

## Resolution of Respect

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### Frank Edwin Egler 1911–1996

Frank Egler, plant ecologist, vegetation manager, conservationist, critic, and iconoclast, passed away in North Canaan, Connecticut on 26 December 1996 at the age of 85. Frank was one of the last of the group of original thinkers who traced their lineage directly to Henry Chandler Cowles and the beginnings of American ecology. His wife, Happy Kitchel Egler, died in 1978. There were no children.

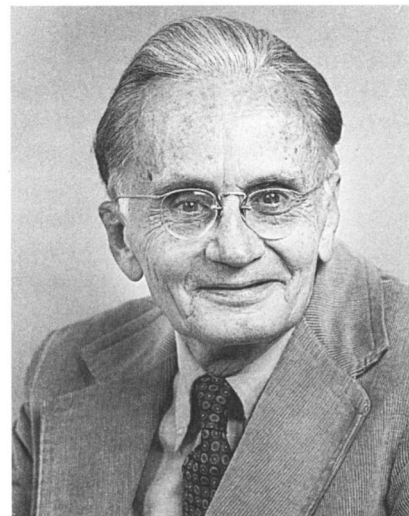
Frank was born in New York City on 26 April 1911, the son of Charles John and Florence Edna (Wilshusen) Egler. After a series of prep schools in and around Manhattan, he enrolled at the (then) New York State College of Forestry, rechartered in 1972 as the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF) in Syracuse. Two years later, the summer of 1931 found him at the University of Michigan Biological Station at Douglas Lake, whence he moved to the University of Chicago to complete a Bachelor's degree in Botany with Cowles.

Following his Chicago degree, he matriculated at the University of Minnesota to work on an M.S. with William Skinner Cooper, presenting a thesis in 1934, "Communities and successional trends in the vegetation of the Coos Bay Sand Dunes, Oregon." At Minnesota in the early 1930s, he was part of an extraordinary group of ecologists that included Murray Buell (and Helen Foote Buell), Bob Humphrey, Rexford Daubenmire, and Henry Oosting. For the rest of his life, Egler acknowledged Cooper as the primary influence and mentor in his education as an ecologist. Egler subsequently finished his Ph.D. in June 1936 as an Eaton Scholar and University Fellow under the nominal direction of George Elwood Nichols at Yale. That last year at Yale, Carl Skottsberg was a Visiting Professor, on appointment

from the Bishop Museum. A Yale-Bishop Fellowship was offered for a year in Oceania; Egler applied and was accepted. As he was not due in Hawaii until fall, Frank shipped eastward, signing up for summer courses in French at the Sorbonne. Skottsberg outlined an itinerary, including a long list of individuals and institutions to contact along the way. The trip from Paris to Honolulu was a glorious march of adventure, experience, and learning, unscheduled, planned only in a vague way, and altered with the unexpected. After two weeks in Montpellier at S.I.G.M.A., when both Pavillard and Braun-Blanquet were away on vacation, he stopped in Algeria, Tunis, Malta, Egypt, India, Ceylon, Malaya, Java, China, and Japan.

While at the Bishop Museum, he worked on the arid vegetation in southeast Oahu, and then came the 1937 call from Syracuse. He was hired at the New York State College of Forestry as Assistant Professor of Botany, a post he held until 1944, with a wartime hiatus for work with the American Chicle Company in Honduras searching for alternate sources of rubber. During his time at ESF, he was instrumental in preserving the 1000-acre "natural area" at the Huntington Wildlife Forest in the central Adirondacks (*Science* 94:16–17, 1941), now the largest remaining tract of old-growth forest east of the Mississippi. Summers were valuable experiences, including a stay at the Jornada range in New Mexico, one in Martinique (returning via Trinidad and Panama), and another in Virginia and Florida following a failed attempt to spend the time in Cuba. His last visit to the College was in October 1984, when he gave two professional seminars as part of the Graduate Student Association series.

He served on the faculties at Yale, the University of Connecticut, and Wesleyan University, and directed the development of the "Hall of Forests" at the American Museum of



Natural History in the 1950s. He became the world authority on vegetation management in rights-of-way, and served as consultant to innumerable power companies, landscape management firms, and pesticide application consortia. His research with herbicides was cited by Rachel Carson, but got him fired from the Museum, where DuPont was a major benefactor at the time.

Beginning in 1945, the effort becoming full-time in the late 1950s, Dr. Egler directed research activities at Aton Forest, his family estate at Norfolk in northwestern Connecticut. He nurtured a magnificent series of experimental permanent plots to monitor changes in vegetation. Over the years, Aton Forest became synonymous with "experimental field station," where Egler maintained his research, record-keeping, data analysis, and writing.

As an ecologist, Egler built a solid international reputation as a scholar and critic, publishing five books and over 200 journal papers. His essay, "A commentary on American plant ecology," set a standard for scientific critique for over 40 years. He was a Guggenheim Fellow (1956–1958), and a Fellow of AAAS, the American Geographical Society, and the American Museum of Natural History. In 1978, he was honored by the Ecologi-

cal Society of America with its Distinguished Service Citation.

Frank had a love for anagrams, which he coupled with pen names, pseudonyms, and similar literary disguises. Warren G. Kenfield, the alleged author of *The Wild Gardener in the Wild Landscape*, is an anagram for Frank Edwin Egler. Similarly, Stan R. Foote, who appears as author or coauthor in several publications, is an anagram of Aton Forest.

In mid-August, on the way home from the last ESA meetings in Providence, we stopped at Aton Forest to visit Frank. He was a bit pale and obviously frail, but in excellent spirits. He wanted detailed descriptions of and commentary on all the sessions, what the symposia were like, who was there, and how many were in attendance. In particular, he wanted my opinion of the best papers that I heard, and it was obvious that he had read through the program meticulously. In early evening, during cheese and crackers in front of his big, old house, 18 wild turkeys almost walked over us. It thrilled Frank—and us—to see the huge birds so close, emblematic of the holism he tried to build into Aton Forest. When we left to return to Syracuse, I remarked to my wife, “That’s probably the last time we’ll see him.”

### Selected bibliography

Frank Egler’s published scientific works run to a couple of hundred titles or more, and these have not, to my knowledge, been compiled in an adequate or annotated bibliography. Dr. Egler’s trenchant and provocative book reviews are well known, and served, in part, as a basis for his Distinguished Service Citation from the Ecological Society of America. There

is also a scattered body of published literature that serves to make Egler the unquestioned expert on vegetation management in rights-of-way. Four other series, however, deserve mention in this resolution; his books, the regional monographs, the vegetation bibliographies, and three papers that I consider to merit the designation, “classic.”

### Books

Kenfield, Warren G. 1966. *The wild gardener in the wild landscape. The art of naturalistic landscaping*. Hafner, New York, New York, USA. xi + 232 pp.

Egler, Frank E. 1971. *The way of science. A philosophy of ecology for the layman*. Hafner, New York, New York, USA. 160 pp.

———. 1977. *The nature of vegetation. Its management and mismanagement. An introduction to vegetation science*. Aton Forest, Norfolk, Connecticut, in cooperation with Connecticut Conservation Association, Bridgewater, Connecticut, USA. xvii + 527 pp.

———. 1983. *The nature of naturalization II. Studies in naturalization 1925–1980. The introduced flora of Aton Forest*. Publication Number 6, Phillips Herbarium, Dover State College, Dover, Delaware, USA. 145 pp.

Egler, Frank E., and Stan R. Foote. 1975. *The plight of the rightofway domain*. Futura Media Services, Mt. Kisco, New York, USA. Part I, 294 pp. Part II, 160 pp.

### Regional vegetation monographs

———. 1939. *Vegetation zones of Oahu, Hawaii*. *Empire Forestry Journal* 18(1):44–57.

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———. 1952. *Southeast saline Everglades vegetation, Florida, and its management*. *Vegetatio* 3(4/5): 213–265.

Miller, W. R., and F. E. Egler. 1950. *Vegetation of the Wequetequock-Pawcatuck tidal marshes, Connecticut*. *Ecological Monographs* 20:143–172.

### Vegetation bibliographies

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### Classic papers

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