

awards

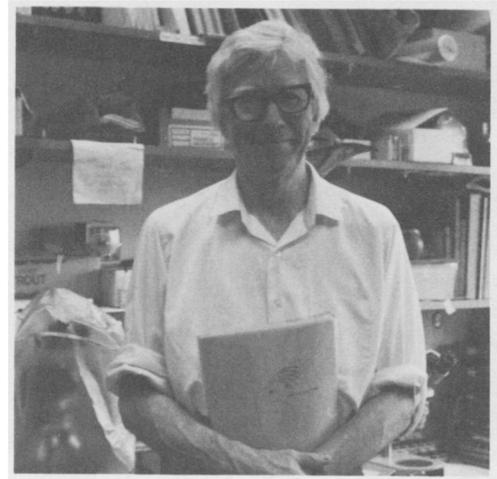
EMINENT ECOLOGIST

W. T. Edmondson

W. T. (Tommy) Edmondson started his research while a student in Hillhouse High School in New Haven, Connecticut, in an era when it was still legal under city ordinances to use roller-skates in the street. Having been given a corner in a Yale laboratory in which to work at weekends, and with the help of his correspondent, F. J. Myers, he identified the Rotatoria collected by the late Richard Bond in Haiti and contributed to the enumeration of the same group in the collection of the Yale North India Expedition of 1932. Publications on these two investigations appeared just before he began his official career as an undergraduate at Yale. During the next four years he continued his taxonomic studies, and then, doing graduate work for a year at the University of Wisconsin, was able to initiate significant work on the ecology of sessile rotifers, comparing his biological findings with the vast amount of chemical data available from the Wisconsin lakes. In some cases it was evident that two species that could live within the same rather wide range of values of pH might differ greatly in their tolerance for bicarbonate or calcium, a situation of considerable ecological interest, though one little explored by subsequent investigators.

Returning to Yale for his Ph.D. degree, he concentrated on the population dynamics of sessile rotifers, finding among many other things a remarkable situation in *Floscularia conifera*. In this species, individuals that settled directly on *Utricularia* had, in two successive years, lower expectation of life than individuals settling on the tubes of *Floscularia* already attached to the plant.

After teaching for three years at Harvard, Tommy took a position at the University of Washington, Seattle, where he is now Professor of Zoology. During the third of a century that he has worked there he has built up an unrivalled limnological school. Extending his interests to many kinds of planktonic animals, he is known for his work on the population dynamics of rotifers, cladocera, and



copepods. His methods of investigation of such populations have been widely adopted by other workers on zooplankton. His studies, though conducted in a variety of lakes, have naturally largely been centered around Lake Washington. In this lake his work and that of his students has led not only to a great increase in knowledge, but also to the preservation, in a satisfactorily healthy state, of a beautiful and socially significant feature of the local landscape. His skillful scientific work combined with politically persuasive cooperation with the local human population has set a standard for this kind of environmental protection, which is known to have had a very wide impact. At the present time various and quite complicated changes that have taken place in the recent history of the lake as a result of the reduction of artificial eutrophication are the subject of intense study while the natural changes of the past are being investigated by the study of cores. Tommy has been very insistent that Lake Washington is not the only interesting lake in his vicinity, and has promoted a great deal of investigation of the remarkable plunge-pool lakes of the Grand Coulee. Recently he has also been much interested in the possible limnological

consequence of the eruptions of Mount St. Helens.

In addition to these scientific advances all students of freshwater biology are indebted to him for the immense editorial labor that he put into the new edition (1966) of Ward and Whipple's *Fresh Water Biology*. For his contributions "De limnologia optime merito" he received the Einar Naumann-August Thiene-mann Medal of the Societas Internationalis

Limnologiae in 1980. He is also a deeply interested student of the history of musical instruments, notably the organ.

Written by G. Evelyn Hutchinson

Selection Committee

W. John O'Brien, Chair

Margaret B. Davis

Paul K. Dayton

Ronald H. Pulliam