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In Memoriam: Daniel Lee Marsh, 1933-2010



Dr. Dan Marsh, who spent his academic career working as a botanist in the Department of Biology at Henderson State University (HSU), was active in attending the annual meetings of the Arkansas Academy of Science, and was a Sustaining Member of the Academy. He regularly brought his students to those meetings to present results of their undergraduate research. Especially in the last decade preceding his retirement, Dan took several of his students to Academy meetings, where they presented their research and published in the journal.

Marsh was born 2 June 1933 in Jonesboro, AR. He entered higher education at Arkansas State College (ASC, now University, ASU), but as a freshman he was not sure whether to major in Biology or English. One of his professors, Delzie DeMaree (a botanist), suggested that he walk the perimeter of Arkansas to figure it out. In 1954, he made the 1,200 mile trek in 94 days, and newspaper articles even chronicled the journey. Studying nature along the way, he returned to school and began his development as a botanist.

Earning his B.S. degree at ASC in 1956, Dan next attended the University of Kansas, where he completed a study of *Phlox* as part of his M.A. program in 1958. He taught at Yellville High School for a few years, and during that time Dan was active in other enterprises including involvement with the Boy Scouts and service as a Red Cross swimming instructor and lifesaver. He also enjoyed cave exploration, and was part of several rescue missions for trapped spelunkers.

Dan began his doctoral work in 1965 at the University of Arkansas (UA). He completed his Ph.D. in 1977, having focused his research on cane (*Arundinaria gigantea*). Cane tends to grow clonally, and may go many years without blooming, so it is rare, even for botanists, to see the bloom of the plant. Among his colleagues, it is well-known that Dan was able to find cane in flower many times and at many locations across the state.

In 1968, well before the completion of his Ph.D., Dan had begun teaching at HSU. Developing a research collection of plant specimens, he curated his growing HSU Herbarium well, and eventually it achieved acclaim as one of the most active herbaria in the state.

During his professional career, Dan became very interested in bryophytes. Because they have no vascular tissue and lie close to the ground, he called his endeavors “belly botany”. Bryophytes often do well in cemeteries, so Dan often could be found, with students and colleagues, prostrate on the ground in a cemetery. Police patrols sometimes stopped to evaluate his objectives.

Dr. Marsh was a member of the Arkansas Native Plant Society, and also of the Arkansas Vascular Flora Committee, which published the “Checklist of the Vascular Plants of Arkansas” in 2006. He was a co-author, with several of his students, on over a dozen papers in the Journal of the Arkansas Academy of Science as well as other journals.

Having retired in 2000, after a career spanning 32 years, Dr. Marsh died 26 July 2010, at the age of 77. He is survived by his former wife, a daughter, a son, and a “god-son” and his wife and their offspring. His academic legacy will be remembered due to his impact on the biology program at Henderson State University, the Academy, the state of botanical knowledge in Arkansas, and the careers of his students.

One of his former students recently named a new species of bryophyte in his honor (*Fossombronia marshii*, published in *Phytologia*).

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