

William Alfred Weber

The Acharius Medal is awarded by the IAL honouring outstanding lifetime achievements in lichenology. William Alfred Weber was awarded the Acharius medal on July 20th 2018, during the 11th International Mycological Conference in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and since he is 100 years old and still active, his lifetime contribution is exceptionally long.

William A. Weber (Professor of Natural History and Curator of the Herbarium Emeritus, University of Colorado Museum) was born in New York on November 16, 1918. His education includes a B.S. degree in 1940 (Iowa State College), M.S. degree in 1942 (Washington State University), and finally a Ph.D. degree in 1946 (Washington State University). Bill Weber was a faculty member in CU's biology department from 1946 to 1962. From 1962 until his retirement in 1991 he served full-time at the museum. In 2015 the University Libraries selected Bill Weber as *CU Legend* and honoured him with an exhibit; "The Naturalist", in recognition of his lifetime achievements, including his many services and contributions to the university. Biologists like him — "old school naturalists" with an in-depth knowledge of many taxonomic groups and their ecology — are becoming increasingly rare in the academic sciences. Of his many publications, many have dealt with cryptogams, and a substantial number of them are lichenological.

In 1951, that is, almost 70 years ago (!), Bill Weber entered the world of lichenology, which he himself has expressed was the "most significant event in my life". The first scientific article concerning lichens that he published appeared in 1954 (together with S. Shushan; *Lichens — only survivors?*). Over the years, he published several lichenological books (for example, Weber 1972; Weber & Corbridge 1998), monographs (for example Weber 1966, 1968), book chapters (for example Weber 1966), and scientific articles (for example Weber & Shushan 1955; Weber 1971; Weber, Bratt & Larsen 1987; Weber 1996; Bowler, Weber & Riefner 1996). The publications deal with a variety of themes, such as taxonomic revisions (for example, *Acarospora* and *Cyphelium* in the USA), checklists, descriptions of taxa, chemistry, and biogeography, and include several parts of the world (the U.S.A, especially Colorado; the Galapagos Islands; Nepal; New Guinea; and so on). He has described more than 40 taxa of lichen-forming fungi. Bill's continuing passion for lichenology resulted in the important work *A Rocky Mountain Lichen Primer* with former CU-Boulder Chancellor James Corbridge (1998).

During his approximately 65 years with lichens, he visited several areas that had never before seen a lichenologist. The most important example was in 1964, when he participated in the Galápagos International Scientific Expedition, which opened the islands to modern research. Bill was the first to explore the Galápagos Islands for bryophytes and lichens and, after nine trips, became the leading expert at the time on Galápagos mosses and lichens. This work resulted in numerous publications on the lichen mycobiota of the islands.

One more example of Bill's important contributions to lichenology is *The Lichenes Exsiccati COLO* (Weber 1961-1989, and additions in 2008), through which he assembled and distributed a standard herbarium of lichens. With 700 numbers, and over 40,000 specimens distributed to some 60 herbaria all over the world, it is an outstanding contribution. The exsiccate has been of service to the science of lichenology for over 50 years, and will most certainly be important for lichenological studies for many years to come.

In 1946, Bill acquired a small, low-quality herbarium of less than 50,000 specimens. Over forty years, he single-handedly, through collection and exchange, built it into a National Resource herbarium. Today, the CU Museum of Natural History Herbarium houses more than half a million specimens of vascular plants, bryophytes, and lichens, earning it national and international rankings in many of its holdings. The lichen collections contain ca 113,000 specimens. In 2012, the herbarium was named *The W. A. Weber Collection* in his honour.

Bill Weber has always been dedicated to his students. He encouraged field studies as part of their work, and a number of them have become professionals in herbarium curatorship. Several students mentored by him went on to possess significant capacities in lichenology, for example, Roger A. Anderson, Juliette Asta, and

Toby Spribille. He also trained D. D. Awasthi, who did his doctorate at CU, and who went on to become the great authority of Indian lichenology.

Approximately 20 lichen-forming taxa described by several authorities in lichenology are named in honour of Bill Weber. This includes the genus *Wawea* Henssen & Kantvilas, the species *Cetraria weberi* Esslinger, and *Xanthoria weberi* S. Kondr. & Kärnefelt.

Bill Weber turned 100 years old on November 16, 2018. Still active in botany, he is back with the cryptogams! Together with his daughter Linna, he recently published an online article about bryophytes. The paper is available on his personal website, which his grandson constructed <http://williamaweber.com/>

– Louise Lindblom

Bill Weber eventually received the Acharius Medal at a ceremony on August 15th 2018, during the ABLs meeting in Colorado, USA. Many thanks to Erin Tripp and Carla Rae Anderson who organised the transportation, and acted as couriers to carry the medal from Puerto Rico to this event, and to Frank Bungartz who, in the end, did the presentation on behalf of me!

– Mats Wedin