Resolution of Respect

Rexford Daubenmire 1909–1995

Rexford Daubenmire died on 27 August 1995, in Sorrento, Florida, at the age of 85 years. He is survived by his wife, Jean, and daughter, Janet.

"Dauby" was born in Coldwater, Ohio, on 12 December 1909. He grew up an only child in Indianapolis. His father was an engineer on the Pennsylvania Railroad. He was an undergraduate student at Butler University, and graduated magna cum laude in 1930. During his undergraduate years, Dauby was influenced in his career choice by two faculty members at Butler. Ray C. Freisner, Head of the Botany Department, was responsible for his majoring in botany, and Stanley Cain stimulated his interest in plant ecology.

His first seven published papers were based on studies done as an undergraduate at Butler University. Dauby did his Master's work under Francis Ramaley at the University of Colorado, where he studied leaf and conifer twig structures in relation to altitudinal distribution. His doctorate was taken under William S. Cooper at the University of Minnesota, where he did a classic ecological study of the Big Woods of Minnesota.

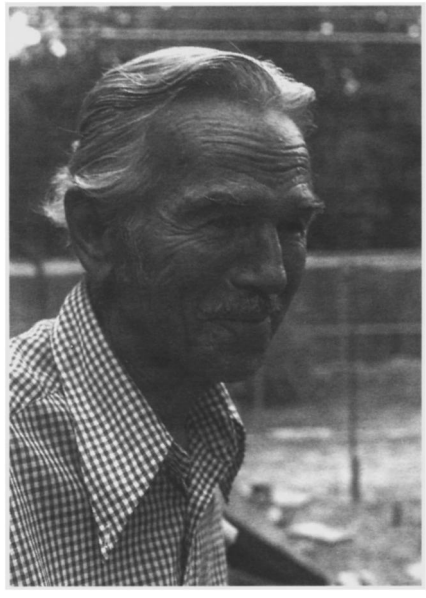
After completing his doctorate in 1935 he taught for a year at the University of Tennessee, spent 10 years at the University of Idaho, beginning in 1936, and settled at Washington State University, where he served on the faculty of the Botany Department until he retired in 1975. During his early years in Idaho he met and married Jean Boomer, a well-qualified botanist who became involved in many of Dauby's studies.

Early in his career he spent summers teaching at the University of Minnesota Lake Itasca Field Station and at the University of Wyoming Science Camp. During the war years he also taught chemistry to military personnel. While on the faculty at Washington State University, Dauby took sabbatical leaves to Sweden and Costa Rica.

Dauby's first textbook, *Plants and Environment, a Textbook of Plant Autecology,* was published in 1946. He revised it in 1959, and in 1978. He was preparing a fourth edition at the time he died. That book has been translated into Spanish and Polish, and more than one form of the book or parts of it have been published in India, and distributed to other countries. Other students of William S. Cooper have noted that *Plants and Environment* followed the outline for half of Cooper's Plant Ecology Course, while *The Study of Plant Communities* (1948, 1956) by H. J. ("Heinie") Oosting, reflected the other half.

The range of ecologic topics shown in Dauby's bibliography indicates a broad range of interests including epiphyllous lichens, the *Agropyron spicatum–A. inerme* complex, growth and phenology of tree species, conifer distribution related to temperature and soil moisture, introgression among species of *Picea*, autecology of *Hyparrhenia rufa* and the derived savannas of Costa Rica, effects of cattle grazing on temperate region grasslands, fire and vegetation, and the geography of flowering plants. During his field studies, he discovered a new genus in the Boraginaceae endemic to northern Idaho. It is *Dasynotis daubenmyri*.

One of Dauby's most cited papers began with a fairly poor prognosis. As he prepared to begin an extensive study on the grasslands of central and eastern Washington state, he examined and tried out various published sampling methods. He revised and finally produced a technique that satisfied his needs. He wrote the paper and submitted it to *Ecology,* the editor of which considered it only marginal. Dauby withdrew the paper from consideration and later resubmitted it to *Northwest Science,* where it was published in 1959. In the 24 September 1984 issue of *Current Contents,* that paper was honored as a "Citation Classic," having then been cited in the literature more than 185 times since it was published in 1959. Since 1984 the paper has been cited many more times.



Dauby was also a respected and productive teacher. During his years at both Idaho and Washington State, Dauby had 35 Ph.D. and 18 Master's students. Except during sabbatical years, his teaching load was usually two courses per semester. His book *Plant Communities, a Textbook of Plant Synecology* was published in 1968, the same year he and Jean Daubenmire published their definitive work on "Forest vegetation of eastern Washington and Northern Idaho." This work, and its companion "Steppe vegetation of Washington," are still regarded as the standard vegetation classification of the ecosystems of the Northwestern interior, and are widely used by conservationists and forest managers alike.

Rexford Daubenmire received several honors for his contributions to ecology. In 1968 he was President of the Ecological Society of America, and in 1980 the ESA honored him as Eminent Ecologist. At their annual meeting in 1986, the Society for Range Management presented him

with a "Special Award." The Special Award "recognizes extraordinary contributions to the Society for Range Management and the range profession."

Within days following his retirement Dauby and Jean were off to Florida, where they settled. Retirement is a relative term. Dauby built two new houses after he got to Florida, landscaped his home sites, planted huge gardens, and began collecting plants throughout the central part of the Florida peninsula. In addition, he published his third book, *Plant Geography with Special Reference to North America,* plus several papers that were "waiting" to be completed. Ever the plant ecologist, Dauby studied forests and savannas of Central Florida, and published on his work in 1990.

He and his wife also travelled. They visited places natural historians visit, and they often went beyond the normal travel limits. They spent a week camped out alone, beyond the last Amazonian village, in a virgin tropical rain forest. They visited a village of head hunters and spent a night in the village without fear of losing theirs. They spent considerable time in the Philippine Islands, as consultants on the vegetation and its management in certain areas. They traveled to Malaysia and Africa more than once. Dauby led a group of naturalists on trips to Ecuador and Costa Rica. Their travels were all to tropical or subtropical regions, or to temperate regions during a moderate season of the year. He once told me that after retirement he wouldn't have to tolerate any more cold winters.

Rexford Daubenmire was very modest about his accomplishments and the influence he had on plant ecology, but he will long be known for his contributions to ecology. Those of us who worked for him in graduate school knew him as a teacher and adviser. Seldom did Dauby co-author a paper with one of his students, though he encouraged us to present our results through publication and become active members of our chosen field. His passing ends another period of the rich contributions by that group of active ecologists who worked under William Cooper so many years ago.

The complete list of original publications by Rexford Daubenmire is available. Call me at (319) 273-6490 or write to me at the address below.

George R. Hoffman
Department of Biology
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, IA 50614-0421

Source: Bulletin of the Ecological Society of America, Vol. 77, No. 3 (Jul., 1996), pp. 143-144. Courtesy of JSTOR.