

Andrew Delmar Hopkins



Andrew Delmar Hopkins was born near Ripley in 1857 and died at his farm in Wood County in 1948. He is considered the “father of forest entomology” for his work studying and cataloging pest insects in West Virginia and elsewhere.

Economic Entomology was a fledgling field when Hopkins began his career and he had little formal training as a result. However, he acquired a wealth of knowledge in the field, documenting the insects that threatened West Virginia’s fields and forests and authoring dozens of academic papers of international import.

His investigation of the Hessian fly, a wheat pest, is considered a classic in the discipline. Hopkins used thousands of widespread climate observations to develop the “Hopkins Bioclimatic Law,” which provides a formula to determine dates for seasonal biological events in particular areas based on latitude, longitude and elevation. Hessian flies are only active for a short period early in the Spring, so wheat planting could safely occur after those dates, he reasoned.

His work on southern pine beetle, a type of bark beetle, led him to Germany where he collected parasites to release against the beetles. It was the first time an insect biological control had been used in the United States at a time when no practical forest insecticides existed.

He began teaching classes at WVU in the 1880s and was awarded an honorary doctorate in 1893. He was hired by USDA in 1899 to study bark beetles in western states. He was moved to Washington, D.C., in 1902. He became the head of the Division of Forest Insects in USDA’s Bureau of Entomology in 1904, a position he held for 21 years.

Hopkins was the founder and first president of the West Virginia Academy of Science, president of the Association of Economic Entomologists, President of the Biological Society of Washington, a life member of the American Meteorological Society, a fellow of the Entomological Society of America, fellow of the American Association (then Academy) for the Advancement of Science, and an honorary member of the Society of Economic Entomologists of England, among others.

He also served as the vice director of the West Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station, where he published the Catalog of Forest and Shade Tree Insects and the Catalog of West Virginia Scolytidae (bark beetles) and Their Enemies. In another report, he notes that he had described and published six new generations and 196 new species of insects.