

## Charles Congden Carpenter

### Oklahoma Scientist of the Year

#### An eminent naturalist and herpetologist from Oklahoma

Recognition of Dr. Charles Congden Carpenter as the Oklahoma Academy of Science's 1991 Scientist of the year adds to his impressive list of honors. These previous honors include being the first W. Frank Blair Eminent Naturalist Awardee of the Southwestern Association of Naturalists, receiving the Distinguished Alumni Award from his undergraduate school, Northern Michigan University, in 1972, and receiving the Regents' Award for Superior Accomplishment in Research and Creative Activity for the University of Oklahoma in 1980.

Charles was born in Denison, Iowa on June 2, 1921. He received a B.A. degree in 1943 from Northern Michigan College of Education, now Northern Michigan University, in Marquette, MI. He was a laboratory assistant in zoology. Then he took an Army Specialized Training Program at Tarleton State College in Stephenville, TX, 1943-44; at Stanford University in Palo Alto, CA, 1944; and at Wayne University College of Medicine in Detroit, MI, 1945.

His M.S., received in 1947 from the University of Michigan, was in zoology wherein he served as a teaching assistant. The Ph.D. in zoology was awarded in 1951 by the same institution. He remained at Michigan in 1951-52 as an instructor in zoology, and then became an assistant professor in zoology at the University of Oklahoma in 1953. In 1959 he was promoted to associate professor and became a full professor in 1966. His title was Professor of Zoology at the University of Oklahoma and the Oklahoma Biological Station, and Curator of reptiles and amphibians at the Stovall Museum of Science and History. On the last day of 1987 he retired and became Professor Emeritus and Curator Emeritus.

Dr. Carpenter joined the Oklahoma Academy of Science in 1953 and was elected a Fellow in 1958. For Section A he was vice-chairman in 1954-55 and chairman in 1955-56. In 1969 he served as President-elect and became President in 1970. He served on numerous committees and led many field trips.

Charles has been a member and an officer of a large number of organizations, to wit: American Institute of Biological Sciences; American Ornithologists Union; American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists; American Society of Mammalogists; American Society of Zoologists, division secretary; Animal Behavior Society, secretary; Animal Research Council of the Oklahoma City Zoo, secretary and executive committee; Blue Cord Society, secretary and president; British Ecological Society; Charles Darwin Foundation for the Galapagos Islands; Ecological Society of America, section secretary; Grassland Research Foundation, secretary, treasurer, and board of directors; Herpetologist's League, president and executive council; Nature Conservancy; Oklahoma Academy of Science, listed above; Oklahoma Herpetological Society; Oklahoma Zoological Society; Oklahoma Wildlife Federation; Phi Kappa Phi; Phi Sigma; Societas Europaea Herpetologica; Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles, editorial board; Southwestern Association of Naturalists, board of governors, secretary, and president; Society of Sigma Xi, OU chapter president; Wilderness Society, Wildlife Society; and Wilson Ornithological Society. What an outstanding record of service to science!

In 1947 he married Mary Frances Pitynski and they had three children: Janet



Eleanor, Caryn Sue (Vaughn), and Geoffrey Congden. Mary was a member of the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation and an adjunct professor of biochemistry at the University of Oklahoma Health Science Center in Oklahoma City. She is a member of the American Society of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology and the American Institute of Nutrition. Her research interests include: lipids, antioxidants, prostaglandin metabolism during differentiation, fatty acid metabolism, and microsomal hydroxylation. This successful marriage makes a point that I hope is never lost to the members of the Oklahoma Academy of Science. Both classical field sciences and molecular sciences are required to elucidate the full story about a biological topic. With the fashion craze of molecular biology many have forgotten or never appreciated this point. Charles and Mary attest to the power of such a union.

He has published 136 papers on subjects as diverse as: copulation in the fox snake, the common garter snake, time-motion studies of a lizard, turkey vulture migration in Veracruz, a combat ritual between two male speckled king snakes, and courtship, male combat and dominance in the western diamondback rattlesnake. There have been 214 special lectures and seminars, and he has made 32 appearances on radio and television. The meeting research papers presented number 125. Dr. Carpenter has communicated. His field work has included 16 expeditions.

In addition to teaching for 35 summers at the University of Oklahoma Biological Station on Lake Texoma Charles has taught: general zoology, zoology II, comparative anatomy, vertebrate embryology, human anatomy, anatomy and physiology, bioecology, animal ecology, animal kingdom vertebrates, zoogeography, animal behavior, and ethoecology. This diverse catalog of courses taught attests to his breadth of knowledge. Charles directed 26 Ph.D. students, 21 M.S. students, and 3 M.N.S. students.

Charles Congden Carpenter has made monumental contributions to biology and science in Oklahoma — just look at the abbreviated list of accomplishments cited above. Yes, he is an outstanding scientist and richly deserves the Outstanding Scientist Award from the Oklahoma Academy of Science. Happy snake hooping, tongue sticking out, or whatever herpetologists do. I am sure that you won't hibernate.



Drawn by Ms. Coral McCallister