

## FEATURED SOCIETY—

### THE AMERICAN ARACHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Except at a few points where interest in arachnids was centered, around Harvard, Yale, Cornell, and Utah universities, most students of arachnology in the United States, perhaps emulating the habits of the subjects of their interest, pursued their studies in isolation up through the first half of the 20th Century. And until relatively recent years, most contacts between arachnologists were principally by correspondence.

Outside of the United States, arachnological study groups had been formed in England and Japan by about 1950 and were publishing newsletters or tenuous "journals." And the number of interested people had increased in France, Germany, Poland, and other places as well as in the United States. The first international congress of arachnology was convened in 1959 under the auspices of the Centre International de Documentation Arachnologique at the Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris. Tentative beginnings of an organization in the United States may have commenced with a symposium "Arachnids other than Mites" on the program of the annual meeting of The Entomological Society of America in New Orleans in September 1965. It motivated the gathering of some 20 arachnologists, and though the formal papers were few, their informal sessions were individually rewarding. Then, through the efforts of Dr. Peter Witt and others, the American Society of Zoologists sponsored a second symposium, "Web-building Spiders," at the AAAS annual meeting in New York in December 1967, which attracted a considerable number of interested scholars. Eighteen papers were presented at the symposium which were published in toto in the *American Zoologist* 9(1), February 1969. There was no recognizable organization as such, however, until in 1970 a group of arachnologists in Southern California began to meet regularly and to publish a small journal, "Notes of the Arachnologists of the Southwest". This group became the nucleus around which subsequently developed the American Arachnological Society, largely because of the untiring efforts of Dr. Beatrice Vogel.

On August 12, 1972, 35 people from across the United States met for the purpose of organizing a society, first in a forest glen in Rustler's State Park in the Chiricahua Mountains, Arizona and continuing at the American Museum of Natural History's Southwest Research Station, finally to more or less culminate at a dinner hosted by Dr. and Mrs. Willis Gertsch. Pro-tem officers, with Beatrice Vogel as pres-

ident, were elected and organizing committees were established to erect a society structure. It was decided initially that this "American" society was not to be construed to mean a United States society but was to embrace all of the Americas. And in consonance with this precept, when Dr. Robert Mitchell's offer to act as editor of a journal was accepted, it was decided that the journal would accept papers in all major American languages.

Organizational work proceeded rapidly and the society was incorporated as a non-profit organization in Los Angeles County, California, on April 24, 1973, largely through the efforts of M. E. Thompson, David Marqua, and Robert Crandall of the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation. It, in effect, absorbed the Southwest Arachnologists and ultimately its publication. Beatrice Vogel, Vincent Roth, and Mel Thompson were elected the first President, Vice President, and Secretary-Treasurer respectively. There were 116 charter members, mostly from the United States, but among them were representatives from Canada, Mexico, Venezuela, and Panama as well as from England, Japan, Italy, and Austria. The society has grown in its nearly seven year history to some 480 current members, about 20% of which are museums and libraries. About 30% of both individual and institutional memberships are from outside of the United States proper.

For some five years before the society was incorporated and began to publish the *Journal of Arachnology*, it began to achieve an identity through a newsletter entitled "American Arachnology" which Beatrice Vogel had been writing and distributing with logistical assistance from several others. *American Arachnology* has recently distributed its 20th issue. It is published irregularly and typically reports research in progress, requests for and offers of material, activities of members and the society, and other items of general interest to arachnologists.

The *Journal of Arachnology*, the official organ of the society, published its first issue in November 1973 and posted the most recent issue of Volume 7 in October 1979. It is published winter, spring, and fall, currently, in cooperation with the Graduate School of Texas Tech University and is presently under the editorship of Dr. Oscar Francke, Department of Biological Sciences, Texas Tech University. It has a 13 member editorial board who serve as the principal referees for the papers it

publishes. Manuscripts dealing with any aspects of the Arachnida, exclusive of mites, in English, Spanish, Portuguese, or French are accepted only from members of the society. There are no page charges. An issue typically contains brief "research notes" and longer research reports. Each paper is reviewed by two or more referees. Although early issues are now in short supply, back issues of the journal are available still at \$5.00 each (\$15.00 per volume).

To accommodate its widely dispersed members, the society meets twice yearly, one meeting in the eastern part of the country and one in the western part. Every third year, however, a single, general meeting is convened. Proceedings of the meeting are normally published only informally in the *American Arachnologist* as abstracts of the papers presented. Formal papers that are read at the meetings are published in the *Journal of Arachnology* or at the authors' discretion.

The society is affiliated with the international arachnological association, the Centre International de Documentation Arachnologique, in Paris, with the British Arachnological Society, and the Arachnological Society of East Asia and facilitates reciprocal payment of memberships dues with them. It also maintains communication with more recently organized groups of arachnologists in France and South Africa.

Although the society does not maintain a central reference library, it has a library of foreign language materials that have been translated to English that is available to members through Dr. Susan Reichert, Department of Zoology, University of Tennessee.

Membership in the society is open to anyone interested in the Arachnida, and payment of dues includes subscriptions to the *Journal of Arachnology* and *American Arachnology*. Current dues are \$12.50 per annum for regular members, \$7.50 for student members, and \$15.00 for institutional members. Membership may be had by remitting the appropriate dues to the Membership Secretary, Dr. Norman Platnick, American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street, New York, NY 10024. Dr. Herbert W. Levi, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA 02138, is the current president of the society.

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