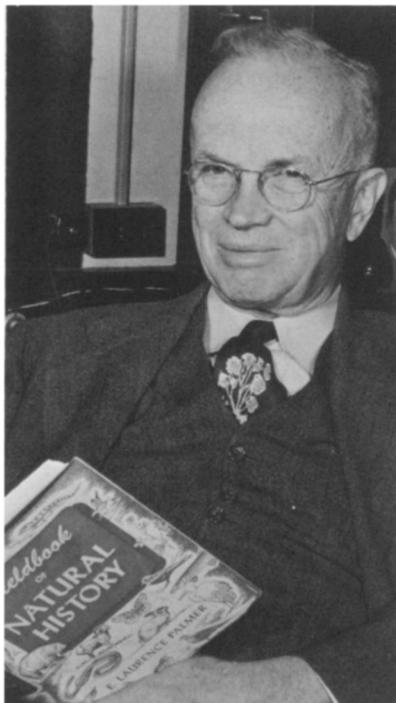


Reports—Current Topics—Queries

Ephraim Laurence Palmer (1888-1970)

I came to know the late Dr. E. Laurence Palmer when he visited the Iowa Lakeside Laboratory one day in 1925, while I was starting graduate work there; I can't think of any man who made a greater impact on my life on first contact than he did that day. I later came to learn that my reaction to him was quite typical. To accompany "Eph" Palmer on a field trip was an unforgettable experience, which automatically reestablished all of one's links with nature. Through the years he came to Kansas State Teachers College many times: to help us set up the summer Workshop in Conservation, which still continues enthusiastically; to consult with us on the programs for the newly established Ross Natural History Reservation; to be the main speaker and field trip leader for an Emporia meeting of the Kansas Association of Biology Teachers; to appear before our departmental biology seminar; to help us get *The Kansas School Naturalist* under way; to speak to our Biology Institutes; and just to visit. There are many other colleges and universities all over the country to which he contributed in as great a variety of ways.

Dr. Palmer represented many different things to different people. To his thousands of students he was an inspiring teacher who, through challenge and at times provocation, brought out the best in them. To thousands of teachers he was for 33 years the editor of the *Cornell Rural School Leaflet* (later to become the *Cornell Science Leaflet*), distributed not only in New York but to readers in many other states. To still other thousands he was the creator of the eight-page "Nature Inserts" in *Nature Magazine*, each of which carried an unbelievable amount of information under such titles as "Circus and Zoo Animals," "Christmas Plants," "Feathered Plebians," "Natural History Changes," and the like; this contribution



grew logically out of his long period as director of nature education for *Nature Magazine*. To thousands of Boy Scouts, during a period of more than 30 years, he was the director of conservation-education programs, including several national jamborees, for which he received the highest honor of Scouting, the Silver Beaver. To many radio fans during the 1940s and 1950s he was the producer-director of a weekly radio show, "This Week in Nature." To leaders in biology education he was a member or chairman of several committees that had important influence on the development of the Biological Sciences Curriculum Study. To nature-study teachers and other nature-lovers he is probably best remembered for his *Fieldbook of Natural History* (1949) and other books—particularly the one on mammals, which includes the domesticated, circus, and zoo animals. To those dealing with international exchange of personnel he was known as one who was ready to carry the message of conservation education and environmental improvement to other countries. Those especially interested in field-trip techniques may remember best his "Around the World in 80 Steps," in which he opened the participants' eyes to the wealth of nature observation available within a few steps of the school and other buildings. To every one of the many professional societies in which he held membership and office he was a moving spirit who helped to develop and maintain high standards. To our own National Association of Biology Teachers he was the 1947 president who got the conservation-education programs of the association headed in the direction of environmental improvement rather than mere preservation and who initiated our identification with the American Institute of Biological Sciences. Retirement from active duty in 1950 did not slow him down; it only gave him more time for new activities and more flexibility for the continuing ones. He was undoubtedly the most active "retired" man I have known.

The entire membership of NABT joins Dr. Palmer's many other friends in extending deep sympathy to Mrs. Palmer. A scientist in her own right, she and "Eph" worked as a team, not only in their home but also in the field and laboratory. In this period of sorrow for the passing of a great leader, all of us who came under his influence may share a feeling of gratitude for having known him and for the fact that his influence will continue for a long, long time.

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