



Dr. William Leo Pflieger, passed away at the age of 89, in Ashland, Missouri, December 15, 2021.

Dr. Pflieger worked for many years as a fishery biologist for the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) and was recognized as an expert on Missouri fishes and crayfishes. He authored three books: “The Fishes of Missouri”, “The Crayfishes of Missouri”, and a revision of the first edition of “The Fishes of Missouri.”

“The Fishes of Missouri” instantly became a widely used text book due to the high quality of the figures, photographs, keys and biological information. Executive Director of the American Fisheries Society, Doug Austin, commented that, “Yes, Bill Pflieger was a noted ichthyologist. I don't know any fisheries student from my era who didn't have one of his books.”

Dr. Pflieger was born October 26, 1932 in Columbus Ohio. He was a Korean War veteran and was married to Jo (Osborne) Pflieger who preceded him in death November 14, 2021. Bill, as he preferred to be called, was an avid naturalist, hunter, and beekeeper.

Bill obtained a BS from Ohio State University in 1958 followed by an MS in 1960. He was recruited by MDC in 1961 to assemble information about the distribution and habitats of all fish species occurring in Missouri. Bill reviewed published literature and located collections of Missouri fishes held at several museums in both Missouri and in other states. He also visited most areas of Missouri, and made over 700 collections of fish from more than 500 localities.

He took a leave of absence from MDC in the early 1960's to pursue a PhD at the University of Kansas. He documented his work there in a 245-page 1971 published report, "A Distributional Study of Missouri Fishes," that was a partial fulfillment for a PhD from the University of Kansas in 1969.

During his 34-year tenure with the MDC, he published three aforementioned books, as well as numerous reports and publications. He was very instrumental in the establishment of Missouri's system for storage, retrieval, and analysis of stream resource data as well as the development of an aquatic community classification system for Missouri. Bill's knowledge of fishes, streams, zoogeography and natural features, and how these affect systems and communities led to a contract with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to prepare a recovery plan for the endemic and endangered Niangua Darter.

Bill was a prodigious field worker and became known as "One-more-seine-haul, Bill" by his coworkers. Even though the sun was setting, and it had been a long day, Bill would say, "Let's make just one more seine haul to see what is in that pool!"

Bill was a research associate at the University of Missouri, a member of the Society of Sigma Xi, American Fisheries Society, International Association of Astacology, Natural Areas Association, Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists, Missouri Conservation Pioneers, and a founding member of the Missouri Chapter of the American Fisheries Society.

Bill was honored for his many contributions, receiving: the 1977 Missouri Chapter of the American Fisheries Society's John L. Funk Award of Excellence; 1992 MDC Fisheries Division Employee of the Year Award; 1997 American Motors Conservationist of the Year Award; and 1997 Missouri Natural Areas Committee Award.

His advice on the systematics, habitat requirements and other aspects of fish and crayfish life were highly sought after by other professionals as well as lay people and will be sorely missed.