

quently served as Science Advisor to the Secretary of the Interior. While in Washington, he made major institutional changes that strengthened the role of ecological science within the Interior Department, and he continues to serve as an advisor on national environmental policy. He also has served on a wide range of boards for major environmental councils and organizations that have played an important role in bringing good ecological science into the arena of public policy. He currently is on the Board of Directors of the Committee for the National Institute for the Environment; the National Research Council's Commission on the Environment, Geosciences, and Resources; the Board of Directors of the Defenders of Wildlife; and the Science Advisory Board for the David and Lucille Packard Foundation.

For his service to the Society, to the scientific community, and to the purpose of ecology in the public welfare, ESA is delighted to award the Distinguished Service Award to Ron Pulliam.

*Distinguished Service Citation Subcommittee: Katherine L. Gross (Chair), Deborah Goldberg, Robert Holt, Beatrice VanHorne, Paul Dayton, and Peter Groffman.*

## **WILLIAM S. COOPER AWARD**



**Nigel Pitman**

The William Skinner Cooper Award honors an outstanding recent contribution in geobotany, physiographic ecology, plant succession, or the distribution of organisms along environmental gradients. The 2002 Award goes to Nigel C. A. Pitman and his coauthors, John W. Terborgh, Miles R. Silman, Percy Núñez V., David A. Neill, Carlos E. Cerón, Walter A. Palacios, and Milton Aulestia, for their 2001 paper, "Dominance and distribution of tree species in upper Amazonian terra firme forests," published in *Ecology* 82: 2101–2007. This research is largely the work of Dr. Pitman and formed part of his Ph.D. thesis at Duke University.

These authors investigated broad-scale spatial patterns of trees in Amazonian forests. They demonstrated that tropical forests are dominated by oligarchies of tree species, many of which are truly common, as opposed to rare and spatially isolated. Although species clumping has been previously reported in tropical forests, this study by Pitman and his colleagues extends this knowledge much farther by demonstrating that on sites of similar soil types that are separated by 1300 km, the same oligarchy of tree species reappears.

A major observation emerging from this study is that forests are not randomly composed of possible pool members. Such insights are hugely important in studying coevolution and in rethinking community ecology in these systems. For example, several members of the oligarchy are palms that produce large fruits and form the dietary mainstay for populations of large frugivores, such as peccary. If large mammals are to be conserved, we need to better understand the forest structure on which they depend. Oligarchy stability through time has yet to be tested, but this research provides a predictive target that can be addressed through paleoecological studies. It adds much to our understanding of tropical forest dynamics and is clearly deserving of the W. S. Cooper Award.

*William S. Cooper Award Subcommittee: Andrea Lloyd (Chair), Mark Bush, Paul Dayton, Marie-Josée Fortin, John Lichter, Glenn Motzkin, and Ricardo Villalba.*