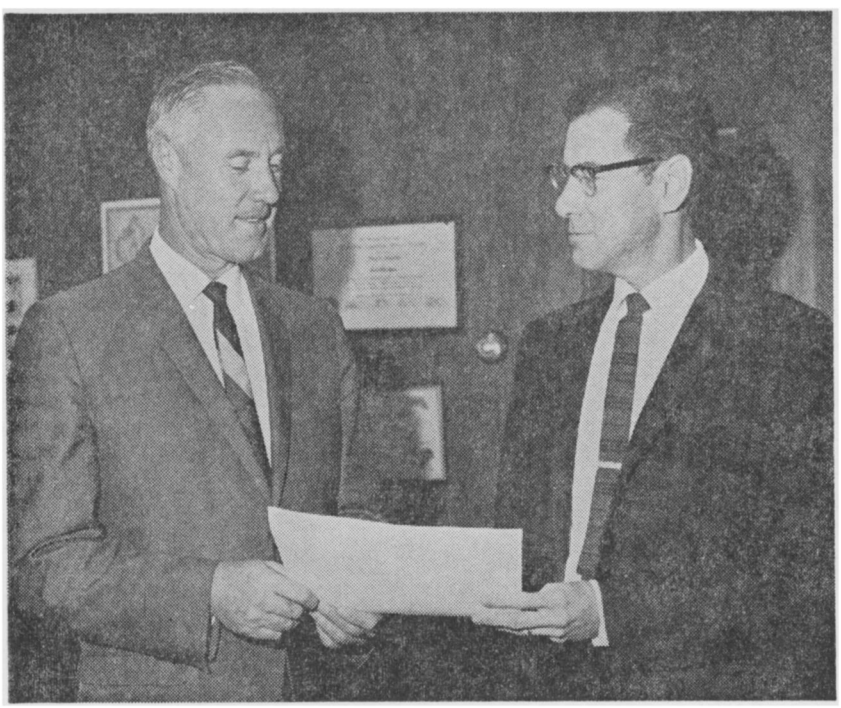
THE GEORGE MERCER AWARD FOR 1967

The George Mercer Award for 1967 was awarded to Drs. R. H. Whittaker and Wm. A. Niering for their study of the vegetation of the Santa Cataline Mountains in Arizona. This work was published in Ecology 46 (4): 429-452, 1965 as "Vegetation of the Santa Cataline Mountains, Arizona: A Gradient analysis of the South Slope."

This award was announced at the Annual Banquet of the Society in College Station, Texas on August 29, 1967. The prize of $100 that goes with this award was divided between the authors.

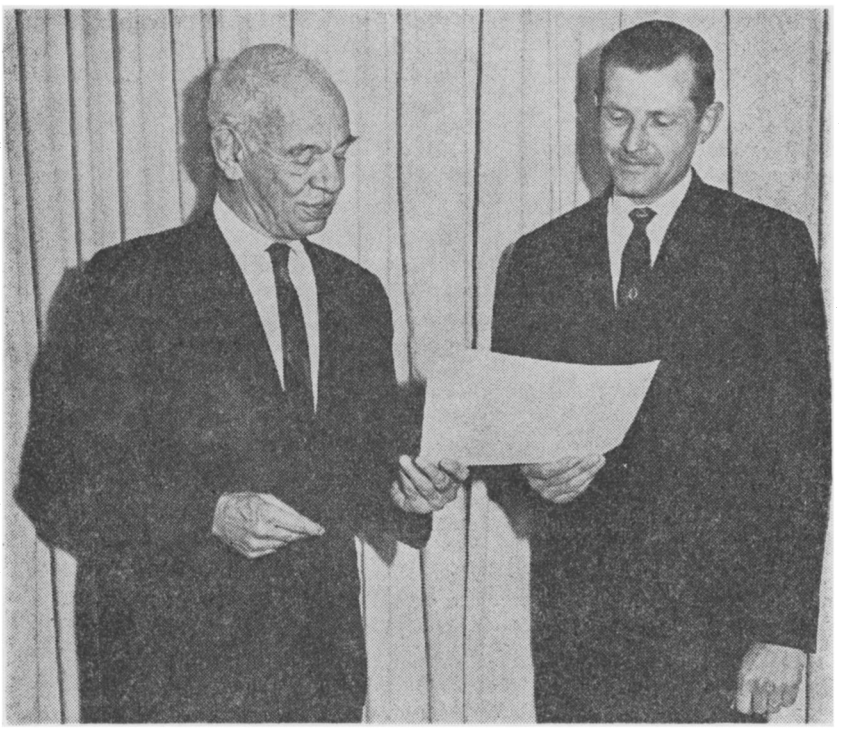
The George Mercer Award was established in 1948 by a member of the Ecological Society of America in honor of a young naturalist and ecologist who was killed in World War I. Its purpose is "to encourage others to publish papers comparable with those it is reasonable to suppose he would have published if he had lived." The Award is made each year to a young man who in the previous two years, has published an outstanding paper in ecology.



Dr. R. H. Whittaker (right) shown receiving his certificate of Mercer Award from Daniel G. Aldrich, Chancellor, University of California, Irvine.

Bob Whittaker took an interest in ecology while a college student at Washburn University, Topeka, Kansas, and an Air Force weather forecaster during World War II. Within about a week of his discharge he was at the University of Illinois to study ecology, with S. C. Kendeigh as his graduate adviser. He was influenced there not only by Kendeigh, but by the stimulating crossfire of opinion on the nature of the community between two eminent older ecologists, V. E. Shelford and A. G. Vestal, representing Clementsian and Gleasonian thought, respectively. His thesis on vegetation of the Great Smoky Mountains was accordingly aimed studying the nature of community-types through the relations of species populations to environmental gradients and one another. The study developed the approach he called "gradient analysis." From Illinois he went to the Zoology Department at Washington State University, Pullman, and has since held positions in the Biology Laboratories of the Hanford Works, Pullman, Wash., the Biology Department of Brooklyn College for the longest period, 1954-1964, and two years as a visiting scientist with George Woodwell at Brookhaven National Laboratory before moving to the University of California, Irvine, in 1966. From gradient analysis his research interests have branched out to studies in climax theory, animal community comparisons, nutrient circulation in aquarium microcosms, and species diversities in plant communities; more recently he has been dealing with productivity and nutrient circulation in forests and shrublands, in the Great Smoky Mountains, the Brookhaven oak-pine forest, Hubbard Brook Watershed, New Hampshire, and the San Jacinto Mountains, California. He would not exchange the appeal and challenge of ecology for any other science, and one can regret only that ecology's great importance to man may have so little influence on the trajectory our civilization has now set for itself.

Bill Niering received his bachelor's and master's degrees from Pennsylvania State University in 1948 and 1950 respectively and his Ph.D. from Rutgers University in 1952. Since 1952 he has been at Connecticut College where he is now Professor of Botany and Director of the Connecticut Arboretum. During the summer of 1954 he participated as land ecologist on the Kapingamarangi Atoll Expedition in the Caroline Islands. In 1958 he served as conservation consultant for the Regional Plan Association. His research interests in the Connecticut Arboretum have included the establishment of long-range ecological studies within the natural areas and the manipulation of vegetation by herbicides and prescribed burning. Studies on shrub stability are proving invaluable in increasing our understanding of old field development and its application in right-of-way management. He is also collaborating with F. E. Egler on writing the Vegetation of Connecticut Natural Areas



Dr. Wm. A. Niering (right) shown receiving his certificate of the Mercer Award from Dr. Leland Haworth, Director National Science Foundation.

series. Vegetation studies with R. H. Whittaker in the Southwest have centered on community dynamics with especial emphasis on saguaro. In addition to his teaching commitments at Connecticut College he has taught in the secondary and college teacher training programs supported by the National Science Foundation at Wesleyan University and Williams College. Currently on leave from Connecticut College he is Associate Program Director in Environmental Biology, National Science Foundation.

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