



HARRIET B. MERRILL

1863-1915, UNITED STATES

Ecologist known for her studies on microscopic freshwater animals (zooplankton), specifically on the genus *Daphnia*.

She possibly was the first female limnologist hired by an American university. She held a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Wisconsin (1890) and became Assistant Professor of the Department of Zoology at the University of Wisconsin in 1900.

She did two expeditions across South America without a male companion (1902-1903 and 1907-1909).

HERSTORY

For 75 years, Harriet was erased from the history of Limnology. In the 1990s, her grandniece brought her out of total obscurity by publishing her biography, and the University of Illinois stepped up to preserve her papers.

TAXONOMY OF CLADOCERAN



Geoffrey Fryer, Juan C. Paggi.
(1972). Crustaceana.

Merrill described the appendages of *Bunops scutifrons* (Cladocera: Macrothricidae) in detail.

Differences between *Bunops scutifrons* and their homologues in *Onchobunops*:

- The **epipodites** on the trunk limbs are larger in *Onchobunops* than in *Bunops*.
- There is no "maxillary process" (or **inner lobe**) in *Bunops*, while *Onchobunops* have a lobe with 3 setae.

EXPEDITIONS



She led two expeditions to South America to collect and study Cladocera.

In both cases, she travelled alone and under difficult conditions. Some of her travel stories were published in a local newspaper.

First expedition (1902-1903). Her collections and notes were modest

Second expedition (1907-1908). Harriet collected ~ 500 vials of material from different freshwater bodies, particularly in Brazil. The collections were mostly of Cladocera species, but also contain other Entomostraca species. These items were kept for years at Wisconsin museums.

RELEVANT CONTRIBUTIONS

Merrill, H.B. (1893). The structure and affinities of *Bunops scutifrons*. Birge. Trans. Wisconsin Academy of Science, Arts and Letters, 9, 319-342.

LOOKING
FOR MORE?

You can find more information about her story and research at:

<https://writingroughshod.com/2016/08/16/just-the-facts-maam-resources-on-harriet-bell-merrill/>

<https://blog.limnology.wisc.edu/2013/04/24/lean-in-to-limnology-a-history-of-aquatic-ecologists/>

Hartridge, M. L. (1997). The Anandrous Journey: The discovery of revealing letters to a mentor.