

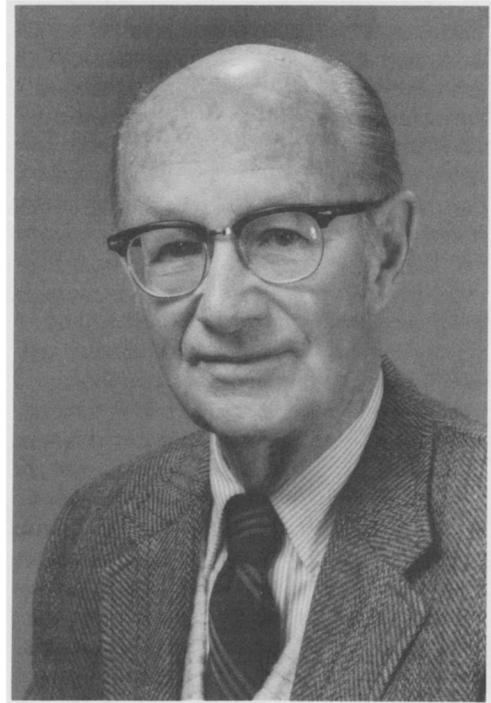
# awards

## EMINENT ECOLOGIST

W. Dwight Billings

The Eminent Ecologist Award is given for continuing and significant contributions to the field of ecology. It is our pleasure to recognize W. Dwight Billings with this award. Dr. Billings received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Butler University where he graduated magna cum laude. He then went to Duke University where he received both his master's and doctoral degrees. He began his academic career at the University of Tennessee where he was an Instructor from 1936 to 1937. He then moved to the University of Nevada where he moved through the ranks to become Professor and Head of the Biology Department. He left the University of Nevada in 1952 to return to Duke University where he became the James B. Duke Professor of Botany in 1967. He has had a long and distinguished career and has been the recipient of both the Mercer Award (1962 with H. A. Mooney) as well as the Distinguished Service Award (1981) and a Certificate of Appreciation (1982) from the Ecological Society of America.

Throughout his career Dr. Billings has maintained an interest in severe environments such as the arctic, alpine, and desert regions. He is certainly one of the founders of the field of physiological plant ecology and through his writings provided both its philosophical orientation and the emphasis on experimentation that have been so important in this field. His early papers, particularly those of 1952 and 1957, are particularly important in this regard. They emphasized the importance of understanding the abiotic environment and how it affects and interacts with the organisms living within it. Having helped to define the field, he then moved on to develop the methods and experimental techniques necessary for testing and extending hypotheses. For example, he produced some of the first accurate field measurements of photosynthesis and water relations under known environmental conditions; he pioneered both controlled environmental studies and microcosms.



He has consistently been a leader in the field both in terms of questions and in terms of approach.

For over 50 years Dr. Billings has been at the forefront of physiological plant ecology, developing methods, testing ideas, finding new ways to combine the laboratory and the field. Much of our current understanding of the comparative physiological ecology of plants in severe environments is from his work and that of his students, or has been strongly influenced by him.

Selection Committee:  
Sarah Woodin, Chair  
Robert Burgess  
Paul Dayton  
Pete Peterson  
Andrew Sih  
Edmund Stiles