

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CITATION

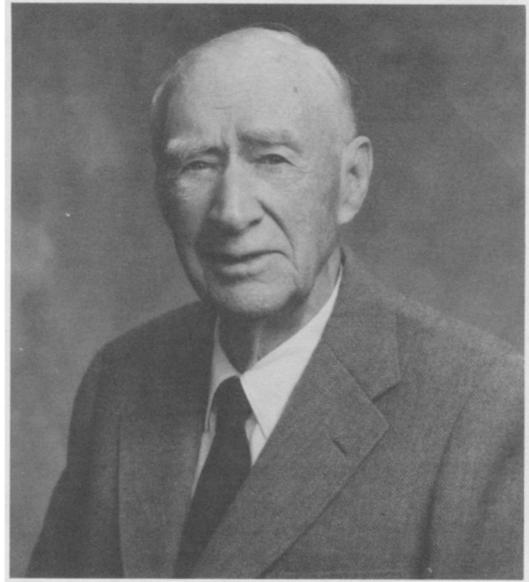
Frank W. Preston

The Distinguished Service Citation is presented to an ecologist who has provided outstanding service to the Ecological Society of America. It was first presented to Jack Major in 1975. Since then, it has been presented to ten additional people, including, in the last five years:

- 1981 Dwight Billings
- 1982 Paul G. Pearson and John Frederick Reed
- 1983 David Frey
- 1984 Arthur Cooper
- 1985 Stanley Auerbach and Josephine Doherty

This year, we are pleased to present the Distinguished Service Citation to Dr. Frank Preston.

Dr. Preston claims that he is neither an ecologist nor distinguished, and, thus, that he



does not qualify for the Distinguished Service Citation. To the former, we must acknowledge that by training and profession, Dr. Preston is an engineer. But with the latter, we must vehemently disagree. Dr. Preston has been a member of the ESA since its early years and played a seminal role in helping his friend, Aldo Leopold, when the young Society was floundering. In large part as a result of his efforts to raise funds and find new members, the Society exists today with a healthy treasury and a world-wide membership.

Despite his professional disclaimer, Dr. Preston is an ecologist. He has travelled widely, on all continents except Antarctica, and has been "stung by bees, wasps, hornets, fire ants, and scorpions." These two traits—travel and pain—alone would define an ecologist. But in addition, he has collected birds, mammals, insects, and data for more than 60 years. His publications on the Commonness and Rarity of Species, published in 1948 and 1962, have stimulated an immense amount of thought and research. His canonical distribution papers have been among the most widely cited papers in ecology. And they continue to be cited today.

Dr. Preston has also played a significant, if cryptic, role in providing financial support to the Society. It was Dr. Preston who established the fund to recognize excellence in published research by a young ecologist. To keep the gift anonymous, he named the fund for George Mercer, a promising young British scientist who was killed during the first World War. This evening, of course, the Mercer Award has again recognized the achievements of a young ecologist.

It is only fitting, then, that at the same time we honor one of the oldest members of the Society and recognize his life-long contributions to ecology and to the Ecological Society.

Written by Barbara Bentley
Selection Committee:
Barbara Bentley (Chair)
Robert Colwell
Francis Evans
John Ewell
Harold Mooney
Gordon Orians
Daniel Simberloff

Edited remarks by Dr. Frank Preston on acceptance of the Distinguished Service Citation, Syracuse, NY, August 1986.

In the early days of this century, Sir Oliver Lodge, principal of Birmingham University in England, noted that about half the great advances in science in Britain had been made by amateurs—nonprofessionals who had neither attended nor been connected with a university. Michael Faraday is a prominent example, and in the biological field there are Alfred Russel Wallace and Henry Walter Bates, the naturalist of the Amazon.

Some decades ago Hugh Gauch of Cornell said to me, "You are, I think, the only amateur ecologist who is writing papers at the professional level." If nonprofessionals are not writing professionally today, it is a great pity, and the Ecological Society should try to encourage their participation. Amateurs constitute no insignificant fraction of the membership of some of the ornithological societies, and amateurs have done striking work also in the field of entomology. They have often been diffident about writing up their findings. Sometimes they have taken them to the professionals, who have often enough discounted them as the imaginings of non-experts, and sometimes that has delayed the progress of science.

So I am glad to accept this honor as a representative of the band of amateurs. I believe there may be a hundred others who deserve it, and who, like myself, never expected to get it.

Thank you.