GEORGE MERCER AWARD

The George Mercer Award is given annually to a young ecologist for an outstanding publication. The 1994 award was presented to J. T. Wootton for his paper, “Indirect effects and habitat use in an intertidal community: interaction chains and interaction modifications” (American Naturalist 141:71-89). In this and subsequent publications, Dr. Wootton has moved beyond simply marveling at the occurrence of “indirect effects,” and introduced the idea of chains of interaction and interaction modification as a distinction that will help us better understand the manifold consequences of indirect effects in communities. The terminology is not important; what is important is the way that he has gone about determining the extent to which a perfect understanding of pairwise interactions can be pieced together to predict community dynamics. Dr. Wootton’s work provides a technology for anticipating how wrong we will be if we confine ourselves to pairwise studies.

George Mercer Award Subcommittee:
Peter Vitousek (Chair)
Kirk Winemiller
Elvira Cuevas
Michael Vanni
James Clark
Craig Williamson
Maxine Watson


WILLIAM S. COOPER AWARD

The 1994 William S. Cooper Award is given posthumously to Dr. Alwyn H. Gentry for his chapter “Diversity and floristic composition of lowland tropical forest in Africa and South America” in Biological Relationships between Africa and South America, edited by Peter Goldblatt and published in 1993 by Yale University Press.

Alwyn Gentry’s chapter embodies the ideas of the Cooper Award, dealing with geobotany, physiographic ecology, plant succession, or the distribution of organisms along environmental gradients. The 1994 William S. Cooper Award is given posthumously to Dr. Alwyn H. Gentry for his chapter “Diversity and floristic composition of lowland tropical forest in Africa and South America” in Biological Relationships between Africa and South America, edited by Peter Goldblatt and published in 1993 by Yale University Press.

Alwyn Gentry’s chapter embodies the ideas of the Cooper Award, dealing with geobotany, physiographic ecology, and distribution of plants along environmental gradients. The paper points out that differences between the rain forest florals of Africa and South America may be more apparent than real, with taxonomy in the former mainly by Europeans and in the latter mainly by Americans. Lowland Africa, Madagascan, and South American forests are shown to be similar in local patterns of plant communities, but strikingly different at the continent-level pattern. Alwyn presents evidence for the relative roles of speciation, differential extinction, and community organization at these local and continental scales.

Dr. Gentry was senior Curator at the Missouri Botanical Garden. He was one of a handful of botanists who had by heroic field work helped us gain a scientific understanding of the diversity and ecological complexity of the tropics. He was also a leading international educator and spokesperson for tropical conservation.

William S. Cooper Award Subcommittee:
Edward A. Johnson (Chair)
Keith Van Cleve
Frank W. Davis
David R. Foster
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Martin C. Kellman
Samuel J. McNaughton
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