

Miscellanea

Reviews

A Lifetime of Contributions to Myriapodology and the Natural History of Virginia: A Festschrift in Honor of Richard L. Hoffman's 80th Birthday. Steven M. Roble & Joseph C. Mitchell (editors). 2009. Special Publication Number 16, Virginia Museum of Natural History, Martinsville, VA. Pp. i-xvi, 1-458. ISBN: 1-884549-31-4. \$76.00, plus shipping. Available at: <http://www.vmnh.net/store.cfm?itemID=97>

Dr. Richard L. Hoffman has devoted much of his life to the study of the natural history of Virginia and the southern Appalachians, while simultaneously establishing himself as a leading authority of the world's milliped fauna. Since 1944, he published more than 485 scholarly papers and books, and over 50 popular articles on a mind-boggling array of taxa, including millipeds, amphibians, reptiles, worms, mollusks, arachnids, beetles, and true bugs. During his incredibly productive career, Dr. Hoffman has described more than 600 new taxa. Nearly 50 taxa have been described in his honor in recognition of his prodigious work and broad contributions as a scientist, teacher, mentor, editor, curator, and conservationist.

Given this exemplary record of scholarship, it was no surprise that a symposium was organized to celebrate Dr. Hoffman's life and work on the occasion of his 80th birthday. An event entitled "A Lifetime of Contributions to Myriapodology and the Natural History of Virginia. A Symposium in Honor of Richard L. Hoffman's 80th Birthday" was co-organized by Steve Roble, Joe Mitchell, and Nick Fraser at the Virginia Museum of Natural History in Martinsville on September 21-22, 2007. The symposium was co-sponsored by the Virginia Museum of Natural History, Virginia Natural History Society, and Patrick Henry Community College. The Virginia Herpetological Society and its founder, Franklin Tobey, provided additional funding for the event. Approximately 90 colleagues, friends, and family attended the reception, symposium, and banquet.

Many of the papers presented at the symposium became the foundation for the volume entitled "A Lifetime of Contributions to Myriapodology and the Natural History of Virginia: A Festschrift in Honor of Richard L. Hoffman's 80th Birthday," published as a Special Publication of the Virginia Museum of Natural History. The Hoffman Festschrift is handsomely bound, printed on heavy glossy paper, and richly illustrated with detailed maps, tables, line drawings, black and white photographs, and three color plates that include a

fine portrait of the Festschrift's honoree, Dr. Richard L. Hoffman.

The Hoffman Festschrift is a collection of 32 papers rendered by 41 authors living on four continents. It is divided into seven parts, including introduction and biography, herpetology, myriapodology, crustacean biology, entomology, miscellaneous (paleontology, phytogeography), abstracts of symposium presentations, and appendices. The cumulative breadth of taxonomic topics presented in these articles is a direct reflection of Dr. Hoffman's own broad taxonomic interests. Descriptions are presented for one new genus and 32 new species, 11 of which are named in honor of Dr. Hoffman. Several of these species occupy highly threatened habitats and are potentially threatened with extinction. As an entomologist, the papers dealing with Virginia invertebrates were of the greatest professional interest, especially the three entomological contributions that touch on Virginia's beetle fauna.

There is a strong biographical component of the Festschrift that brings Dr. Hoffman's achievements as a scientist, educator, and mentor into sharp focus. The most compelling biographical article was written by one of the Festschrift's editors, Steve Roble. "Richard Lawrence Hoffman: A Biography and Review of his Contributions to Natural History, with Particular Reference to the Fauna of Virginia" sets the standard for future biographies of prominent biologists in Virginia and beyond. Roble's relentless pursuit of all things Hoffman is nothing short of impressive. Beginning with Hoffman's years as a nascent naturalist in Clifton Forge, Roble highlights the young man's early family life and influences, and traces his academic pursuits from the halls of the University of Virginia, Cornell University, and Virginia Tech to the Virginia Museum of Natural History.

Festschrift co-editor, Joseph Mitchell, follows up Roble's detailed biography with a more specialized contribution that focuses on Dr. Hoffman's contributions to Virginia herpetology. Mitchell notes that Hoffman "... was a herpetologist first and myriapodologist second" and has to his credit more than 60 herpetological publications that offer up taxonomic contributions on and biogeographic analyses of lizards and salamanders, as well as contributions to their conservation. William Shear and Pietra Sierwald each present summaries of Hoffman's contributions to myriapodology.

Papers that were presented at the symposium, but not included as full manuscripts in the Festschrift, appear in the abstracts section. The appendices include excerpts from Dr. Hoffman's weekly nature columns

“Do You Know?” These interesting and well-written essays were penned when the author was only 16 years old. They appeared during the summer and fall of 1944 in “The Daily News” published in Clifton Forge, Virginia. The remaining appendices not only provide insights into Dr. Hoffman and his work as seen through the popular press at different points of his career, but also a whimsical taxonomic description of the man himself.

The breadth and depth of the scientific content of the Hoffman Festschrift has secured its place among the important works on Virginia natural history. The vibrant biographical aspects of the work will also appeal to many who consider themselves fans of Dr. Hoffman as a scientist, naturalist, and teacher. I heartily congratulate the Festschrift’s editors, VMNH publications editor Jessica Davenport, and each of the work’s 41 contributors for pooling their talents to create a stunning and informative publication worthy of Dr. Hoffman and his life of scholarly achievement.

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