

Rev Ronald R. Hooper (1931-2010)

Rev Ronald R. Hooper passed away, at the age of 79 years, on 2 December 2010 in Tijuana, Mexico, where he was seeking an alternative treatment for cancer. Ron was born on 28 April 1931 in the Caragana Red Cross Outpost Hospital in Saskatchewan. He was predeceased by his parents, Eli and Clara Belle Hooper, his brother Dayle and twin brother, Donald.



Ron was one of the most notable amateur entomologists in Saskatchewan. Ron attended Souchez Rural School and completed his high school education in Weekes. His vast entomological knowledge came from an eagerness to learn about the world around him. Ron and his brother, Don, took an early interest in nature. Around 1950, they started collecting insects and plants, and took a taxidermy course through correspondence. To further their taxidermy skills, they came to the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History [now called the Royal Saskatchewan Museum (RSM)] in 1953 and tutored under Fred Lahrman. Ron started his association with the museum when, in July 1964, he went on a field trip to Stony Rapids in northern Saskatchewan. He was asked by the museum director, Fred Bard, to mount the insect specimens that were collected on that trip. That was the beginning of a long-term relationship with the museum, 46 years to be exact. That field trip in 1964 was the first of over 60 field trips that Ron conducted for the museum. It was also the beginning of the provincial collection of insects. Under Ron's efforts, the collection at the RSM expanded to over 100,000 specimens.

Ron retired at the RSM in 1996 but continued to work tirelessly as either a volunteer or under contract until his passing. His two main areas of expertise were the Lepidoptera and Coleoptera. Over the years, Ron had many accomplishments. He is credited for several new insect species records for Saskatchewan including the first Mexican Sulphur (*Erema mexicana*) and a new ground beetle, *Bembidion lanciphotoides*. Ron is also credited with finding the first *Simius Roadside Skipper*, *Amblyscirtes simius*, in Canada on 27 June 1968. In 1973, Ron's keen interest in butterflies resulted in his 216-page publication, *Butterflies of Saskatchewan: A Field Guide*. He contributed numerous articles for Nature Saskatchewan's publication, *Blue Jay*, which included an 18-part series entitled "A check-list of the moths of Saskatchewan" and he also wrote the second supplement to Manley Callin's *Birds of the Qu'Appelle Valley* (*Blue Jay* 60:64-74, June 2002). Over the years, Ron contributed many articles to the Entomological Society of Saskatchewan (ESS) Newsletter with records of new species for Saskatchewan, providing the dates, locations and other significant data for these records. Ron was also a major contributor to the entomological information contained in the revamped Life Sciences Gallery at the RSM.

Ron was an all-round naturalist and took a keen interest in not only insects but all flora and fauna. From 1951 to 1953, within a 24-km radius of their farm near Somme, Ron and his twin brother had identified 198 species of birds, found nests of 80 bird species and flightless young of another 8. In 1954, when their list had grown to over 206 species, they published an article entitled "A preliminary list of the birds of the Somme area" (Contribution 3, Yorkton Natural History Society, 13 pages). Ron also was very knowledgeable on identifying numerous plant species in the province. He convened the Fort Qu'Appelle Christmas Bird Count each year and initiated the North American Butterfly Association's Fourth of July butterfly counts for the Fort Qu'Appelle and Regina areas.

Ron held many positions and worked on many committees. Some of these included serving as an associate editor of *Blue Jay*. Ron served as President of the Fort Qu'Appelle Natural History Society for 21 years, from its foundation in 1984 till 2009, except for the years 1995-1998. He was part of a team that conducted a Bioinventory of the Wildcat Hills Wilderness Area in the Pasquia Hills of east central Saskatchewan. Ron was one of the founding members of the Lepidopterans and Molluscs SSC (Species Specialist Group) that advised the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC). He joined this SSC in 1995 and served until 2007. Ron served as President of the ESS in 1979.

Ron has been recognized for his many contributions in the field of natural history. These include being made a Fellow of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society in 1992. In 1983, the Entomological Society of Canada awarded Ron the Norman J. Criddle award which recognizes the contributions to entomology in Canada by an amateur. This award was presented by Dr George Ball (University of Alberta) to whom Ron sent many beetles for identification over the years. (Apparently, Ron would occasionally return a specimen to George questioning the identification and, often as not, Ron was correct!) To further recognize his contributions, the RSM will be naming the museum's entomology collection in honour of Ron.

Ron's other passion besides entomology was that of preaching. He was ordained in 1959. Until his death, Ron served the Apostolic Church in Punnichy and Fort Qu'Appelle, conducting services, bible studies and tent meetings for First Nations people. He married Barbara Clements on 8 June 1963 and together they travelled to many First Nations communities in Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

Ron is survived by his wife, Barbara, son John and daughter Esther, all of Fort Qu'Appelle, and his son David (Vicki) Hooper and their family Alicia and Jesse in the United Arab Emirates. I had the honour and privilege to know and work with Ron for almost 40 years. He was always eager and willing to share his knowledge with anyone who was willing to listen and learn. Rev Ron Hooper was Saskatchewan's last self-taught, all-round naturalist. His energy and drive to learn about the world around him was infectious. He was a very special and unique individual whose vast knowledge will be greatly missed.

– Keith Roney (Regina) with contributions by Dr. Stuart Houston (Saskatoon).

This is a revised version of the obituary published in *Blue Jay* (Volume 69[1]: 44-46 [2011]). We thank Nature Saskatchewan and the editors of *Blue Jay* for allowing us to use this material.