James Franklin (Jim) Scudday (Fig. 1) died 24 September 2009 at the hospital in Alpine, Texas, following an extended illness. He was among the most knowledgeable natural history biologists of his time and a rich source of information for students during a long and distinguished teaching career at Sul Ross State University.

Jim Scudday was born 16 September 1929 in Alpine. He attended public schools in Alpine and Fort Stockton, graduating from Fort Stockton High School in 1948. After high school, he attended the University of New Mexico for 1 year (with an archeology degree on his mind), before entering Sul Ross State University, where he earned a B.S. degree (Biology) in 1952. His first teaching job was in science at Fort Stockton High School, 1952–1954. From 1954 to 1956, he served in the United States Army, stationed at Fort Bliss, El Paso, Texas, and at Fort Hamilton, Brooklyn, New York. After being honorably discharged from the Army, he taught biology at Andrews High School from 1956 to 1962. During that time, making good use of his summers, he also completed requirements for a Master of Natural Science degree (1962) at the University of Idaho, Moscow.

Jim joined the Sul Ross faculty as Instructor of Biology in 1962; he was promoted to Assistant Professor in 1969. In 1967, he entered a doctoral program in Wildlife Science at Texas A&M University, College Station, specializing in herpetology, under the direction of Jim Dixon; the Ph.D. degree was earned in 1971. Jim Scudday was promoted to Associate Professor in 1973 and to Professor in 1976. Jim’s career at Sul Ross spanned 33 years; he taught for 31 years, with 2 years in residence at College Station. Upon retirement on 31 July 1995, the Texas State University System Board of Regents named him Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Biology, the Board’s highest honor for retired teachers.

During his tenure at Sul Ross, Jim taught a wide array of courses including, general zoology, comparative vertebrate biology, invertebrate biology, herpetology, mammalogy, ornithology, ichthyology, desert ecology, animal systematics, and field zoology. He was THE vertebrate biologist in a department with five faculty members, typically teaching four classes per semester. In spite of a heavy teaching load, he was active in zoological research, authoring many fine publications, several concerning whiptail lizards, one of his favorite herp groups. In my opinion, some of his best work is in the form of comprehensive vertebrate fauna surveys for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, 14 of them, concerning various Texas Natural Areas Survey projects. Jim served as major advisor for numerous graduate students, as I recall supervising 5–9 graduate students in thesis research during most semesters, with a high of 15 or 16 during one period. He was extremely proud of his graduate students, often commenting about the high quality of their work on thesis projects as well as subsequent professional achievements. Through the years, many of these students consistently returned to visit Jim, never failing to express appreciation for the academic and personal influences he had on their lives. In 1996, the Southwestern Association of Naturalists honored Jim with the Robert L. Packard Outstanding Educator Award.

Fig. 1—Jim Scudday on a collecting trip in Baja California, Mexico, March 1970 / Jim Scudday en una expedición para colectar ejemplares en Baja California, México, en marzo de 1970.