

WILLIAM S. COOPER AWARD



Alwyn H. Gentry

The William S. Cooper Award is given by the Society for recent contributions in geobotany, physi-

ographic 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 floras 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.

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