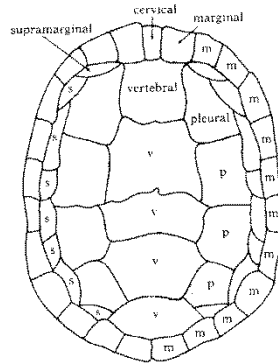
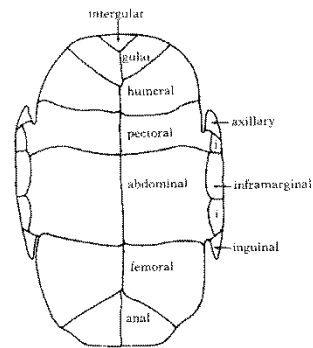


**BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**  
**AND**  
**BIBLIOGRAPHY OF CARL H. ERNST**



Carapacial scutes of turtles, generalized



Plastral scutes of turtles

**Carl H. Ernst**  
Leola, Pennsylvania

**SMITHSONIAN HERPETOLOGICAL**  
**INFORMATION SERVICE**  
**NO. 150**

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Generalized carapace and plastron

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## Biographical Sketch

I was born in Lancaster, Pennsylvania on 28 September 1938 to George H. and Evelyn M. Ernst. My father was a carburation expert for General Motors and worked on both Indianapolis and NASCAR racing cars during the late 1940s and early 1950s. He served on the pit crew at the Indianapolis 500 in 1949-1951. He was also a very good golfer. My mother, as was typical in those days, was a homemaker.

My early education from kindergarten through grade 12 was entirely in the City of Lancaster school system, where I graduated from John Piersol McCaskey High School in 1956. I was a typical high school student, only really interested in girls and sports. I was also a championship wrestler with college scholarship offers; unfortunately, a shoulder injury ended that career.

My interest in wildlife began early when my father, an avid fisherman and hunter, took me with him, and introduced me to reptiles (turtles and my first copperhead, *Agkistrodon cortortrix*), birds, and mammals. I fell in love with box turtles (*Terrapene carolina*) and had several box turtles and wood turtles (*Glyptemys insculpta*) as pets. Snakes came later, to the dismay of my mother who watched my first “experiment” as I left an earthworm trail on our kitchen floor and allowed a worm snake (*Carphophis amoenus*) to follow its scent. The experiment was a success!

Although I was told by my high school guidance counselor that I was destined to work in one of Lancaster’s factories, I entered the local Millersville University in the fall of 1956. There I majored in biology and minored in geography (which had the supporting courses in weather, climate, earth science and conservation). I graduated with a B.S. in Biology in 1960. While there, I was greatly encouraged by Dr. Alex Henderson, Jr. and William Caulwell to further my education in biology.

A delay came, however, when I had to teach for three years in secondary school, as a condition of my admission to Millersville University, a Pennsylvania Commonwealth University. This resulted in my teaching biology at Hempfield High School, Landisville, Pennsylvania from 1960-1966. During this time, I took courses at night and during the summers to earn a M.Ed. degree in science (with a major in biology) from West Chester University in 1963. A research thesis was required for that degree, and I studied the fangs of Nearctic pit vipers of the genus *Agkistrodon*. This was my introduction to scientific research, and I loved it; particularly when I published papers from it.

Although I had been content to be a high school biology teacher, my experience at West Chester gave me a new perspective. It was very apparent that the biology professors there were much better paid, and had much easier teaching loads than I did as a high school teacher; but they held Ph.D. degrees. It was then that I decided to continue my studies toward a doctorate, to be able to teach in a “publish or perish” college or university. In the interim, I had the opportunity of serving as an Assistant Professor of Biology at Elizabethtown College, located in Lancaster County, during the academic year 1966-1967.

I enrolled in the doctoral program of the Zoology Department at the University of Kentucky in Lexington in 1963; with minors in ecology, botany, and parasitology. I chose the University of

Kentucky because I would be working under the direction of Dr. Roger Barbour. After researching numerous doctoral programs, it seemed like he would be the best fit for my interests. Dr. Barbour was one of the last truly pure naturalists, who during his career published more than 100 papers that included all classes of vertebrates, and a number of books on the wildflowers, trees, shrubs, and geology of Kentucky. I have never met anyone so rounded a naturalist as Roger Barbour. I was thrilled when he agreed to be my major professor. Roger became my good friend and colleague. He brought me my first book contract (*Turtles of the United States*) a month after I graduated, and was the coauthor and illustrator of three of my books and several papers.

Of course, I had to prepare an original research dissertation. I immediately gravitated back to my first love, turtles. But where to do this research? I remembered an ornithology field trip with William Caulwell to the White Oak Bird Sanctuary in northern Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and how I was impressed with the abundance of painted turtles (*Chrysemys picta*) and spotted turtles (*Clemmys guttata*). They were everywhere! So, I discussed the plan to study the *Chrysemys* at White Oak with Dr. Barbour. His reaction, because I would not be at the University for several years, was if that was what I wanted to do, I was a “big boy” (hardly, I am only 5’4” tall) and that I had to assume all responsibility, but I was to check in with him periodically. I was impressed with his confidence in me. The total amount of financial support available to me from the Zoology Department was \$38. Thus began a precedent that was to continue throughout my research career; I did the research and funded most of it myself. I conducted my research at White Oak from 1965-1967, then returned to the University and graduated in 1969.

I must give credit to my greatest supporter, my wife Evelyn, the other Dr. Ernst. I first noticed her when, as a pretty premed student, she enrolled in my Vertebrate Zoology course at the University of Kentucky in 1969. We first dated on the last Sunday in January of that year, were married in August, 1969; and have been together ever since. She has served as my coauthor on several papers and three books, and is a talented researcher, teacher, and administrator.

I served as an Assistant Professor of Biology at Southwest Minnesota State University from 1969-1972. Then I accepted a position as Associate Professor of Biology at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia in 1972, and retired 32 years later in 2004 as an Emeritus Professor of Biology. I served as Director of the Doctoral Program in Environmental Science and Policy from 1986 to 1991. I was honored as a Distinguished Professor of Herpetology in 1986. I also served as a Research Associate at the Smithsonian Institution from 1972 until 2016.

During my combined academic and research careers, I was the major professor to 20 Doctoral students and 51 Master’s students at George Mason University, and also served on the graduate committees of numerous other students there and at other universities. I authored more than 240 journal articles on vertebrates and 11 books on turtles and snakes; and was fortunate to discover and name 5 turtle taxa and an acanthocephalan parasite of them. In 1971, I was voted a Fellow of the Herpetologists’ League. My books on turtles were named the Outstanding Publication of the Year in Wildlife Ecology and Conservation by The Wildlife Society in both 1972 and 2011. I have had a full and satisfying biological career, and I have loved every minute of it.

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2013 None.

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## Curriculum Vitae – C. H. Ernst

Birthplace: Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 28 September 1938

Marital Status: Married, 2 children

Education:

B.S., 1960, Millersville University

M.Ed., 1963, West Chester University

Ph.D., 1969, University of Kentucky

Research Speciality; Biology of reptiles, esp., ecology, ethology & taxonomy of turtles & snakes.

Positions Held:

Hempfield Union High School, Landisville, Pennsylvania

1960-1966 Biology teacher

University of Kentucky

1964-1965 Graduate Teaching Assistant in Zoology

1967-1968 Graduate Teaching Assistant in Zoology

1967-1969 Curator of the Vertebrate Collection

Elizabethtown College

1967-1969 Assistant Professor Biology

Southwest Minnesota University

1969-1972 Assistant Professor of Biology

George Mason University

1972-1978 Associate Professor of Biology

1978-2003 Professor of Biology

1986-1991 Director, Doctoral Program in Environmental Science/Public Policy

2004-present Professor Emeritus of Biology

National Museum of Natural History/Smithsonian, Department of Vertebrate Zoology

1972-2016 Research Associate

Awards and Special Recognition

1968, 1969 Kentucky Research Foundation Summer Research Fellowship

1968-1969 University of Kentucky Terminal Year Doctoral Fellowship

1968 Full Member, Society of the Sigma Xi

1971-present Fellow, Herpetologists' League

1974 Wildlife Society's Wildlife Publication Award for 1974 - "Turtles of the United States"

1974 Outstanding Faculty Member, George Mason University

1983 Nominee, Alumni Association "Faculty Member of the Year," George Mason University

1986 Distinguished Faculty Award, George Mason University

1992 Distinguished Alumni Fellow, Millersville University

1993 American Library Association Most Outstanding Nature Reference in 1993 - "Venomous Reptiles of North America"

1999 Nominee, College of Arts & Sciences Scholarly Award, George Mason University

- 2003 Nominee, Virginia "Life Achievement in Science Award"
- 2003 Nominee, "International Scientist of the Year" award, Cambridge University UK
- 2011 Wildlife Society's Wildlife Publication Award—Outstanding Book - "Turtles of the United States and Canada"
- 2014 Distinguished Alumni Award, J. P. McCaskey High School, Lancaster, Pa.

Fieldwork: United States.

#### Professional Organizations

- American Association of Zoological Parks & Aquariums
  - Chelonian Advisory Committee 1991-1995
- American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists, 1958-2015
  - Life Member 1971
- American Society of Mammalogists, 1964-2015
  - Life Member 1972
- Association for Tropical Biology 1975-1988
  - Associate Editor, *Biotropica*, 1976-1982
- Biological Society of Washington, 1974-present
  - Council Member 1983
- British Herpetological Society 1973-present
- Helminthological Society of Washington 1974-1993
- Herpetologists' League, 1962
- Maryland Herpetological Society 1973-present
- Pennsylvania Biological Survey
  - Reptile & Amphibian Advisory Committee 1980-1996
- Society of Sigma Xi 1968-1996
  - President, local chapter 1983
- Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles 1968-2014
  - Editorial Board 1973
  - Editor of Turtle Section of *Catalogue of American Amphibians and Reptiles* 1978- 1992
- Species Survivorship Commission, IUCN
  - Freshwater Turtle & Tortoise Advisory Committee 1992-present
- Virginia Amphibian & Reptile Advisory Committee 1990-1998
- Virginia Herpetological Society 1993-present

## **Endnote – Contributions to the history of the Division of Amphibians & Reptiles – USNM**

As one grows older, there comes a desire to record one's past experiences and also the history of one's workplace. None of us in the USNM Division of Amphibians and Reptiles has expressed a desire to write a divisional history for the past half-century. As an alternative, I am encouraging colleagues who have been associated with the division to create autobiographical sketches. Although such sketches will not provide a detailed history of divisional activities, each offers a unique perspective of past divisional activities and insights into each author's contribution to the division and, of course, a window into the author's personality.

The SHIS series is an obvious outlet. SHIS has been a facet of the division's contribution of research information to the herpetological community since its establishment in 1968 by James A. Peters.

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### **Previously published contributions to divisional history**

- SHIS 1. A list of the herpetological publications of the United States National Museum, 1853-1965. James A. Peters 1965 [revised 1968].
- SHIS 42. A revised list of the herpetological publications of the National Museum of Natural History (USNM) 1853-1978. Ronald I. Crombie 1979.
- SHIS 51. Biography and bibliography of James A. Peters. Frances J. Irish & George R. Zug 1982.
- SHIS 101. Herpetological publications of the National Museum of Natural History (USNM), 1853-1994. Ronald I. Crombie 1994.
- SHIS 147. Biographical sketch and bibliography of W. Ronald Heyer. W. Ronald Heyer & Miriam H. Heyer 2016.
- SHIS 148. Biographical sketch and bibliography of James B. Murphy. James B. Murphy 2016.
- SHIS 149. Biographical sketch and bibliography of C. Kenneth Dodd, Jr. C. Kenneth Dodd, Jr. 2016.