

News

From the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission

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News Release

TIRELESS RESEARCHER OF BUTTERFLIES, MOTHS WINS 2004 BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY PROTECTION AWARD *Dr. Charles Covell built UofL collection*

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Dec. 8, 2004) – Dr. Charles Covell, who became an international expert on butterflies and moths in 40 years at the University of Louisville, has won the 2004 Biological Diversity Protection Award from the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission.

The award is given annually to an individual who has made a significant contribution to the protection of Kentucky's biological resources.

Covell retired this year from the university's biology faculty. He now is curator of macromoths at the McGuire Center for Lepidoptera Research in Gainesville, Fla.

The commission's award is a framed print of a James Archambeault photo of Bad Branch Falls in the Bad Branch State Nature Preserve in Letcher County. The award was presented at a recent meeting of the Society of Kentucky Lepidopterists, of which Covell was a founding member.

Covell came to the University of Louisville in 1964 as an entomologist and immediately began to inventory Kentucky's butterflies and moths. The university's insect collection contained 28,000 specimens at the time. Covell built the collection to 250,000 specimens, with Lepidoptera – butterflies and moths – comprising about 50 percent.

Covell's enthusiasm for moths was contagious, and he helped form the lepidopterist society in 1974. He hosted annual meetings, served as the group's adviser and led survey efforts. In 1975, he began an annual count of butterflies to monitor population trends in the Horner Wildlife Sanctuary in Oldham County.

Years of work culminated in the publication in 1984 of *Eastern Moths*, a field guide that remains the standard for everyone – amateur or professional – interested in moths. That was followed by publication in 1999 of *The Butterflies and Moths of Kentucky: An Annotated Checklist*, which documented nearly 2,400 species. This checklist is part of a scientific and technical series published by the Nature Preserves Commission.

Covell's work has gone beyond academia and scientific journals. He has kept up a tireless public outreach, encouraging countless children and adults to take an interest in butterflies and moths. His role as adviser to graduate students has resulted in a network of professionals in the field. He played a lead role in efforts to create a Kentucky Natural History Museum.

Covell provided butterfly specimens for the commission's booth at the 2002 Kentucky State Fair, an event that included the unveiling of a nature license plate depicting the Viceroy butterfly.

Covell has become internationally known as an expert in the field, making enormous contributions to our knowledge of Kentucky butterflies and moths. He has been the driving force behind many engaged in the study and preservation of Kentucky's native Lepidoptera.

KSNPC's mission is to protect Kentucky's natural heritage by: (1) identifying, acquiring, and managing natural areas that represent the best-known occurrences of rare, native species, natural communities and significant natural features in a statewide nature preserve system; (2) working with others to protect biological diversity; and (3) educating Kentuckians as to the value and purpose of nature preserves and biodiversity conservation. The commission inventories Kentucky for significant natural areas and protects the best examples in a state nature preserve system with 19,077 areas statewide.

Information about the commission can be obtained by mail (KSNPC, 801 Schenkel Lane, Frankfort, Kentucky 40601-1403), by telephone (502) 573-2886 or on the Internet (www.naturepreserves.ky.gov).