

NEWS

Richard L. Hurley, 1934-2008

by Justin Runyon

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Richard Lester Hurley, dolichopodid worker and friend to everyone, passed away on September 3rd at the age of 74. He was born on June 22, 1934 in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario and received a B.A. in biology from Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario in 1957. For his senior thesis, he conducted an insect survey of the Lake Opinicon region. Rich spent the summers of 1957-58 working for Agriculture Canada; collecting insects in the Northwest Territories for the Northern Insect Survey in 1957, and in southern Manitoba in 1958. It was during these two summers that his interests were confidently narrowed to Diptera ("refined" as Rich would say). For this, Rich was charged with collecting all insects, but he quickly favored the flies – in particular the ornate, long-legged Dolichopodidae. After polling a number of prominent dipterists for a list of dolichopodid genera most in need of revision, he chose *Hydrophorus* for his doctoral work. Rich completed his Ph.D. in Systematic Entomology in 1965 at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana.



Photo: Emily Nichols

Rich then became a professor of Biology at Humboldt State University in Arcata, California where he remained for 30 years (1966-1996). There, he was an admired teacher and advised approximately a dozen graduate students on subjects ranging from pigments of butterfly wings, to the arthropod fauna in pitcher plants, to histology of glands found in dolichopodids. Rich's enthusiasm for Diptera was contagious: one student had a large, male *Dolichopus* tattooed on his arm! He also led annual field trips to the desert southwest, which are much storied and remain legendary among the participants. At Humboldt, in spite of his large teaching load, Rich completed work on *Hydrophorus* and the other Hydrophorinae genera *Hydatostega* and *Scellus*. All were published in the monographic series, *Flies of the Nearctic Region*.

Upon retiring in 1996, Rich was associate curator of the Montana Entomology Collection (MTEC) at Montana State University until his death. Rich played an important role in the education of most entomology students there, and when asked by two graduate students, even became an ordained minister in order to marry them. I knew nothing about flies when I met Rich in 1998. Under his guidance we published five papers, including a revision of *Nepalomyia*, the discovery of a fly with asymmetrical wings, and a biography of Fred C. Harmston. And I was never officially his student.

Rich authored or coauthored 9 scientific papers, including 224 pages in the two Hydrophorinae monographs, and described 1 genus group name and 22 species group names (we have projects near completion so there's more to come). He was an avid collector and donated his extensive collection of Dolichopodidae to the MTEC in 1996.

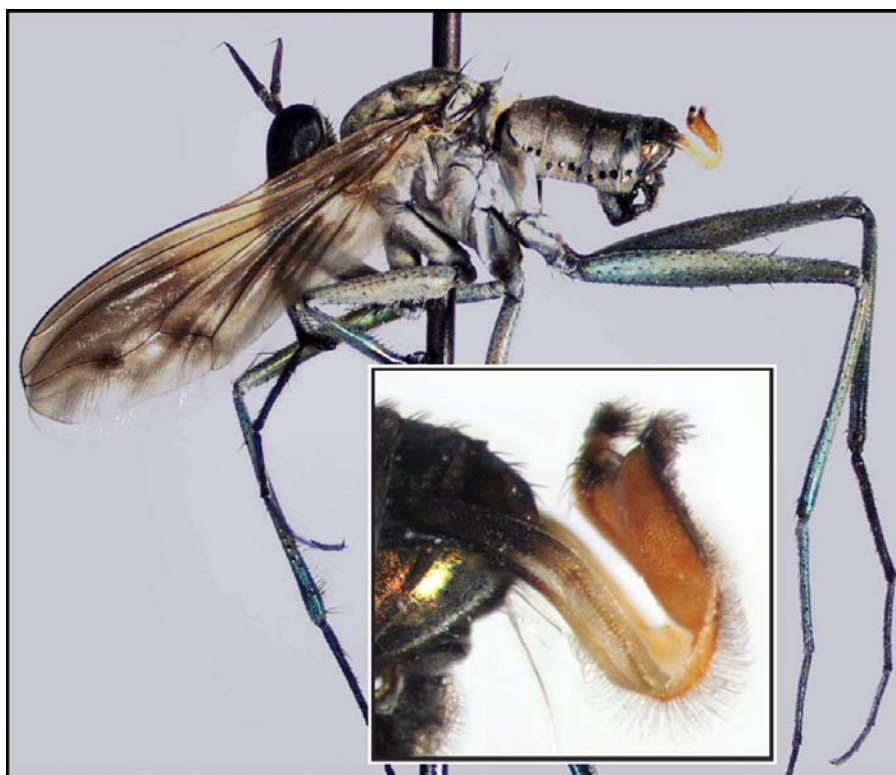
Those who knew Rich describe him using words including: beloved, helpful, easy-going, smiling, humorous, and a truly accurate dipterist. In true Rich fashion, he did not want a sad funeral, but chose a “memorial celebration” with pizza and beer. That was Rich. He will be missed.

The Cingulum: a unique structure of some Dolichopodidae

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The cingulum is a U-shaped structure of unknown function which arises between abdominal sterna 4 and 5 and terminates in a pair of variously modified flag-like appendages. This structure is well developed only in males of the genus *Scellus*. Richard Hurley discovered that *Hydatostega* have a much reduced cingulum, a finding that had broad implications for elucidating hydrophorine phylogeny. Rich suggested that the size and bright coloration might serve a visual signaling function, whereas the arrangement of hairs suggests a pheromone-dispersing function.



Scellus virago Aldrich showing the bright orange cingulum arising from abdomen. The bright coloration fades over time in preserved specimens. Inset: close-up view.