history, and dispersal. In each new study, the focus is likely to be on a different organism, chosen not because of previous familiarity but rather because of appropriateness to the question at hand. An avid birder since childhood and a skilled fisherman, Paine has developed research interests covering an impressive spectrum—from brachiopods to starfish, from encrusting algae to the sea palm *Postelsia*, from oystercatchers to snowy owls.

Bob Paine has remained an innovator, and his recent Tansley lecture provides a gold mine of theoretical ideas regarding community infrastructure and organization. Bob’s unusual quality is that, despite his firm grounding in natural history and empiricism, he has always had a fascination with theory and made it an integral part of his work. This theoretical bent, as well as his curious weak spot for mathematicians, probably can be traced to his father’s skills in cryptography and a distinguished maternal mathematical lineage. A Birkhoff on his mother’s side and part of a distinguished American heritage as a Paine, Bob has skillfully blended mathematical ideas with Common Sense to leave his imprint on his graduate students, his colleagues, and contemporary ecology. Robert Treat Paine has served the Ecological Society of America well—as an editor of *Ecology* and *Ecological Monographs*, as Vice-President, and later as President. It is appropriate that the ESA now has an opportunity to repay that service by recognizing his distinguished contributions to our science.

Written by Simon A. Levin

Selection Committee
W. John O’Brien, Chair
Richard T. Holmes
Henry S. Horn
Gene E. Likens
Keith D. Waddington
Thomas S. Whittam

MERCER AWARD

The George Mercer Award is given annually to a young ecologist in recognition of outstanding research published in the United States or Canada within the preceding two years. It is the highest form of recognition for published ecological research awarded by the Ecological Society of America.

Dr. Kenneth Peter Sebens, Associate Professor of Biology, Harvard University, is recognized for his paper, “The limits to indeterminate growth: an optimal size model applied to passive suspension feeders.” The paper appeared in *Ecology* in 1982 (63:209–222). This work examined the interaction between energy acquisition and expenditure as a function of animal size in the sea anemone *Anthopleura xanthogrammica* in the rocky coastal zone in Washington State. It is a fine example of the blending of laboratory experimentation, field natural history, and mathematics to increase ecological understanding.

Mercer Award winner Kenneth P. Sebens with Derek Bok, President of Harvard University

While applied to a particular species, this research has wide-ranging implications for many invertebrates and fish. Dr. Sebens is continuing his research on rocky intertidal or-
Elaine M. Birk was the 1983 recipient of the Murray F. Buell Award. Her paper, "Nitrogen availability, N cycling and N use efficiency on the Savannah River Plant," was based on research carried out while at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. At present Elaine is a Research Associate with the Ecosystems Research Center at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.

Murray Buell ascribed great importance to the participation of students in meetings and to excellence in the presentation of papers. To honor Murray F. Buell’s dedication to the Ecological Society of America and to the younger generation of ecologists, this award is presented to a student (undergraduate, graduate, or recent doctorate) for an outstanding paper presented at the Society’s annual meeting.