

## eminent ecologist, 1974

Eugene P. Odum

Alumni Foundation Distinguished Professor; Callaway Foundation Professor of Ecology; Director, Institute of Ecology, University of Georgia; Georgia Scientist of the Year; and Member, National Academy of Science. These are but a few of the visible evidences of Eugene P. Odum's remarkable accomplishments as scientist and as teacher.

Odum has been one of the main contributors to the study of ecosystems, emphasizing their functional attributes rather than their structural characteristics. His physiological or functional point of view derives in part from his graduate training, and from his field research on ecosystems. Odum studied at the University of North Carolina and later at the University of Illinois, where he investigated heart rate in unrestrained birds under Charles Kendigh. His research has focused on field experimentation in relatively simple systems, including abandoned fields and salt marshes. Investigation of these two environments was encouraged in the early 1950's by research support from the Atomic Energy Commission and the Marine Institute of Sapelo Island. In the first case, the AEC provided funds to establish base-line characteristics of the environment of their new Savannah River Plant, near Augusta, Georgia. It is characteristic of E.P. Odum that he used these funds for graduate students and post-doctoral research on productional trophic structure, and energetics rather than mere description of ecosystems. Similarly, at Sapelo Marine Institute, Odum with his colleagues studied productivity of the marshes and their trophic dynamics. Through his research and that of his associates and students, Odum contributed to and, in a large measure, defined a number of concepts in daily use in modern ecology such as diversity, trophic transfer and development of ecosystems. Through this he was one of the principal architects of the establishment of the ecosystems as a distinct level of organization of life. This added new dimensions to the science of ecology and helped lay the ground work for its acceptance and use in our quest for environmental quality.

Odum's ability to visualize general patterns in masses of data and observations has made his books and publications rich in concept and stimulation. These include



four books, more than 100 papers in professional journals, and numerous popular or semi-popular articles on ecological themes. In recent years he has lectured widely and written on the social relevance of ecological principles. His two text books are widely known throughout the world and have been translated into eight foreign languages. There are few ecologists indeed in this country and around the world who have not profited from his ability to make ecosystem concept and theory understandable and usable.

Besides his scholarly work, Odum has always evidenced a concern for the common man. Possibly this empathy is derived from his father, the sociologist, Howard Odum, who is well known for his emphasis on southern regionalism and the condition of Black and industrial workers. Eugene Odum has often stated that we are in the business of training the educated citizen as well as the research worker, and his concern that ecological knowledge be applied to human problems has led him to devote an increasing share of his time to public education and to numerous national and international activities. Eugene P. Odum, then, through his ability to combine the qualities of both scholar and popularizer, has contributed brilliantly and uniquely to his science and to society.

Robert B. Platt