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VASCO M. TANNER

C. Lynn Hayward¹

During the summer of 1925 there arrived on the campus of Brigham Young University a young man who had received his Ph.D. from Stanford University that same year. Dr. Vasco M. Tanner had come to serve as chairman of the newly organized Department of Zoology and Entomology at the University.

Prior to the coming of Dr. Tanner a diversity of courses in the biological sciences were taught under several teachers. In 1903 Brigham Young Academy became a University through the efforts of President Benjamin Cluff. One of the early teachers of biological subjects was Chester Van Buren, who had accompanied President Cluff on an expedition to Central and South America. The school at that time, being principally a high school, offered only a limited number of courses on a college level, but Mr. Van Buren taught a course in ornithology during the 1904-05 school year. Later the curriculum was expanded to include courses in plant physiology, field botany, zoological collecting, and taxidermy. In 1908-09 a Department of Biology was organized, and for a three-year period Dr. Ralph V. Chamberlain was head of the department and was assisted by Chester Van Buren, Andrew T. Rasmussen, and Charles H. Carrol. Chamberlain left the University soon afterward. Van Buren departed to go into private business, Rasmussen went away for graduate work and later became a well-known neurologist, and Carrol eventually became a medical doctor.

Beginning about 1913 Professor Edwin Smart, who was trained primarily as a horticulturist, taught a course in entomology until his untimely death in 1920. Dr. Martin P. Henderson became professor of biology in 1915. He was assisted by Professor Smart and later by Drs. Horace G. Merrill and L. Weston Oakes, who had joined the medical staff and taught courses in physiology and health. Dr. Henderson became ill in 1923 and never again returned to his duties at the University. His work was taken up by Walter P. Cottam with the assistance of Drs. Merrill, Oakes, and Dr. Charles H. Carrol who had returned after completing his M.D. degree.

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On the arrival of Vasco M. Tanner in 1925 the biological work was divided into the departments of bacteriology, botany, and zoology. These departments were housed in the old Education Building on what had become known as the lower campus. At that time only the Maeser Building and the lower floor of the Brimhall Building stood on the upper campus. The space available for the newly organized Department of Zoology and Entomology consisted of two sizable laboratories, one or two smaller laboratories, and a little office space. Equipment was limited to about thirty microscopes and other minor items. Budgets were low, and for the most part teachers and students had to find their own animal specimens for study and dissection. As a student at that time, I recall taking a course in vertebrate zoology in which about all we had to work with in the laboratory was an old dogfish which had been dissected several times previously. Library facilities were also very limited. Perhaps all of the books and journals on the biological sciences then in the University library could have been placed in one or two sections of our present library.

Dr. Tanner, with his characteristic enthusiasm and vigor, soon began to remedy the lack of material for teaching and research. A field collecting expedition was organized in early summer of 1926. Besides Dr. Tanner, the expedition personnel consisted of Clarence Cottam, Claudeous Brown, and C. Lynn Hayward. The collection of entomological specimens was the main object of the expedition, but Clarence Cottam also collected a number of birds, and a fossil fish collection was obtained in Wyoming. Some fish, amphibians, reptiles, and plants were also collected. The itinerary included the shores of Great Salt Lake, parts of Weber County, Bear Lake Valley, southwestern Wyoming, the Uinta Mountains, and the Uinta Basin.

Transportation facilities for the expedition consisted of a Model T Ford and a trailer, which, when loaded, weighed almost as much as the Ford. The trip lasted nearly six weeks and was not without its vicissitudes and even perils, but it was the beginning of a long chain of collecting trips led by Dr. Tanner and others who have followed him. Extensive and invaluable collections are now available in the University for the use of students, teachers, and researchers.

Vasco Myron Tanner was born in Payson, Utah, October 29, 1892. The family later moved to Fairview, Utah, where Vasco received his early schooling. In 1915 he graduated from Brigham Young University. In 1920 he earned a Master of Arts degree from the University of Utah where he worked mainly in geology and paleontology and wrote his thesis on the ancient Lake Bonneville. From 1916 to 1924 he was head of the Department of Biology at Dixie College. He also served as state crop pest inspector during part of this time. While he was at Dixie College, Vasco met and married Annie Atkin, and they became parents of four girls and a son—Carol, Gloria, Marilyn, Carmela, and Jordan.

In 1924 Dr. Tanner left Dixie College to continue his graduate studies at Stanford University where he was awarded a Ph.D. in 1925. His special research interests were in entomology, particularly

in the field of insect morphology. He was, however, interested in many other facets of the biological sciences and became broadly trained in other areas. At the time of his sojourn at Stanford he came under the influence of the famous David Starr Jordan who aroused his interest in fishes and had a great influence on his life in many other ways. Jordan was, in turn, a student of the renowned Louis Agassiz. The broad biological interests and training of these famous naturalists were sources of great inspiration to Vasco Tanner and prepared him well for his responsibility of building a Department of Zoology and Entomology at Brigham Young University.

During the long period that Dr. Tanner served as department chairman, from the summer of 1925 to May 31, 1958, much of the emphasis in the biological sciences

was in the areas of taxonomy, distribution, ecology, and morphology. Dr. Tanner had many interests and was instrumental in amassing a large collection of insects, particularly in the order Coleoptera, and in seeing that these were housed in suitable cabinets. He was also active in building collections of fishes, amphibians, and reptiles and encouraged the growth of bird and mammal collections. He was interested in fresh water biology and spent several summers studying the lakes of the Uinta Mountains and other freshwater bodies in the West. Numerous publications listed in another section of this paper reflect his research interests in many of these areas.

These collections, together with the notes and published papers of Dr. Tanner and his students and associates, become increasingly valuable as the years go on and the growing pressure of rising human populations threaten the survival of many living organisms as well as the communities in which they live.

Up to the time of Dr. Tanner's retirement as chairman of the department, approximately sixty master's theses were produced. The doctoral degree was not offered during his tenure as chairman. Of the sixty theses, about forty were written under Dr. Tanner's personal supervision. The contribution to science of one man cannot be measured solely from his own works but must include the works of those who may in one way or another have come under his stimulating influence. Dr. Tanner constantly advised his students that a piece of research is not complete until the findings are on the



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printed page. This writer once undertook to assemble a bibliography of the writings of all the graduates of the Department of Zoology and Entomology from its beginning to 1960. While the list is undoubtedly incomplete, it contains about 870 titles. If it were brought up to date it would undoubtedly surpass the thousand mark.

During his professional lifetime in Utah, Dr. Tanner has been active and influential in the advancement of the biological sciences not only at Brigham Young University but at other institutions and agencies within the state. His interest in building collections of natural history objects stimulated other universities and colleges with the result that many thousands of specimens have been assembled for teaching and research. The farsighted value of this activity can be appreciated more as time goes on and as the danger of extinction of many species becomes more evident.

Another contribution of Dr. Tanner to science in Utah came about as a result of his early interest in and vigorous support of what was known at first as the Utah Academy of Science and later became the Utah Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters. For many years he was secretary of the academy and editor of its journal. During his editorship there was much interest in the biological and other sciences, and many important papers were published. Following his time as editor of the *Proceedings of the Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters* he established the *Great Basin Naturalist*. It began as volume one, number one, July 25, 1939, and has continued in unbroken sequence to the present day.

Vasco M. Tanner has long been an advocate and active supporter of conservation. Long before the term "ecology" became a household word, he and many of his associates and students preached the gospel of preservation of our natural resources. As a result of his working as a consultant of the United States Forest Service as well as other agencies, he has been influential in bringing much land, particularly along the Wasatch Front, under the control and protection of the Forest Service. Dr. Tanner has also been active in the State Parks Commission and in the National Parks Service. Closely associated with this activity has been his work in various civic enterprises which will be treated in separate articles.

Recognition of Dr. Tanner's standing in the scientific world is indicated by his membership in numerous scientific societies and in the fact that he has been granted a number of awards. He is a member of some fourteen scientific societies and is a fellow in five of them. He is one of few men in the western United States to be a fellow of the Royal Entomology Society of London. Special awards include the James E. Talmage Scientific Achievement Award, the Utah Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters Award in Biological Science, and Brigham Young University's Alumni Distinguished Service Award.

The major interest and contribution of Dr. Tanner has, of course, been in the area of teaching. If I were to name the most important characteristic of the successful teacher, I would say that it is to be able to inspire and stimulate his students. Vasco M. Tanner possesses

this ability to a remarkable degree. He was always interested in the great biologists of the past and took every opportunity to tell his students stories of their exploits and successes. To him David Starr Jordan, Louis Agassiz, Georges Cuvier, Charles Darwin, Jean Baptiste Lamarck, and a host of others of the past were figures of the greatest accomplishments, and he continuously stimulated his students to emulate them and to read their works. In the days when there were fewer students Dr. Tanner knew by name all of the pupils in his classes. If they showed the least interest in zoology or entomology he took a personal interest in them. Not only did he teach them, but he was concerned about their personal lives, their families, and their individual hopes.

Closely associated with Dr. Tanner's accomplishments as a scholar and teacher was his love of books and literature of all kinds in biology as well as in other areas. During his career he has assembled a personal library of thousands of books and reprints. Much of this material has found its way to the Brigham Young University library, but he still maintains much of this literature in his office and laboratory.

For his contributions to Brigham Young University as a scientist, teacher, editor, conservationist, and his inspiration to students, it is fitting that special recognition and tribute be paid to him in this issue of the *Great Basin Naturalist* on the occasion of his retirement as its founder and long time editor.

Following is a list of Dr. Tanner's publications to date:

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-22 The Bean Ladybird (*Epilachna corrupta* Muls.) Found in Southwestern Utah. Proceedings Pacific Coast Entomology Society 2(1):4.
- 1924 An Unique Blackbird. The Condor 26:192. Illus.
- 1925 Notes on the Collection of Fossil Fishes Contained in the University of Utah Collection with the Description of One New Species. Bulletin of the University of Utah 15(6):1-16. Illus.
- 1926 A New Species of Plastoceridae in the Genus Euthysanius (Coleoptera). Pan Pacific Entomologist 2(4):188-190. Illus.
- 1926 Life Zone Studies of Southwestern Utah. Utah Academy of Sciences 3:7.
- 1927 First Zoological Expedition of the Brigham Young University, 1926. Utah Academy of Sciences 4:23-24.
- 1927 Some of the Smaller Mammals of Mt. Timpanogos. Journal of Mammalogy 8(3):250-251.
- 1927 Notes on Birds Collected in the Virgin River Valley of Utah. The Condor 29:196-200.
- 1927 An Ecological Study of Utah Amphibia. Utah Academy of Sciences 5:6-7.
- 1927 Distributional List of the Amphibians and Reptiles of Utah. Copeia No. 163:54-58.
- 1927 Notes on Orthoptera and Dermaptera from Utah. Pan-Pacific Entomologist, 3(4):178-179.
- 1927 A Preliminary Study of the Genitalia of Female Coleoptera. Transactions of the American Entomological Society 53:5-50, pls. II-XV. 222 figs.
- 1927 A Preliminary Study of the Genitalia of Female Coleoptera. Abstracts of Dissertations for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Stanford University, 4 p.
- 1928 The Coleoptera of Zion National Park, Utah. Annals of the Entomological Society of America 21(2):269-381. 1 pl.
- 1928 The Golden Eagle. The Utah Educational Review 21(6):4 p.

- 1928 Distributional List of the Amphibians and Reptiles of Utah, No. 2. *Copeia* No. 166:23-28.
- 1929 Future Human Progress. The Scratch, Vol. 1, No. 1. (A magazine published quarterly by the student body. Brigham Young University. 6 p.)
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- 1929 A Distributional List of the Amphibians and Reptiles of Utah, No. 3. *Copeia* No. 171:46-52.
- 1929 Studies in Utah Orthoptera. (With Wilford Olsen), *Utah Academy of Sciences* 6:30-31.
- 1929 The Mexican Bean Beetle in Utah. *Pan-Pacific Entomologist* 5(4):183-186.
- 1929 Coleoptera of Utah—Cicindelidae. *Pan-Pacific Entomologist* 6(2):78-87.
- 1930 The Amphibians and Reptiles of Bryce Canyon National Park, Utah. *Copeia* No. 2(June 30):41-43.
- 1930 Fresh Water Biological Studies at Utah Lake, Utah. *Utah Academy of Sciences* 7:60-61.
- 1931 A Synoptical Study of Utah Amphibia. *Utah Academy of Sciences* 8:159-198, 11 pls.
- 1931 Fresh Water Biological Studies at Utah Lake—No. 2. *Utah Academy of Sciences* 8:199-203, 1 pl.
- 1931 A Preliminary Report on a Biological Survey of the Uintah Mountain Lakes. *Utah Academy of Sciences* 8:155-158.
- 1932 Ecological and Distributional Notes on the Freshwater Sponges and Bryozoa of Utah. *Utah Academy of Sciences* 9:113-115.
- 1932 Entomological Collections of the Rocky Mountain Region. Report of the Ninth Rocky Mountain Conference of Entomology, Pingree Park, Colo., August 15-20, 2 p.
- 1932 A Description of *Notolepidomyzon utahensis*, a New Catostomid from Utah. *Copeia* No. 3(October 7):135-136.
- 1933 Notes on Utah Lepidoptera. (With Owen M. Davis), *Utah Academy of Sciences* 10:151-152.
- 1933 The Genus *Salmo* in Utah. (With Sheldon P. Hayes), *Utah Academy of Sciences* 10:163-164.
- 1933 A Study of the Variation of the Dorsal Scale Rows of *Charina bottae* (Blainville). *Copeia* No. 2(July 20):81-84.
- 1933 Herpetological Note. *Copeia* No. 1(April 3): 42.
- 1933 Subject and Author Index to the Ten Volumes Published by the Utah Academy of Sciences from 1918 to 1933. *Utah Academy of Sciences* 10:167-183.
- 1934 A Biological Study of the La Sal Mountains, Utah. Report No. 1 (Ecology). (With C. Lynn Hayward), *Utah Academy of Sciences* 11:209-235.
- 1934 Studies in the Weevils of the Western United States, No. 1. *Utah Academy of Sciences* 11:283-288.
- 1934 The Coleoptera of Zion National Park, No. 2. *Annals of the Entomological Society of America* 27:43-49.
- 1935 List of the Insect Types in the Entomological Collections of the Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, No. 1. *Utah Academy of Sciences* 12:181-193.
- 1935 Western Worm Snake, *Siagonodon humilis* (Baird and Girard) Found in Utah. *Utah Academy of Sciences* 12:267-270.
- 1935 Instructions for the Preparation of Competition Papers. *Bios* 6:334-335.
- 1936 Description of Two Melyrids from Utah (Coleoptera-Melyridae). *Utah Academy of Sciences* 13:153-54.
- 1936 List of the Insect Types in the Entomological Collections of the Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, No. 2. *Utah Academy of Sciences* 13:147-152.
- 1936 A Study of the Fishes of Utah. *Utah Academy of Sciences* 13:155-184, pls. I-III.
- 1936 A Study of Utah Fossil Fishes with the Description of a New Genus and Species. *Utah Academy of Sciences* 13:81-90.
- 1936 The Western Mockingbird in Utah. *Utah Academy of Sciences* 13:185-187.

- 1936 Shall We Adopt Means of Conserving the Wild Life of Utah? Utah Academy of Sciences 13:189-190.
- 1938 Phylum Arthropoda (Cont'd) Onychophora, Chilopoda and Diplopoda; Arachnida; Class Insecta; The Locust. Potter's Textbook of Zoology, pp. 286-358; figs. 161-206.
- 1938 A New Weevil in the Genus *Dyslobus*, Study No. 2. Utah Academy of Sciences 15:147-48.
- 1938 A New Subspecies of Worm Snake from Utah. Utah Academy of Sciences 15:149-50.
- 1939 Studies in the Weevils of the Western United States, No. 3: New Species from Utah. Great Basin Naturalist 1(1):31-32.
- 1939 A Study of the Genus *Scaphiopus* (The Spade-foot Toads). Great Basin Naturalist 1(1):3-26, pls. 1-III.
- 1939 Notes on *Charina bottae* in Utah: Reproduction (With W. W. Tanner), Great Basin Naturalist 1(1):27-30.
- 1939 Albert B. Reagan, 1871-1936. Utah Academy of Sciences 16:5-19.
- 1939 Introductory Note to Great Basin Naturalist 1(1):1.
- 1939 Notes on the Gordiacea of Utah, Great Basin Naturalist 1(1):2.
- 1940 A Chapter on the Natural History of the Great Basin, 1800-1855. Great Basin Naturalist 1(2):33-61.
- 1940 A Biotic Study of the Kaiparowits Region of Utah. Great Basin Naturalist 1(3-4):97-126. Illus.
- 1940 Dr. Henry Clinton Fall, 1862-1939. Great Basin Naturalist 1(2):62.
- 1940 *Spongilla fragilis* Found in Utah Lake and Salem Pond. Great Basin Naturalist 1(2):61.
- 1940 Dr. Pfouts Contributes Butterflies. Great Basin Naturalist 1(2):61.
- 1940 The Flying Squirrel Collected in Garfield County, Utah. Great Basin Naturalist 1(3 & 4):126.
- 1940 John E. Blazzard Contributed Mammal Collections. Great Basin Naturalist 1(3 & 4):146.
- 1941 Studies in the Weevils of the Western United States. No. 4: A New Species of *Cimbochera*. Great Basin Naturalist 2(1):29-32.
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- 1941 Painted Lady Butterfly in Migration. Great Basin Naturalist 2(2):104.
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- 1941 Lesser Yellow Legs, New Record for Washington County, Utah. Great Basin Naturalist 2(2):86.
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- 1942 A Review of the Genus *Notolepidomyzon* with a Description of a New Species (Pisces-Catostomidae). Great Basin Naturalist 3(2):27-32.
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- 1942 George Paul Engelhardt (1871-1942). Great Basin Naturalist 3(2):57-58.
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- 1942 Notes on the Birth and Growth of Horned Lizards. Great Basin Naturalist 3(2):60.
- 1943 A Study of the Subtribe Hydonomi with a Description of New Species. (Curculionidae) Study No. 6. Great Basin Naturalist 4(1-2):1-38. Illus.
- 1943 The Mexican Bean Beetle, *Epilachna varivestis* Mulsant. Does Range in Utah in 1943. Great Basin Naturalist 4(3-4):61.
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- 1949 Amphibians and Reptiles Contributed to Brigham Young University by Owen Bryant. Great Basin Naturalist 9(3-4):47-49.
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- 1951 Pacific Islands Herpetology No. 5. Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands: A Check List of Species. Great Basin Naturalist 11(3-4):53-86.
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- 1954 The Utah Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters. Science 119(3082): January 22.
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