



FRANK NELSON BLANCHARD

Photographed during a salamander hunt. A nest of *Hemidactylum*, whose life history is now well known because of his researches, may be seen in the lower center of the picture.

Frank Nelson Blanchard, 1888-1937

DR. FRANK N. BLANCHARD, stricken by bacterial infection in July, died on September twenty-first. His death was a serious loss to North American herpetology. His papers embodying research on various problems in North American snakes and on other aspects of herpetology had come to be recognized as models; his work on the life histories of snakes was especially original, and had set the standard in a field in which the genuine interest of natural history need not be lost in scientific investigation.

Frank N. Blanchard was born on December 19, 1888, at Stoneham, Massachusetts; his boyhood days were spent at nearby Somerville. Showing no inclination for the ancestral vocation of printing and publishing, his youthful enthusiasms were for music, electricity and chemistry, and it was not until he entered Tufts College that he developed the interest in biology which was to continue throughout his life. Entering as a prospective forester, he turned to zoology and to botany, through the encouragement of his professors, J. S. Kingsley and F. D. Lambert, and served as teaching assistant in the latter science during his senior year.

In 1913, after graduating at Tufts, he went to Massachusetts Agricultural College, at Amherst, to teach zoology, a position that he held for three years. Now for the first time he became actively interested in natural history. Extensive field observations were possible in a promising area, and most of the time he could spare from his academic duties was spent in the field, laying a foundation which was to aid later in making him one of the ablest natural history teachers of his day. Numerous entries in his journal¹ at this time show how eagerly he embraced every opportunity for zoological observations. Having lost a cherished possession on an excursion, he writes:

May 21 (Sun.) Took 9:07 car for Sunderland and went to the waterfall where I thought I lost my Phi Beta Kappa Key and found it at the very spot . . . Luckily found two earthworms in copulation under a stone, and spent over an hour making notes on the process. Got 7 new birds, making 67. Found a field sparrow's nest with 4 eggs. A most interesting day.

In 1916 he accepted a fellowship at the University of Michigan. His attention had been turning more and more toward vertebrates, and, under the inspiring influence of Dr. A. G. Ruthven, he decided upon a

¹ In 1905 Dr. Blanchard began the journal in which he made daily entries until his final illness. It is through the courtesy of his wife, Dr. Frieda Cobb Blanchard, his able collaborator in his field studies and in many of his researches, that the above data are made available.

study of the genus *Lampropeltis* as his doctoral problem, thus definitely centering his interest upon herpetology. In 1919, the year of the completion of his thesis, he served in the Division of Reptiles in the U. S. National Museum, a period which afforded a wonderful opportunity for stimulating association with Dr. Leonhard Stejneger. The following year, recognizing his scientific ability, the University of Michigan called him back to teach zoology; he was associate professor in this institution at the time of his death.

Wherever Dr. Blanchard might be, afield, he found problems offering themselves, and he realized that just as useful researches may be made in our own dooryards as in the alluring distance. Thus it happened that most of his researches were characteristically local, developing from problems noted on Saturday afternoon and Sunday rambles in local woods, or from field trips made for his classes. Chances for extended field work were few, but shorter trips for collecting and for observation of environments were made whenever intervals in his teaching schedule permitted.

Though his research interests had been confined to this country, he used his first sabbatical leave (1927-28) for that most desirable experience to one interested in general natural history and classification of vertebrates — a trip to New Zealand, Australia and Tasmania. When he was again eligible for leave, in the autumn of 1935, he had already made a start on a long planned manual of the snakes of the United States, a work for which he was particularly fitted through his comprehensive taxonomic studies of North American snakes and their life histories. In furtherance of this project he spent a semester, accompanied by Howard K. Gloyd, on a trip through the southwestern and western parts of the country, studying museum collections, conferring with herpetologists and making field observations. The need for such a manual and its fundamental importance are sufficiently obvious to zoologists and its completion is to be hoped for at the hands of Dr. Gloyd, who has been associated with it both in preliminary studies and final plan.

Dr. Blanchard's quiet modesty and his obviously unselfish interest in the furtherance of investigations in his field formed the basis of relations with his colleagues and students characterized always by mutual respect and confidence,—such relations as should always be distinctive of the friendships among scholars, above all, scientists.

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