



ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT CABINET

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Retired UK Zoology Professor Receives Top Honor *KY State Nature Preserves Commission Bestows Biological Award*

FRANKFORT, Ky. – Dec. 12, 2008 – The distinguished career of Dr. Thomas C. Barr Jr. was recognized by the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission during its year-end commission meeting on Dec. 10. Dr. Barr was the recipient of the 2008 Biological Diversity Protection Award, which recognizes a person, persons or organization that has made a significant contribution to the discovery and protection of Kentucky's biological diversity.

Dr. Barr was born in Nashville, where his lifelong commitment to the study and protection of caves began. Dr. Barr holds an A.B. degree from Harvard University, an M.A. from Columbia University and a Ph.D. from Vanderbilt University. He has taught at Texas Tech and Tennessee Tech universities. In 1961 he joined the University of Kentucky faculty as an assistant professor of zoology, remaining there for 32 years until his retirement in 1993. During his career at UK, he served as the chair of the Zoology Department and as president of the National Speleological Society, an organization dedicated to the study, conservation, exploration and knowledge of caves.

Dr. Barr's interests focus on the ecology and evolution of cave communities and ecology and systematics of carabid beetles, most notably of mountaintops and caves. He has long been recognized as an international authority on cave ecosystems and has published more than 100 papers in refereed journals. Following are highlights of some of his most important or Kentucky-related publications.

In 1959 he published a paper on new cave beetles from Kentucky and Tennessee. *Caves of Tennessee*, a widely used and often cited book, was published in 1961. In 1962, he published the blind beetles of Mammoth Cave, Kentucky, and in 1963 he published an ecological classification system for cave organisms that is still used today. "Cave Ecology and the Evolution of Trogllobites" was published in 1968, and in the late 1960s and early 1970s, after extensive work in Mammoth Cave he published a two-part series titled, "Ecological Studies in the Mammoth Cave System of Kentucky."

In the late 1970s and early 80's Dr. Barr coauthored two of KSNPC's technical reports on the cave fauna of the eastern and western Kentucky coal fields. He is a leading authority on cave beetles, describing many species that were new to science, and in 1985, he published one of his major works on beetles titled, "Pattern and Process in Speciation of Trechine Beetles in Eastern North America." During the 1990s he conducted status surveys for rare cave beetles in Kentucky and Tennessee funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and his data and recommendations were essential in determining which cave invertebrates were included on KSNPC's list of rare biota.

Dr. Barr continues to be actively involved in the protection of caves by publishing papers, sitting on boards, working with state and federal agencies, local and national cave organizations, and local citizens, such as the recent efforts to protect the Sloan's Valley cave system in Pulaski County. Many of his efforts are concentrated in Kentucky and Tennessee. For more than 50 years, Dr. Barr has been actively involved in cave ecology research and the protection of these fragile ecosystems.

Dr. John Holsinger, a colleague of Dr. Barr and biology professor at Old Dominion University, stated, "Tom's fieldwork in Kentucky and before that in Tennessee is virtually legendary...I strongly support the Biodiversity Protection Award for Tom."

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