

awards

EMINENT ECOLOGIST

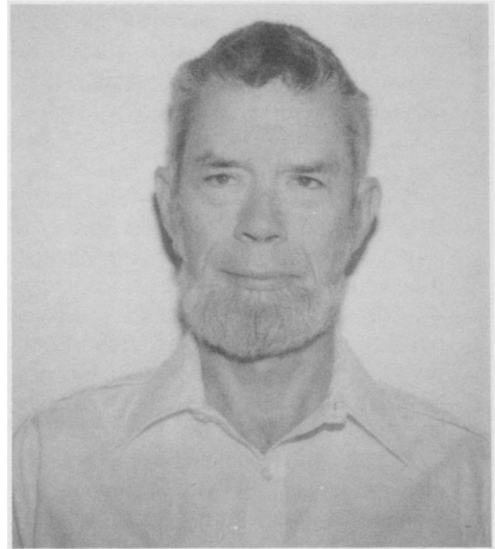
George C. Williams

The Eminent Ecologist Award is given to a scientist for continuing, significant contributions to the field of ecology. George C. Williams is the recipient of the Eminent Ecologist award for 1989. Professor Williams received his bachelor of arts degree from the University of California at Berkeley in 1949 and his doctorate from the University of California at Los Angeles in 1955. He was first a faculty member at Michigan State University. Then in 1960 he moved to the State University of New York at Stony Brook where he still is, in a department known for its contributions to evolutionary biology and in particular identified with his presence.

Professor Williams is an evolutionary ecologist who has had an enormous impact on the field of ecology. His book *Adaptation and Natural Selection*, published in 1966, strongly affected our perceptions of group selection vs. individual selection and the consequences of each. It remains as one of the most articulate discussions of the theory of individual selection. This book plus his papers have helped shape the course of research in the area of life history evolution for the next two decades.

In several cases Professor Williams has clearly been one of the trail blazers. For example, in "Pleiotrophy, Natural Selection, and the Evolution of Senescence," published in *Evolution* in 1957, he pointed out the interaction of life history characters and life history stages with senescence. The evolution of senescence remains an area of considerable controversy with many of the principal ideas centered around issues originally articulated by him.

Throughout his career Professor Williams has been able to focus attention on testable aspects of complex hypotheses that have



changed the directions of ecological research. His 1975 book *Sex and Evolution*, for example, helped to do this for the topics of "cost of meiosis" and the advantages of sex. Perhaps most importantly, Professor Williams' publications have continued for over thirty years to reacquaint many ecologists with the importance of evolution and to demonstrate how to blend ecology and evolution to produce testable hypotheses about individual selection.

Selection Committee:
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