

EMINENT ECOLOGIST

At the annual meeting in Stanford in August, the Ecological Society of America was proud to announce that Dr. Karl Patterson Schmidt, Curator-Emeritus of Zoology at the Chicago Museum of Natural History, had been awarded the title, Eminent Ecologist. Dr. Schmidt was unable to be present at the meeting and was notified of the award by mail. Before he could reply and furnish autobiographical details for his citation, he died suddenly on September 26.

Dr. Schmidt's colleagues at the Museum have kindly furnished biographical material, and a combined citation and Resolution of Respect for Dr. Schmidt will appear in a later issue of the **BULLETIN**. [see below]

**RESOLUTION OF RESPECT
KARL PATTERSON SCHMIDT
1890-1957**

Dr. Karl Patterson Schmidt, internationally known herpetologist and life member of the Ecological Society of America, died on September 26, 1957, 24 hours after being bitten by a juvenile boomslang. With his passing, the Society lost one of its distinguished members.

Dr. Schmidt was born at Lake Forest, Illinois, in 1890. His father was professor of German at Lake Forest Academy. The cultured atmosphere of the family home was reflected in Dr. Schmidt's deep

—39—

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understanding of people, his love for books, and his innate desire for knowledge far beyond the confines of his specialty. After attending Lake Forest College for one year and spending several years on the family farm in Wisconsin, he studied at Cornell University, graduating in 1916.

Soon after graduation, Dr. Schmidt joined the staff of the American Museum of Natural History. In 1922 he accepted a position at the Chicago Natural History Museum, then known as the Field Museum of Natural History. Until he became Chief Curator of Zoology in 1941, Dr. Schmidt headed the Division of Reptiles and Amphibians. On retirement from active administrative duties in 1955, he became Curator Emeritus of Zoology.

Dr. Schmidt's profound interest in snakes dates from 1915. From the very beginning, however, his interests extended far beyond the mere collection and identification of specimens. In connection with his work, Dr. Schmidt was able to travel extensively and to observe living animals in their natural surrounds. Being especially interested in the New World, he made several trips to the West Indies and Central and South America. As scientific leader of the Crane Pacific Expedition in 1928 and 1929, he visited most of the important islands of the South Pacific.

The productive life of this unusual man is manifest by a wealth of technical publications chiefly concerned with amphibians and reptiles, both recent and fossil. In addition to many papers, he was the author or co-author of several books. One is the popular Field Book of Snakes of the United States and Canada, written with D. Dwight Davis and published in 1941. This handbook has stimulated many a young person to become interested in herpetology. Of more technical nature is A Check List of North American Amphibians and Reptiles published in 1953. Of broader scope is the Living Reptiles of the World written in collaboration with Robert F. Inger and published in 1957.

Although Dr. Schmidt will be remembered best through his basic contributions to herpetology, several books in the field of animal distribution and ecology will perpetuate his name in the hearts of at least another generation of students. The superiority of his published works shows a remarkable ability both as a scientist and as a man of letters. His acquaintance with the German language made effective his collaboration with W. C. Allee in the translation and rewriting of Hesse's Tiergeographie auf oekologischer Grundlage. This important work, the second edition of Ecological Animal Geography, appeared in 1951. In the preparation of Principles of Animal Ecology, Dr. Schmidt, as one of five collaborators, not only aided in writing parts of the text but also served as general editor of the manuscript. The logical organization of subject matter and uniformity of style are expressions of Dr. Schmidt's ability.

Dr. Schmidt was active in several professional organizations. He

was the herpetological editor of *Copeia* for 13 years and, since 1927, was section editor of the *Amphibia and Reptilia* for *Biological Abstracts*. From 1942 to 1946, Dr. Schmidt was president of the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists. He helped organize the Society for the Study of Evolution and served as treasurer from 1946 to 1951 and president in 1954.

During his lifetime, Karl Patterson Schmidt was the recipient of many honors. At the time of his retirement and in honor of his sixty-fifth birthday, the thirty-seventh volume of *Fieldiana: Zoology* was designated the Karl Patterson Schmidt Anniversary Volume; and in 1956 he was elected to the National Academy of Science. A recent honor came in August, 1957, when the Ecological Society awarded him the title of Eminent Ecologist. In spite of the deep gratification that must have come from these honors, Dr. Schmidt obviously received his greatest personal satisfaction through helping those who sought his advice and assistance.

Dr. Schmidt is survived by his widow, Margaret Wightman Schmidt, and two sons, John Mungo and Robert George. In his death, members of his immediate family have experienced deep distress and his colleagues and associates have lost an irreplaceable friend.

Albuquerque, New Mexico
January 30, 1958

C. J. Goodnight
W. T. Penfound
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Committee on Resolutions