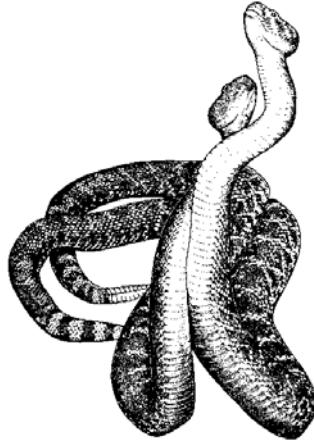


**BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH  
AND  
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF ROBERT P. REYNOLDS**



**Robert P. Reynolds**  
Biological Survey Unit  
USGS-Patuxent Wildlife Research Center  
National Museum of Natural History

**SMITHSONIAN HERPETOLOGICAL  
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## SMITHSONIAN HERPETOLOGICAL INFORMATION SERVICE

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Cover Image: *Crotalus* male-male combat from  
Ernst & Zug 1996. Snakes In Question fig. 1.22.

## Biographical Sketch

I was born to Anne Mary (nee Washkevich) and Edward Charles Reynolds in the late afternoon of 16 March 1950 in Wallingford, Connecticut. Had I been born on the 17<sup>th</sup> my mother would have named me Patrick. I am the middle child of five boys, and according to my parents I was supposed to be a girl, as were each of my two younger brothers. My childhood home in (then) rural Connecticut was situated near a seemingly endless apple orchard and a large dairy farm, and less than a mile from the Quinnipiac River. The river and associated marshland and riparian forest provided endless opportunities for a youngster to discover natural history. As a young boy, I spent untold hours exploring the river and forests, discovering such amazing critters as Spotted Turtles, Northern Water Snakes, Wood Frogs, Dusky Salamanders, American Bitterns, Black Ducks, Rails, Wood Ducks, Short-Tailed Shrews, Muskrats, Mink, and Raccoons.

Luckily for me, my 5<sup>th</sup> grade science teacher, Mr. Merritt, was knowledgeable about local natural history and most helpful with identifying the various animals I saw along the river. He and our school and town librarians introduced me to books and field guides on natural history. These books provided me a new sense of independence, allowing me not only to identify the animals I found, but also to learn about their lives and where they lived. Without a doubt, the most important reference was the 1959 “Complete Field Guide to American Wildlife; East, Central, and North,” by Henry Hill Collins, Jr. Here in a single volume was “everything” a 10 year-old could ever want to know about birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, and fishes east of the Rocky Mountains. Eventually my parents bought me this field guide (which I still have), as well as the Peterson field guides to birds, mammals, and reptiles and amphibians (my 1958 edition of the latter, signed by Roger Conant, was stolen from my graduate student office at the University of New Mexico).

As I got older I tagged along with my two big brothers who taught me how to fish, hunt, and trap along the Quinnipiac River and on nearby farmlands. Trapping for muskrats, mink, and raccoons throughout junior high and high school provided an important source of income for a teenager, as well as the beginning of a life-long interest in collecting and field-work. I frequently carried a 20 gauge shotgun to hunt the squirrels, rabbits, Ruffed Grouse, Black Ducks, and Wood Ducks I saw along my trap lines. As my younger brothers got older, it became my turn to take them into the field to teach them to fish and hunt.

My early interest in hunting, trapping, and fishing, along with advice from my high school guidance counselor, influenced my decision to pursue my undergraduate and master’s degrees in wildlife biology. Beginning in the fall of 1968, I attended Utah State University (USU), Logan, UT, during my freshman and sophomore years, and then transferred to the University of Connecticut (UConn), Storrs, CT to complete my B.S. in 1972. I stayed in the Wildlife Department at UConn for my M.S. (1974) to study chemical deterrents to Blue Jay depredations on fruit trees. I enjoyed my undergraduate and graduate education at UConn, and I appreciated the biology and natural resources training I learned from the wildlife biology major, but

eventually I became disenchanted with the focus on game species and the emphasis on management.

I took a graduate level course in mammalogy from Ralph Wetzel while at UConn. From Ralph, I learned that not only could you study non-game species, you could also get a job in biology that was not tied to management of animal populations. This course was also my first introduction to the vertebrate museum collections at UConn. Part of the course requirement was making a collection of 12 museum study specimens of mammals for deposit in the University collection. This seemed almost too good to be true; I could use my childhood experience with trapping and skinning furbearers to help me snap trap and prepare a collection of Meadow Voles, White-Footed Mice, Jumping Mice, and Short-Tailed Shrews for a graduate level college course. The following semester I took a graduate level course in herpetology from Norman J. Scott, Jr. This undoubtedly was the most influential class I ever took in college, as it helped me decide to pursue my Ph.D. in biology rather than continuing with wildlife biology. Norm's enthusiasm and passion for herpetology were simply contagious. He constantly supplemented his lectures with exciting anecdotes and real life experiences from his own graduate studies in Costa Rica. Our class field trips were the first time many of us had ever gone out at night with headlamps to look for Spring Peepers, Wood Frogs, and Spotted Salamanders. Similar to what I had learned from Ralph Wetzel, Norm also explained that it was possible to study amphibians and reptiles and to pursue a career in herpetology.

Norm Scott left UConn to take a position in the biology department at the University of New Mexico (UNM), Albuquerque, NM. After completing my Master's degree I enrolled in a Ph.D. program in biology at UNM in 1974 with Norm as my major advisor and with Jim Findley, Bill Degenhardt, and Roger Conant as committee members. Other Ph.D. students in herpetology at UNM while I was there included John Applegarth, Jim Jacob, Charlie Painter, Steve Williams, and Bruce Woodward. My graduate student office was located in the Museum of Southwestern Biology (MSB), which at that time occupied the entire basement level of Casteter Hall biology building. The vertebrate collections at MSB were many times larger than the collections at UConn. I worked as a research assistant in both the herpetology and mammal collections, and I deposited more than a few hundred specimens of herps, birds, and mammals in the MSB that I collected in New Mexico, Arizona, and from throughout the Central Plateau of Mexico.

I did my Ph.D. studies on the diets, habitats, and seasonal activities of a community of mammal-eating snakes and their mammal prey in the creosote-bush desert of northeastern Chihuahua, Mexico. Before starting my dissertation research, I visited with Dave Morafka in Los Angeles to pick his brain about the Chihuahuan desert herpetofauna and to select an appropriate study site for my research. Dave accompanied me to Chihuahua at the beginning of my first field season and helped me establish my study area along Highway 16 from Villa Aldama northeast to El Pastor. I gave my first-ever paper on my Ph.D. studies at the joint annual meetings of the Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles and the Herpetologists' League held in 1977 at the University of Kansas in Lawrence. While my anxiety level was off-the-charts prior to the

presentation, I was relatively calm and relaxed once I started talking. Happily, I experienced none of the slide carousel or remote control issues that seemed to be plaguing the other speakers in my session.

During my time at UNM, I participated in many field collecting trips in New Mexico, Arizona, throughout much of mainland Mexico, multiple trips to Baja California and Tiburon Island in the Sea of Cortez, and in Costa Rica. Arguably the most significant of these trips was when Norm Scott arranged for Bruce Woodward and me to spend a month in Nayarit, Mexico, trapping mammals and collecting herps with U.S. Biological Survey mammalogists from the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) in Washington, DC. Here is where I first met Clyde Jones, Al Gardner, Bob Fisher, Don Wilson, and Brian Robbins. Little did I know then that I would someday end up working with Bob Fisher, Al Gardner, and Don Wilson for 33 years at the NMNH.

Probably the most surprising and certainly one of the more enjoyable projects that I worked on while at UNM resulted from a grant Norm Scott received from the Endangered Species Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, to study geographic variation of the Mexican Duck throughout its range in Mexico. Norm and I collected 100 Mexican Ducks along the Mexican Plateau from Lago Chapala in Jalisco north to the border of Chihuahua and New Mexico. I'd always been an avid duck hunter but never in my wildest imagination did I think I would actually get paid to hunt ducks. This project resulted in my only bird publication; a paper coauthored with Norm on the phenotypic variation of the Mexican Duck that we published in *Condor*.

My first job after completing my Ph.D. in 1978 was as a wildlife biologist working with Tom Fritts at a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) research laboratory located at the Riverside Campus of Tulane University in Belle Chase, LA. We conducted aerial surveys of marine turtles, mammals, and birds along the Outer Continental Shelf in the Gulf of Mexico to provide estimates of species populations in relation to offshore oil drilling. I was also an adjunct faculty in the biology department at Tulane and became friends with Royal Suttkus and Harold Dundee, as well as with Bob Thomas at the University of New Orleans.

In October 1980 I left my USFWS job in Louisiana to take a two-year staff scientist position at the Charles Darwin Research Station (CDRS) on Isla Santa Cruz, Galapagos, Ecuador. I served as resident herpetologist in charge of the captive breeding programs for endangered Galapagos giant tortoises and land iguanas. In addition I was the consultant to the Galapagos National Park Service on all matters relating to reptile biology and conservation, and I conducted field work throughout the archipelago to assess the population status of tortoises and land iguanas and the impacts of invasive mammal species on the island reptiles.

Through a cooperative program with the Universidad Catolica in Quito, Ecuador, I served as thesis advisor for Ecuadorian scholarship students doing field-work on tortoises, land iguanas, and lava lizards. One of these projects, the first experimental repatriation of juvenile captive-

reared land iguanas on the island of Isabela, resulted in subsequent repatriation events and eventually the successful reestablishment of the land iguanas at Cartago Bay, Isabela. I met many scientists and conservationists from around the world while working at the CDRS. Two herpetologists that made multiple visits to the Galapagos while I was there were Jim Bacon from the San Diego Zoo and Jay Cole from the American Museum of Natural History. Jim and I published a paper on the population status of Galapagos tortoises, and Jay and I each independently ended up doing field-work in Guyana, and much later we collaborated on a monograph of the amphibians and reptiles of Guyana.

I left my position at the Darwin Station in January 1983 to return to the United States. In March of that year I was hired by Roy McDiarmid to work with him in the Herpetology Project he led for the USFWS Museum Section at the NMNH. Steve Gotte and James Poindexter joined the Herpetology Project in 1988, the same year that Tom Fritts arrived at the NMNH to take over the position of Chief of the Museum Section and to coordinate his brown tree snake research in Guam. The five of us worked on research and collections management in the Division of Amphibians and Reptiles alongside our Smithsonian counterparts that included Elyse Beldon, Frank Blasdale, Ron Crombie, Traci Hartsell, Ron Heyer, Jeremy Jacobs, Kristina Keating-Sami (no overlap with Tom Fritts), Kevin de Queiroz, Ken Tighe, Rob Wilson, Addison Wynn, and George Zug.

The USFWS Museum Section has a scientific and collection management staff permanently stationed in the Divisions of Birds, Mammals, and Amphibians and Reptiles at NMNH and curatorial responsibility for the North American collections in each of those divisions. In 1993 the USFWS Museum Section at NMNH was administratively transferred (along with most other research entities in the Department of the Interior) to the newly formed but short-lived National Biological Survey (NBS). At that time, the Museum Section became a field station of the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center (PWRC) in Laurel, MD. In 1995, I became Project Leader of the Curatorial Project of the Museum Section at NMNH and supervisor of the NBS collection management staff in the three divisions.

A year later in 1996 the NBS was combined with the United States Geological Survey (USGS) and became the Biological Resources Division of the USGS. During that transition the name of the Museum Section was changed to the Biological Survey Unit, but remained a field station of the USGS PWRC. Tom Fritts left the Biological Survey Unit in 1998 to take a USGS position at the Fort Collins Science Center in Fort Collins, CO. Concurrent with his departure, I became the Station Leader and assumed senior administrative responsibility for operation of the Biological Survey Unit at the NMNH, a position I held until my retirement in April 2016. My responsibilities included representing the Biological Survey Unit to the USGS and PWRC, maintaining relations with the Smithsonian Institution's Department of Vertebrate Zoology, supervising the technical staff in the three divisions, and coordinating and supporting the administrative, scientific, and curatorial operations. One of my first tasks as Station Leader was taking the lead for developing a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the

Smithsonian and the USGS PWRC for the Biological Survey Unit operations at NMNH. This MOU was signed by the respective Directors of PWRC and NMNH in January 2001.

I was successful in hiring three new scientific staff for the Biological Survey Unit; a Museum Specialist and a Curator in the Division of Mammals, and a Curator in the Division of Birds. The scientific and collection management staff working for the Biological Survey Unit at NMNH during my tenure as Station Leader included: Steve Gotte, Roy McDiarmid, and James Poindexter in Amphibians and Reptiles; Claudia Angle, Richard Banks, Terry Chesser, Roger Clapp, and Mercedes Foster in Birds; and Robert Fisher, Alfred Gardner, Suzanne Peurach, and Neal Woodman in Mammals.

While at the NMNH, I conducted faunal surveys of amphibians and reptiles in Arizona, Maryland, Nebraska, New Mexico, Guam, Mexico, Belize, Panama, Ecuador, Guyana, and Peru, to document distributions and biodiversity through collecting and permanently archiving specimens and associated data in the amphibian and reptile collections at the NMNH (USNM specimen catalog numbers). The focus of my research was primarily on the taxonomy and biodiversity of amphibians and reptiles in the lowlands and highlands of northern South America. I served as the Guianas Region data coordinator for the first IUCN Global Amphibian Assessment (GAA) of Tropical South America East of the Andes held in Bello Horizonte, Brazil from 31 March – 4 April 2003. I also described four new frog species and one new snake from Bolivia, as well as two new species of blind snakes from the Caroline Islands in Micronesia. Most of my publications in the later years were on the amphibians and reptiles of Guyana, and included checklists of vertebrates, multiple regional herpetological surveys, and culminated with a biogeographic assessment of the amphibians and reptiles of that country. My last field trip before retiring was to the Rupununi Savannah and the Kanuku Mountains of Guyana in November 2015, and I am currently collaborating on a checklist of the amphibians and reptiles of the Kanuku Mountains, Guyana. A complete list of my publications is in the following bibliography.

I held the professional academic appointment of Adjunct Scientist at the NMNH from 2004 to 2016 and served on many NMNH committees too numerous to list. The most significant of these were: as “outside reviewer” for the 2006 and the 2007 review cycles of the NMNH Professional Accomplishments Evaluations Committee (PAEC); Councilor to Senate of Scientists (SOS) for the Affiliated Agencies working at NMNH: more than three years on the Pod 5 Executive Committee for designing and developing the alcoholic specimen storage at the Museum Support Center; two years on the NMNH Collections Committee for developing the museum’s Collection Management Policy (CMP); and more than 12 years as a Practicing Scientist Member on the NMNH Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC).

From 2007 until my retirement in 2016, I served as Associate Editor for Vertebrates (Herpetology) for the Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington. During that same period, I served as Finance Committee Chairman for the Biological Society of Washington.

Throughout my career at NMNH, I participated in training of interns and students at the museum, as well as teaching in field classes for quantifying amphibian and reptile populations at the Smithsonian's Conservation Research Center (CRC) in Front Royal, VA. In addition, I provided classroom lectures on herpetology at the University of Guyana, when I did field-work in Guyana and hands-on specimen collection and preparation training to Guyanese students and interns that worked with me in the field. Similarly, I have provided guidance and assistance for developing natural history collections at the Charles Darwin Research Station, Galapagos, Ecuador, at the Museo de Historia Natural, Universidad de San Marcos in Lima, Peru, and at the University of Guyana's Biodiversity Research Center in Georgetown, Guyana.

In 2013, I was elected an inaugural member of the USGS Collections Steering Committee (CSC) to serve in an advisory role to the USGS Executive Leadership Team concerning coordination and management of the full spectrum of objects and specimens collected in the conduct of USGS scientific investigations, a position I held until my retirement in April 2016. During that time I also traveled to Ho Chi Minh City and Canto, Vietnam, to serve as a USGS advisor to Canto University to explore development of a new natural history museum of the Mekong Delta.

A particularly memorable day in my life was Thursday, April 6, 2006. That was when I first met Adriana Kulczak on the mall-side steps of the NMNH. Adriana and I were married in June 2013 and have shared many exciting times and travels together; we plan to continue doing so in retirement for a very long time.

When I arrived at the NMNH in 1983, I remember thinking how many "old white guys" there were roaming the halls of the museum. Fast forward to 2016 and much quicker than I ever dreamed possible, I realized I had become one of those old white guys and that it was time for me to make way for new blood. I can't believe how fortunate I have been to have successfully pursued a career in biology at the premier natural history museum with some of the greatest systematists and most dedicated collections management staff in the world. I met many interesting people and made many friends with whom I shared hard work and good times both in the museum and in the field. I am grateful to my mentors, and for the many friendships, the camaraderie, and the good memories that I will keep forever.

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### **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.
- SHIS 150. Biographical sketch and bibliography of Carl H. Ernst. Carl H. Ernst 2016.
- SHIS 151. Biographical sketch and bibliography of Richard Highton. Richard Highton 2017.