

h. ronald pulliam, president 1991–1992

H. Ronald Pulliam, the new President of the Ecological Society of America, is a complete ecologist. He is exceptional for his broad interests and background, his seminal research contributions, his accomplishments in teaching and administration, and his dedication to applying basic knowledge to practical problems of human behavior and ecology.

First of all, Ron is a research scientist. He has made major contributions to both theoretical and empirical ecology. He has worked on an amazing variety of problems, from the foraging behavior of individuals, to the roles of competition and predation in organization of communities, to the dynamics of populations in complex landscapes. A common feature of all his work is a combination of creative insight, biological intuition, and clarity of exposition. Ron's theoretical studies emphasize simplicity and realism rather than fancy mathematics. His field work uses his favorite organisms, birds, and in particular sparrows, to test theory and to gain insights into fundamental ecological phenomena.

Much of ecology is concerned with how relationships between organisms and their environment determine the abundance, distribution, and diversity of living things. Ron has contributed to many of the advances made in the last two decades. He is perhaps best known for his models, reviews, and experimental tests of foraging theory. These occupy a central place in our current understanding of how organisms make decisions about what to eat and where to search for food. Two of Ron's papers (1974 in *The American Naturalist*, and 1977 with Graham Pyke and Eric Charnov in *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics*) are, for good reason, Citation Classics. Ron used his studies of the diets and foraging behavior of individual sparrows to make predictions about the structure and dynamics of granivorous bird communities. The failure of his field studies to support some of these predictions led him to question simplistic species packing theory, and to investigate the importance of phenomena other than



food limitation and exploitative competition. This led to important studies of the effects of flocking behavior, interspecific aggressive interference, and risk of predation on individual foraging behavior and community organization. In the last few years Ron has been studying the effects of landscape heterogeneity on the behavior of individuals, the dynamics of populations, and the composition of communities. His recent paper on sources, sinks, and habitat selection (1991 in *The American Naturalist*), is likely to become another classic.

Ron has always had a strong interest in human biology. He has written a book and several papers on the genetical and cultural evolution of learning and related complex behaviors. These publications anticipated current research programs on the ecological and evolutionary basis of perception, learning, and memory. Ron's longstanding interests in human ecology have led him to address prob-

lems of ecosystem management and conservation biology.

In addition to his own research, Ron has used his many talents to advance basic and applied ecological science. He has served on the Editorial Board and on several committees of the Ecological Society of America. He has been mentor, role model, and inspiration to undergraduates, graduate students, and postdocs. For the last several years his leadership, as Director of the Institute of Ecology at the University of Georgia, has been instrumental in keeping that institution at the forefront of ecological science. Ron has become increasingly active as a spokesperson of a central role for ecological science in public affairs. He has served on state, regional, and national committees and advisory boards on global change and conservation.

Although he was born in Miami in 1945, Ron's roots are in Georgia. He did his undergraduate work at the University of Georgia (B.S., 1968). His interests in birds and the outdoors were fanned by Eugene Odum, with whom he did honors research and coauthored his first two papers. Ron went on to Duke (Ph.D., 1970) to work with Peter Klopfer, who encouraged his developing interests in be-

havioral and evolutionary ecology. He did postdoctoral work with Richard Lewontin at Chicago. Ron's first faculty position was at the University of Arizona, where he was instrumental in establishing a new Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. After a sabbatical year with John Maynard Smith at Sussex, he held faculty positions at the Museum of Northern Arizona and the State University of New York at Albany.

Ron returned to the University of Georgia in 1984 to take a position as Professor of Zoology and, shortly thereafter, as Director of the Institute of Ecology. He lives with his wife, Janice, and two children in a newly built house near the ancestral home of five generations of Pulliams. Ron has enjoyed a distinguished career and left an indelible mark on the discipline of ecology. The Presidency of The Ecological Society of America is but the latest in a long list of Ron's honors and accomplishments. There will undoubtedly be many more.

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