



O. Ray Jordan: Winner of the 2022 Tennessee Herpetological Society Bob Hatcher Conservation Award

O. Ray Jordan completed a Master of Science degree at the University of Arkansas in 1962 and became a faculty member in the Department of Biology at Tennessee Tech University in 1965. He served in this role for 44 years until his retirement from academia in 2009. He taught a variety of courses including Herpetology, Ornithology, Comparative Anatomy, and several freshman-level classes for majors and non-majors. He was well known as an understanding and passionate instructor, and he was very popular with students and faculty at TN Tech. During Ray's time teaching Herpetology, his students contributed hundreds of specimens to the TN Tech Herpetology collection. Most of these were collected in the 1960's and 70's. These efforts provided countless opportunities for TN Tech students to explore the habitats of the upper Cumberland and surrounding areas, learning the herpetofauna of Tennessee in the process. Importantly, 280 of these specimens were examined by Dr. Floyd Scott of Austin Peay State University during the 1990's and their data were accessioned into the David H. Snyder Museum of Zoology and used in the creation of

the Tennessee Amphibian and Reptile Atlases. As a result, many of these specimens became vouchers for county records in Tennessee.

Ray served as the advisor for 11 graduate students at Tech, and most of them studied various aspects of amphibian or reptile ecology, including work with copperheads, Ambystomatid salamanders, green anoles, as well as various projects of community structure, habitat variation, biodiversity and abundance of herpetofauna on important public lands such as the Arnold Airforce Base and Cherokee National Forest. His breadth of knowledge concerning biology was well known and respected and he often served on committees for students studying diverse taxa. His own work occasionally ventured outside the realm of herpetology as best exemplified by his involvement in the restoration program of Bald Eagles in Tennessee during the late 1980s and early 1990s. In particular, he was instrumental in creating the restoration plan for Bald Eagles at Dale Hollow Lake.

Ray enthusiastically participated in education and outreach efforts outside of the university. He established a live animal collection of reptiles and amphibians at TN Tech, and used these animals extensively for education and to advocate for the conservation of Tennessee's herpetofauna. This live collection is still heavily used today in teaching, research, and outreach efforts by existing faculty and students of the Tennessee Tech Biology Department; thus, it is impossible to recount the number of people, of all ages, who have benefited from the use of these animals. Ray readily accepted invitations to display the animals and to educate the public about their importance at public events across Middle Tennessee. In addition to 3-5 formal presentations per year at special events at the university and local state parks, Ray frequently visited local schools. His presentations were entertaining, as well as educational, and he was well known throughout the Upper Cumberland as the "snake man". Ray also led wild flower walks

at several events, and a section hiking trail at Standing Stone State Park is named in his honor.

Ray was actively involved in service at Tennessee Tech and received the Outstanding Service Award at the University during his tenure. He served on numerous university committees including the Faculty Senate, Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, and the Teacher Education Committee. He also served as the faculty advisor of the Beta Beta Beta Biology Honors Society. Ray was passionate about education at all levels, and he served as Tech's Representative on the Tennessee Education Association for many years. He also was actively involved in community service and was a member of the Board of Directors of the Putnam County Clean Commission and the Cookeville's Lion's Club for several years, as well as a number of other civic organizations.

Finally, Ray was a charter-founding member of the Tennessee Herpetological Society, and he was actively involved in the organization throughout his career, serving as an officer on several occasions. In fact, Ray was instrumental in the creation of the Chadwick Lewis Memorial Award which has supported the research of more

than a dozen students conducting research on Tennessee's herpetofauna since its inception in 2010. Chadwick Lewis completed his master's degree at TN Tech with Ray Jordan serving as his thesis advisor. Under Ray's leadership, Chad conducted a study of seasonal and elevational distributions of plethodontid salamanders on Unaka Mountain in Cherokee National Forest.

O. Ray Jordan is an excellent candidate for the Bob Hatcher Award because his career exemplified in teaching, research, and service a lifetime commitment to the study and conservation of Tennessee's reptiles and amphibians. His greatest contribution to the conservation of Tennessee's herpetofauna is probably his tremendous effort to educate students and the public about reptiles and amphibians with his coursework, specimen collection, and outreach efforts. He established a legacy of excellence in herpetological education at TN Tech that continues to this day and will certainly do so for decades to come.

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