

WILLIAM S. COOPER AWARD

James C. Ritchie

The William S. Cooper Award is given by the Society for a recent contribution in geobotany, physiographic ecology, plant succession or the distribution of organisms along environmental gradients. These were the areas of greatest interest to Professor Cooper during his long and productive career.

The 1990 recipient of the William S. Cooper Award is Dr. James C. Ritchie of the University of Toronto for his 1987 book, "Postglacial vegetation of Canada," published by Cambridge University Press.

Dr. Ritchie uses the empirical evidence from paleoecology, and particularly his own extensive research, to determine the sequences and general patterns of Holocene vegetation change in Canada as well as the northern United States, including Alaska. The book illustrates the maturity of paleoecology today through its marked contrast with the early work of Cooper, Moss, Nichols, and Raup, who were forced to speculate from contemporary ecological and phytogeographic evidence to study the primary succession that occurred after the



retreat of the last continental ice sheet. Ritchie's book presents a particularly majestic story, not only because of the massive stage upon which it takes place, but because almost all of Canada was covered by continental glaciation and has therefore been recolonized by vegetation only in the last 12,000 or so years.

Ritchie's description of the rates and directions of population re-invasion and their changes resulting from climate, disease, fire,

and pedogenesis emphasizes the inescapable fact that the tundra, grasslands, and boreal and northern deciduous forests have all been subject to continuous change in species composition.

This book is the capstone of Dr. Ritchie's four decades of research in paleoecology and community ecology in North America. Dr. Ritchie is currently professor at the University of Toronto, where he was for many years Head of the Life Sciences Division of Scarborough College. He received a B.Sc. from Aberdeen University in 1951, a Ph.D. from Sheffield University in 1955, and a D.Sc. from Aberdeen in 1962. In 1985 he received the Lawson Medal of the Canadian Botanical Society for his contributions to ecology and paleoecology.

Some of Professor William Cooper's most significant contributions in ecology were studies of primary succession. Dr. Ritchie's book continues and greatly enhances this line of research.

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