

Forward

Several years ago a small group of members of the Oklahoma Native Plant Society, interested in fungi, initiated its Mycological Chapter. The debate which accompanied the chapter's formation naturally centered on the fact that fungi are just not plants, even if they had historically been studied by botanists. In the end most realized that if we did not give the fledgling group a place in the Society, mycological studies in Oklahoma might forever continue to be inadequately addressed in the natural sciences.

For the past several years Dr. Clark Ovrebo has served as chair of the Mycological Chapter and has contributed articles regarding fungi, including one in this volume as well. *The Oklahoma Native Plant Record* is proud to deliver these articles to those who would study fungi in Oklahoma and to those whose interests in fungi might be stimulated toward further investigation.

In another effort to spawn more interest in these under-studied taxa, we present in this volume the first, and until recently the only, major study of lichen distribution in Oklahoma. Lichens, being a dual organism of a fungal base with algal and/or bacterial photobionts, offer the biologist a unique perspective on ecosystem dynamics and evolution. Lichens deserve a more thorough study and this seminal article is the requisite for their study in Oklahoma.

The author of *The Lichens of North Central Oklahoma*, Darvin Wendell Keck was born at Willis, Oklahoma in 1926. After serving in the Army from 1944 to 1946 and before receiving his Ph.D., he taught four years in secondary schools and eight years in higher education. He received his Bachelor of Science, Master of Science and Ph.D. degrees from Oklahoma State University. After receiving his doctorate he accepted a teaching position at Oklahoma Christian University where he was the first inductee of the Science and Engineering Hall of Honor and was awarded many other honors including the Gaylord Chair of Distinguished Teaching and the Master Teacher Award. He was the Chairman of the Division of Science for 15 years before retiring in 1989.

Keck became interested in Oklahoma lichens while taking a course in lichenology at the University of Michigan Biological Station in the summer of 1958. The teacher, Dr. Howard Crum, pointed out that very little work had been done in Oklahoma and in most of the surrounding states, and encouraged him to pursue a study of this type. The primary purpose of his study was to collect and identify lichens in an 11-county area of North Central Oklahoma. Secondary aims were to analyze ecological relationships and to establish a record of species distribution for each county. Difficulties encountered included the lack of sufficient up-to-date literature, particularly family and generic monographs, and the lack of herbarium specimens for reference. Since no herbarium specimens were available at OSU, the author sent most of the foliose specimens to Mason E. Hale, Jr. at the Smithsonian Institution for verification. He also spent several days at the University of Colorado studying with Sam Shushan and William Weber, while making use of the excellent herbarium facilities there.

National Science Foundation provided the research grant. Dr. John E. Thomas served as thesis adviser and Chairman of the Graduate Committee, and Drs. Walter W. Hansen, George Moore, Glenn Todd, and U.T. Waterfall were members.

Darvin Keck is retired and currently resides in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.