



News Release

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Dr. Gary Fellers – Leader in Amphibian Conservation – Passes Away

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Dr. Gary Fellers, researcher emeritus with the U.S. Geological Survey, passed away last month after a 40-year career as an ecologist with the USGS Western Ecological Science Center and the National Park Service. He was a pioneer in herpetology – the study of amphibians and reptiles – and helped bring to light the worldwide decline of amphibians.

Dr. Fellers contributed to a wider understanding of the secretive island night lizard at Channel Islands National Park, closely monitored populations of the endangered Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog within Yosemite National Park, and championed conservation and knowledge of the threatened California red-legged frog and Townsend’s big-eared bat at Point Reyes National Seashore, first as a National Park Service biologist, and then as a research biologist for USGS.

“Gary was an old-school naturalist,” said collaborator and fellow USGS scientist Patrick Kleeman. “He had a broad knowledge base that stood out in a research world where narrowly focused research programs were common.”

Although Dr. Fellers was best known for his lizard and amphibian work, his position as a federal scientist allowed him to broadly apply his wide knowledge and fascination with the natural world. He explored the plants and animals of California, especially in the Channel Islands and at Point Reyes. Whether deer or deer mice, rare plants or ants—Fellers observed, tagged, analyzed and wrote about them all.

Sarah Allen, former science division chief at Point Reyes National Seashore, [said in 2013](#) that Fellers’ publications were “a window into the most pressing resource management issues of the past three decades.”

Fellers’ work was shaped by his adventurous spirit of inquiry. Fellers’ colleagues describe his attitude toward studying wildlife and trying new things as one where he took advantage of exciting opportunities in the moment—when else but now? And when “now” lasts 40 years, one can accomplish an awful lot, said WERC Center Director A. Keith Miles.

Dr. Fellers retired from USGS in 2013. The work he did before and after retirement will continue to shape herpetology research for years to come.