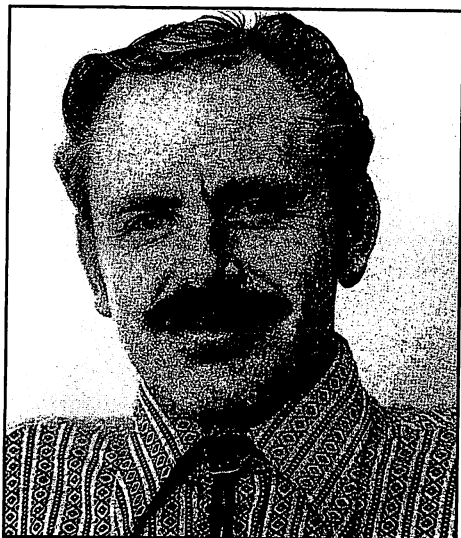


## IN MEMORIAM: RONALD J. TAYLOR, 1932-1998



**Ronald J. Taylor**, Professor of Biology Emeritus at Western Washington University, passed away on 16 August 1998 at his home in Bellingham, Washington. Ron was diagnosed with cancer in early 1997, and he made heroic efforts to win this battle for his life. Ron held much optimism in the cancer treatments, and with his wife Gloria providing loving attention and encouragement he was able to live beyond the estimates of the medical professionals. Ron was born in Victor, Idaho on 16 October 1932 and grew up on a ranch in the foothills of the Teton Mountains and the Snake River where his interest in the natural world developed. Ron obtained a B.S. degree (1954) in conservation at Idaho State University, then became an officer and pilot (1954-1959) in the Air Force; he later earned the M.S. degree

(1960) in botany at the University of Wyoming and Ph.D. (1964) in botany and genetics at Washington State University. Ron joined the Biology Department at Western Washington University in 1964 and taught general biology, evolution and botany classes until his retirement in 1992. He was Chairman of the Biology Department from 1984 to 1992.

Ron was completely dedicated to his family and to his profession. The teaching of biology to undergraduate and graduate students was of the highest priority, and he took particular satisfaction in the fifteen graduate students who completed M.S. degrees in biology under his guidance at WWU. Considering the influence that his students now have in promoting environmental education and conservation biology in the Pacific Northwest, this legacy continues Ron's commitment to the protection of wildlife and their habitats. Ron was instrumental in the development of several conservation management habitats: Sehome Hill Arboretum on the WWU campus, the Beaver Creek Natural Resources Conservation Area on the outskirts of Bellingham, and other more distant sites like subalpine meadows on Chowder Ridge (Mt. Baker) and Chopaka Peak (Okanogan Highlands). Ron's research interest resulted in 46 scientific articles, and he also published six popular field guides to plants. The last book, completed during his illness, is "Desert Wildflowers of North America" (1998) and includes the Mojave, Sonoran, Painted, Chihuahuan, and Great Basin Deserts. Ron was a skilled nature photographer and his vast collection of slides (used in classroom lectures or public meetings, and to illustrate the field guides) has been donated to the Biology Department Herbarium at Western Washington University.

Ron loved the beauty and serenity of sagebrush country and those magnificent mountains that protect his favorite retreat, the subalpine flower gardens. These were the wild places that attracted this systematic biologist, and he would fondly devote much time and effort to study the evolution and reproductive strategy of montane and subalpine plants. We traveled together

on many hiking trails in the North Cascades and the slopes of Mt. Baker, and I see him now in the heather meadows of Yellow Aster Butte with his camera focused on a grape fern or climbing a steep cliff above Skyline Divide to reach the meadows of Chowder Ridge and then collecting samples of sedges requested by a colleague in Colorado. He was able to share this combination of rigorous science and appreciation of nature during numerous fieldtrips with many civic and conservation oriented groups like the Washington Native Plant Society, North Cascades Institute, Audubon Society, Nature Conservancy, and the American Rock Garden Society. He was particularly proud of his long time membership in the Northwest Scientific Association and their award to him of Honary Lifetime Member because of his valuable contributions to biological education, research and conservation in the Pacific Northwest.

In his retirement years Ron developed a keen appreciation of birds, and his backyard provided a glorious garden of trees, shrubs, and flowers with a beautiful pond that attracted a large assortment of bird species. He and his wife Gloria would sit on the porch or living room with binoculars in hand and find enormous enjoyment in the lively antics of this avian assemblage.

Ron was very independent, and sometimes competitive, but he also was kind and humorous. We will always remember his talent at whistling a tune while he strode down the hall or even performing a song with great skill and enthusiasm in the company of close friends, and who can forget those delicious pancakes covered with chokecherry syrup that he would always share during camping trips to sagebrush country. Ronald J. Taylor had a remarkable life, and as he concludes in his personal autobiography "It has been a good life at the best of times!" It has been a privilege for all of us to share this great adventure and know this gifted and talented man.

Herbert Brown  
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