



**Ernie Nelson named Curator  
of the Rocky Mountain Herbarium**

Burrell Ernest (“Ernie”) Nelson has assumed the duties of Curator of the Rocky Mountain Herbarium (RM), replacing Ronald L. Hartman who retired this past fall.

Ernie heralds from Berrien Springs, MI where his dad worked at Andrews University. He was turned on to birdwatching by his high school biology teacher. Upon graduating high school, he and a buddy set out to “explore the West” by jeep, with bird guides and plant press in tow. By chance, they encountered Bob Stolze, a fern specialist from the Natural History Museum (Chicago) on their summer saga, whose encouragement sparked the budding botanist.

Brick-laying helped support Ernie’s ensuing academic pursuits at Andrews University, where field studies were his passion. He sought out old-growth forests, and bogs with their pitcher plants and orchids. In 1972, he returned to the Rockies for graduate school, awarded the Aven Nelson Research Fellowship at University of Wyoming, and mentored by John and Charlotte Reeder. His thesis was titled “Vascular Plants of the Medicine Bow Range” supported by the Payson Award. He was hired as Herbarium Assistant prior to graduating.

Ernie has been integral to the botanical inventory of the Rockies that began with the arrival of Hartman in 1977. He helped train fifty master’s students in the floristics program, always quick to answer questions and share his knowledge. He has overseen hundreds of undergraduate employees in mounting, databasing and filing specimens, and more recently, imaging specimens. During most summers he has spent many weeks with graduate students assisting in their fieldwork. In the early 1990s, he became Herbarium Manager. He and Ron published floristics papers, several of which were coauthored with graduate students. A life list of almost 400 birds is a feat for most biologists, but Ernie has also made a total of 85,542 plant collections and continues to support student work and research at RM.

*By Ron Hartman, Professor Emeritus*

Announcing RM Event:

**Historical Journey of Wyoming's Plant  
Explorers, from Horseback to Satellites**

Where: Berry Biodiversity Conservation Center,  
Oct 27 at @ 10<sup>th</sup> and Lewis Streets (U-WY)

Preceded by RM Open House @ 4:30 pm, and a  
Reception follows the talk

Botanist and author Robert Dorn will talk about exploration of Wyoming’s rich plant life. Advances in technology across three centuries have streamlined the process--from horseback to motorized vehicles, quill pens to computers, and unmapped wilderness to GPS. He received his PhD from the Botany Department (U-WY) and authored *Vascular Plants of Wyoming* (3rd ed., 2001), *The Wyoming Landscape, 1805-1878* (1986), and co-authored with his wife Jane, *Wyoming Birds* (2nd ed., 1999) and *Growing Native Plants of the Rocky Mountain Area* (2007).

*This event is sponsored by RM and Biodiversity Institute (U-WY).*

**Volunteers Mount Hours** (and specimens)

In only eight months since the start of the new volunteer program at Rocky Mountain Herbarium (RM), over 3000 hours have been logged!!! The hours were spent on core specimen tasks: mounting, sorting, filing, databasing and imaging. The hours also represent everyone’s attendance at volunteer nights, professional contributions of Dr. Ron Hartman (Professor Emeritus), and coordination by Charmaine Delmatier (Volunteer Director). The exact total of 3183 hours is an investment in people’s time that stretches the work of RM staff and student employees even farther. Why keep track? These records will appear in grant proposals for RM. They tangibly testify to public support before an administration faced with fiscal austerity. They also put impressive numbers on this team effort that is strengthening our Herbarium.

**Volunteers in the Spotlight**

Abby Kirkaldie has databased collection labels and mounted plants for RM. She leaves shortly for Lewistown, Montana and a new job as GIS specialist with BLM. She relishes GIS, botany and forestry (in which she has her degree), and has done extensive field work from Alaska to Canada to Wyoming. She also loves traveling-by-book, reading books from the RM library.



Abbv Kirkaldie

*...Thank you, Abby, for your time at RM!*