

Obituary - Dr. Ian McTaggart-Cowan 1910 - 2010 by George P. Holm

Renowned University of British Columbia zoologist and early conservationist, Dr. Ian McTaggart-Cowan, died on April 18th in Saanich, Vancouver Island, British Columbia at the age of 99.

Dr. McTaggart-Cowan joined our club just after it was formed and was a member for several years. He did not come to a meeting, but contributed articles for the newsletter. Tom Rice recalls the one time he met with him - "I did drive to Vancouver to meet him and got a look at his collection at his home. I was very impressed with his collection as he had access to specimens collected by University expeditions, etc. And I was impressed with his cordiality to me who was just starting to study mollusks."

In the 1930's he founded the Marine Invertebrate Collection at U.B.C. with C. McLean Fraser. Most of his private collection is now housed there. The Cowan Vertebrate Museum, also at U.B.C., is named for him. Those facilities are now a part of the new Beaty Biodiversity Museum. His considerable collection of chitons is deposited in the Royal British Columbia Museum in Victoria.

Mollusk species described by Dr. McTaggart-Cowan are *Fissurisepta pacifica* Cowan 1969 and *Aligena (Odontogena) borealis* Cowan 1964. He was co-author in the description of two chitons species, *Mopalia spectabilis* Cowan and Cowan, 1977 and *Ischnochiton abyssicola* Smith and Cowan, 1966. A bivalve, *Cuspidaria cowani* Bernard, 1967, and a gastropod, *Cocculina cowani* McLean, 1987, both from British Columbia, are named for him.

He graduated from U.B.C. in 1932 and earned a PhD from the University of California in 1935. Returning to British Columbia, he was a scientist at the Provincial Museum in Victoria for five years. In 1940 he joined the faculty at U.B.C. as a zoology professor, becoming dean of graduate studies there in 1975, and was with the institution for 35 years. After retiring, at age 69, he became chancellor of the University of Victoria for five years.

His life was devoted to education, conservation and science. The broad range of his fields of study, from mammals to birds to mollusks, is reflected in the hundreds papers and articles he wrote. In the 1950's he became involved in the fledgling medium of television and ultimately made 110 television programs and 12 teaching films.

He received numerous awards of distinction including Officer of the Order of Canada and Officer of the Order of British Columbia.

References: <http://www.beatymuseum.ubc.ca>, <http://www.vancouver.sun.com>, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com>