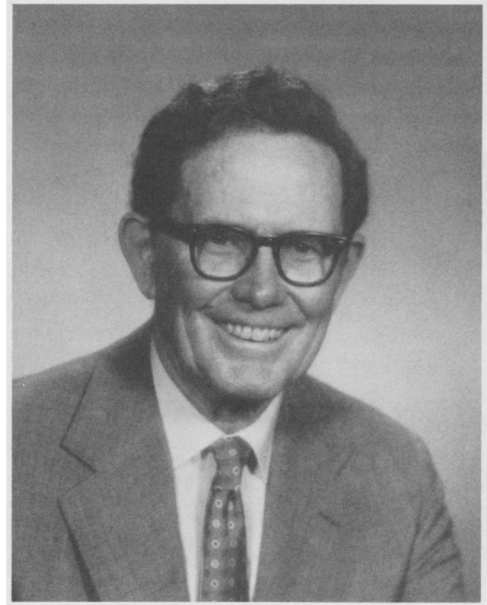


EMINENT ECOLOGIST

Nelson G. Hairston, Sr.

The Eminent Ecologist Award is given for continuing and significant contributions to the field of ecology. It is our pleasure to recognize Nelson G. Hairston, Sr. with this award. Dr. Hairston received his bachelor of arts degree and his masters degree in Zoology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. During his military service in World War II he began his interests in parasitology, working on schistosomiasis in the Philippines and in Egypt. After the war he continued his graduate work and received his doctorate from Northwestern University in Zoology in 1948. In 1948 he began a distinguished career as a faculty member at the University of Michigan, where he rose through the ranks from lecturer to Director of the Museum of Zoology (1967–1975). During this time he was extremely influential in the education of a generation of graduate students who have made very significant contributions to ecology. He also continued his contributions to the field of parasitology and began his writings on the importance of competition to community structure. In 1975 he moved back to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as the Wm. R. Kenan, Jr. Professor of Zoology and Ecology. Again, he invigorated the graduate program and strongly influenced its students.

It is perhaps rare for individuals to begin such a vigorous field experimentation program as that of Dr. Hairston after a move to another university late in their career. However, after his move to the University of North Carolina, he began what was to be a ten plus year project of vigorous field experimentation on species interactions. This work built on his original doctoral studies but employed rigorous experiments. He transplanted races to test ideas about competitive ability, collected demographic data, examined microgeographic distributions, and did experiments to evaluate the importance of competition vs. predation. The results of this project constitute some of the best work of this type and changed significantly how ecologists approach problems of species interactions in the field.



An important and lasting contribution of Dr. Hairston is his insistence on real data and rigorous experimentation as tests of theory. His recent publications on the community ecology of salamanders illustrate the significance of this approach. This has not always been a popular point of view, but Dr. Hairston has consistently and successfully espoused it both personally and through his influence on students. The roles of experimentation and statistical analysis have been consistent themes of Dr. Hairston, and his insistence has shaped in part the way ecologists approach questions of process, in the opinion of many.

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