

Remembering Paul B. Kannowski



I am saddened to report that Dr. Paul Kannowski passed away 3 September 2015, succumbing to cancer. He was 88. A native of Grand Forks, Paul attended the University of North Dakota for his B.S. and M.S. degrees, and the University of Michigan for his Ph.D. He joined the University of North Dakota Biology Department in 1957, retiring in 1990 after 33 years of service.

Paul chaired UND's Biology Department twice, totaling 13 years, considered to be a remarkable achievement by many of us who have been exposed to that task! His leadership was instrumental in the nearly exponential growth of our department's faculty and student enrollment, including its new Fishery and Wildlife program.

When I arrived at UND as a job applicant in 1961, one of my first introductions was to Paul Kannowski, who promptly took me out to see nearby Oakville Prairie, one of the few remnants of native tallgrass prairie in the Red River Valley, and the primary site of his research. Largely through his efforts and leadership, researchers from UND and other institutions have produced a prodigious amount of published research on this native tallgrass prairie. Oakville Prairie is the only station in the northern Great Plains to receive recognition for its research potential by the White House Council on Environmental Quality. In September, 2015, it was granted "Important Birding Area" status by the Audubon Society.

Paul's research interest focused on the ecology and behavior of ants, primarily at Oakville Prairie. However, he was a broad-based naturalist in every sense, with publications on other insect groups and a wide variety of technical reports through UND's Institute for Ecological Studies. He developed a strong interest in wildflowers, and wrote two books on the wildflowers and grasses of North Dakota.

In addition to his departmental activities and research, Paul had two other professional loves – the North Dakota/Great Plains Natural Science Society and UND's Institute for Ecological Studies. He was a founder of the North Dakota Natural Science Society, and strongly supported its transition to its "Great Plains" successor. In the earliest days of the society, Paul urged the establishment of a new journal, "The Prairie Naturalist." Many members were skeptical that such a small society could support its own journal, but he was right, it survived and continues into its 46th year. He volunteered as editor, continuing to maintain its professional standards for 27 years. Paul also founded UND's Institute for Ecological Studies, a forum for research and discussion of North Dakota's environmental issues. How often does a faculty member manage to chair a department, conduct research and teaching, direct an institute, and edit a professional journal, all during the same time frame?

In addition to the Great Plains Natural Science Society, Paul held memberships in the Entomological Society of America, North Dakota Academy of Science, The Nature Conservancy, and the American Society of Zoologists. His honors included a Senior Postdoctoral Fellowship of the National Science Foundation, the Award for Outstanding Scientific Research from the UND Chapter of Sigma Xi, and the Professional Award from the Central Mountains and Plains Section of The Wildlife Society. He was elected a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and of the Explorers Club.

Paul was a very good friend and valued colleague. He will be sorely missed.

Robert Seabloom