

# Edwin J. Crossman

## An eminent ichthyologist with a lasting legacy

Edwin J. Crossman, 74, passed away on 21 December 2003, at his home in Scarborough, Ontario. Known as "Ed" or "EJ" to his friends and colleagues, he was born in Niagara Falls, Ontario. In his pursuit of what became an illustrious career with fish, Crossman graduated from Queen's University at Kingston, Ontario, in 1952, the University of Toronto in 1954, and the University of British Columbia in 1957. Upon graduation, he was recruited by W.B. (Bev) Scott to the Department of Ichthyology and Herpetology, Royal Ontario Museum (ROM). He rose through the curatorial ranks to curator-in-charge and at the same time became cross-appointed at the University of Toronto. He officially retired in 1995 but remained active as curator and professor emeritus at ROM and at the university.

Crossman was straight-spoken, yet kindly, a decisive individual with a strong and formative presence. He was a wealth of knowledge but was as interested in you as you were in him—the hallmark of a personable man. His stature matched his expertise, a true philosopher always searching for the truth and, yes, challenging you if need be. Crossman strived for precision. Sometimes this perplexed us, but on reflection, it taught us. He was often our conscience, encouraging us to do what we truly knew we should. He taught us the importance of mutual associations and interests, best exemplified by his loving association with his wife Margaret, a companion in his active professional life.

Crossman loved to fish and he used fish resources, but he treated all living things with respect and dignity. His first associations with water and fish were as a child raised very close to the lower gorge of the Niagara River, a favorite haunt where he learned an early association with fish, fisheries, and fishermen. Fish were many things and, quite importantly, food to be taken home. Assisting anglers and fishers, who sought him out frequently, found expression in his longstanding association and support of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Ontario Commercial Fish Producers, Muskies Canada, and Muskies, Inc.

Crossman's professional accomplishments were numerous and truly remarkable—two hundred scientific publications including, of course, the award-winning and monumental *Freshwater Fishes of Canada* published with his colleague and life-long friend, Bev Scott, another legend in his own time. In his review, Reeve Bailey referred to the book as "a heroic compendium, the most important work on North American freshwater fishes since Jordan and Evermann." What an immense compliment!

His long list of publications on the freshwater fishes of Canada and Ontario includes books, book chapters, scientific papers, and popular publications

communicating the scientific results of his research. His contributions to the study of the biology, zoogeography, and evolutionary history of Esocidae—which includes muskellunge, pike, and pickerels—earned him international fame, and he was much sought after by ichthyologists, fisheries biologists, and anglers. He was also a valued researcher and advisor in the fields of conservation biology, particularly dealing with introduced and endangered fishes.

Crossman was never too busy to give of his time, conduct reviews, sit on boards and commissions, and assist the many students, staff, and colleagues of countless government agencies, consulting firms, colleges, and universities. He was a mentor to many, and his advice was widely sought and freely given, sometimes only after considerable and appropriate probing for all the facts. He contributed to and received many accolades, awards, and inductions from the numerous societies and organization to which he belonged, particularly the American Fisheries Society.

Crossman recently received his Golden Membership in AFS, having been active since 1953. He was a founding member of the Canadian Aquatic Resources Section, a Certified Fisheries Professional, and a long-time member of the American Fisheries Society's Names of Fishes Committee. As a member of this committee, he jointly won the Distinguished Service Award in 2000. Crossman was heavily involved in preparing the revision of *Common and Scientific Names of Fishes from the United States, Canada, and Mexico*, published this year. Joe Nelson and his co-authors valued Crossman's friendship, frankness, and moderating advice so much that they dedicated this sixth edition to him.

In his honor, the Ontario Chapter of AFS recently established a Best Student Paper award, which also promotes membership and encourages the young and their pursuit of knowledge, especially important to Crossman. The Esocid Technical Committee of AFS Central Division, in conjunction with Muskies, Inc., is now planning the Dr. Ed Crossman Muskellunge Symposium to be held in the fall of 2005.

His unexpected and sudden death greatly saddened his family, ROM staff, and his many colleagues, students, and fishing acquaintances. This great loss to scientific, fisheries, and fishing communities has resulted in the establishment of several endowments to honor and celebrate the life of this eminent ichthyologist and to support and encourage students and studies of freshwater fishes: the E.J. Crossman Fund, The Royal Ontario Museum Foundation, Toronto, ON; the Crossman Memorial Fund, Queen's University, Kingston, ON; and the Crossman Scholarship Fund, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON.

—John Casselman

# Ed Crossman obituary



Ed Crossman