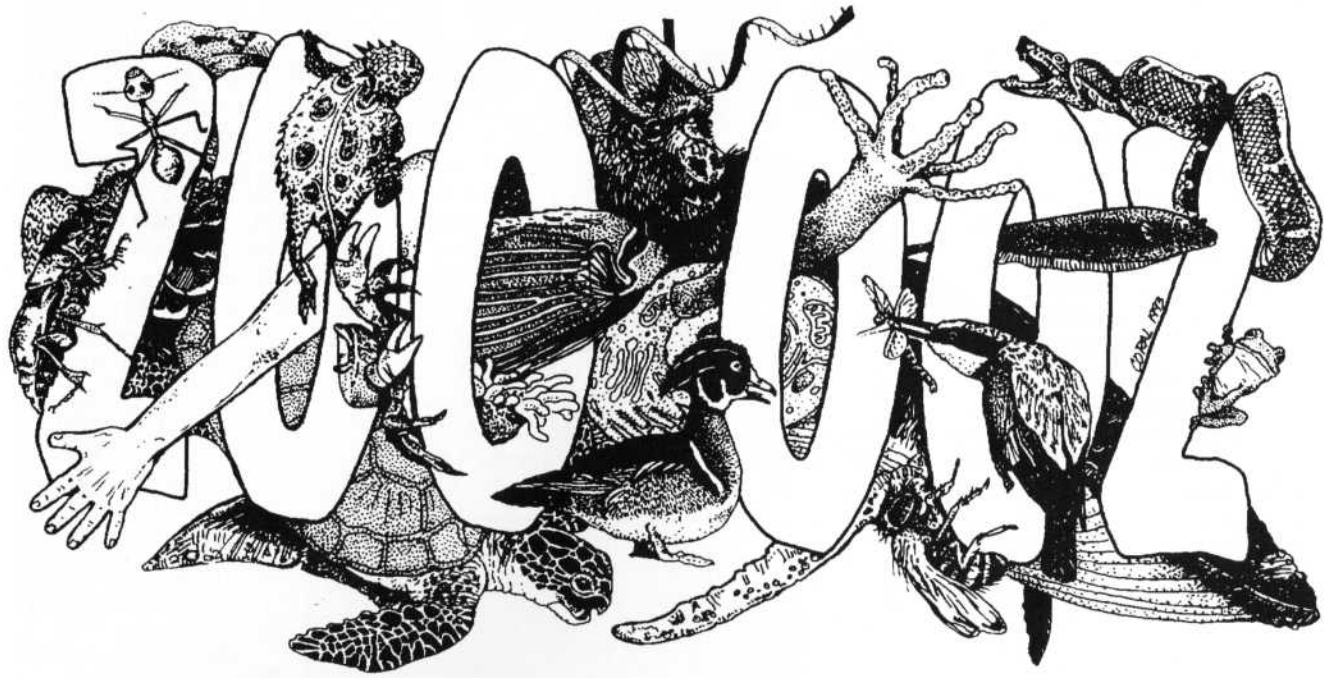
McCallister credits her background in the sciences for her ability to execute the intricately detailed illustrations she is called upon to produce. She particularly loves to draw or illustrate birds, but also enjoys illustrating other animals, as well as insects, bones and skeletons, etc.

For her more serious and technical tasks, McCallister conducts extensive research, turning to the faculty for their expertise as well.

McCallister uses a variety of media to pro-

Gil Jain

As a biological illustrator, Coral McCallister combines her scientific background with artistic talent to produce both "serious" work for the zoology department and more whimsical promotional cartoons.



At first Coral McCallister wondered if her scientific cartoons were academic enough, but she found that their lasting impression helped make complex behaviors more understandable.

duce her drawings, illustrations, graphs and other assignments. Some of her work is done with pencil, which she likes because it produces subtle tones, however, because it copies better, she more frequently uses pen and ink.

A calligraphy pen is one of her favorite tools, but of course, she also utilizes more state-of-the-art equipment. McCallister has two computers—both MacIntoshes—and a scanner. Although she has access to several graphic software programs, her favorite is CANVAS, which she says users call "the Swiss Army knife" program for graphic artists because of its versatility.

Her artistic interests also find expression outside of her job. She enjoys working with clay and volunteering at Norman's Firehouse Art Center, where she has taken clay and Bonsai classes.

McCallister and her husband, Rood, four dogs and two ferrets live on a 20-acre tract of land "in the country." She enjoys reading, gardening, walking and "living life" and derives special pleasure from the day trips she and Rood take around the state. "I like to look at lichens and mosses," she says, noting that she often takes samples and tries to grow them in her yard.

McCallister is not the only creative member of her family. Two of her brothers—one of whom is a taxidermist—enjoy wood carving, while another brother dabbles in clay and tapestry. Her mother, Betty, who is assistant to the director of the OU School of Meteorology, is a seamstress. Her father, retired from the Merrick Computing Center at OU, works with wood and is "into home-improvement things."

One cannot help but wonder what career path McCallister might have taken had she been more satisfied with her "math-crunching" abilities. But one thing is certain: there would be fewer smiles across the campus. And if, through her humorous approach, she makes science more approachable for even one individual, she has accomplished quite a lot.

—JERRI CULPEPPER