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Robert Charles Cashner 1942 - 2018

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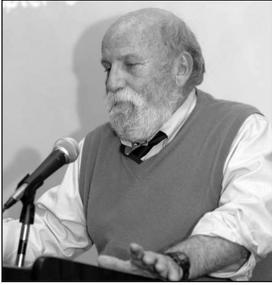
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OBITUARY



**ROBERT CHARLES
CASHNER**
1942 - 2018

Robert C. Cashner, widely beloved and respected fish biologist, passed away 1 July 2018 in New Orleans, LA at 76. To his colleagues he was ‘Bob’, and such was his reputation that often his surname was implied. “Bob will be running the symposium,” or “Bob gave a great talk,” would be typical phrases overheard at professional meetings. We all knew to which Bob people were referring. Bob’s 35 year career at the University of New Orleans was a rare balance of intellectual intensity, professional success, and an extraordinary capacity for showing kindness to others whether they were colleagues, employees, or students. Most of us are lucky if we can exhibit at least one of these qualities during our lives and careers.

Bob was born on 18 August 1942 in Flint, MI and his family would later move to Conroe, TX. In 1965, he received his B.S. from Lyon College (formerly Arkansas College) and would later serve on the Lyon College President’s Council. For his M.S. thesis at the University of Arkansas, Bob studied the fishes of the White River in northwestern Arkansas. Bob went on to complete his Ph.D. at Tulane University in New Orleans under Royal D. Suttkus where he conducted a systematic study of the genus *Ambloplites* (Pisces: Centrarchidae).

Immediately following the completion of his Ph.D., Bob began his long career at the University of New Orleans. He began as an Instructor in the Department of Biological Sciences and after serving in this position for 5 years was hired as a tenure track Assistant Professor in 1978. Bob rose through the ranks becoming a Full Professor in 1987, a Research Professor in 1993, and serving as Chair of Biological Sciences from 1993–1996. In 1996, he became Dean of the Graduate School and retained this position even after he was asked to also assume the role of Vice Chancellor for Research and Sponsored Programs in 2001. In 2005, he was part of a valiant administrative team that fought to save the university during the Hurricane Katrina disaster, after which he stayed on in both roles to further help the long recovery until he retired in 2008. Bob was also an active member and officer of the American Society of Ichthyology and Herpetology throughout his career, where he served on a number of Planning and Management Committee’s and chaired the 1996 and 2006 annual meetings in New Orleans. He served as president 1999 and past president and was elected to be a permanent member of the Board of Governors.

During his career, Bob mentored 29 graduate students and published over 60 peer-reviewed manuscripts. Most of Bob’s research over the years focused on freshwater fishes and this work took him to streams and rivers in Oklahoma, Arkansas, and even down under to Australia. In the last decade of his career, however, Bob developed and supported a research laboratory whose studies focused on estuarine and marine fishes in southeastern Louisiana. Of particular interest was how ecologically and economically important local fishes responded to environmental threats such as coastal land loss, sea level rise, hurricanes, and anthropogenic disturbances. Bob was a co-author on 3 peer-reviewed manuscripts during this period and his graduate students studied such diverse subjects as species extirpation from hurricane surges, barrier island fish assemblage dynamics, and responses of an invasive species to Hurricane Katrina. Even though Bob was an upper administrator at the university during most of this period, he would still regularly drop by the lab to check fish identifications and talk with graduate and undergraduate students about their research. Thanks to Bob’s efforts, the lab continues on with research a decade after his retirement with graduate students studying everything from Tarpon to sea turtles to Red Drum.

Bob was preceded in death by his wife and fellow biologist Frances ‘Fran’ Cashner. Before Hurricane Katrina, Bob and Fran were regularly seen walking in the morning along the levee next to the university. Fran would have her binoculars for birding and Bob would have his coffee and sometimes a dog on a leash. Both Bob and Fran loved nature and both inspired numerous students to pursue a career in biology, ecology, or environmental sciences. Bob is survived by his three daughters: Christi Cashner Alli, Dr. Mollie Cashner Woltmann (a biologist like her parents), and Emily Q. Laan (Bob’s main caregiver over the last few years). He is also survived by five grandchildren: Kallista, Nico, Sedge, Miles, and Townes.

The official obituary and memories of Bob can be found at <https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/new-orleans-la/robert-cashner-7901544>

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