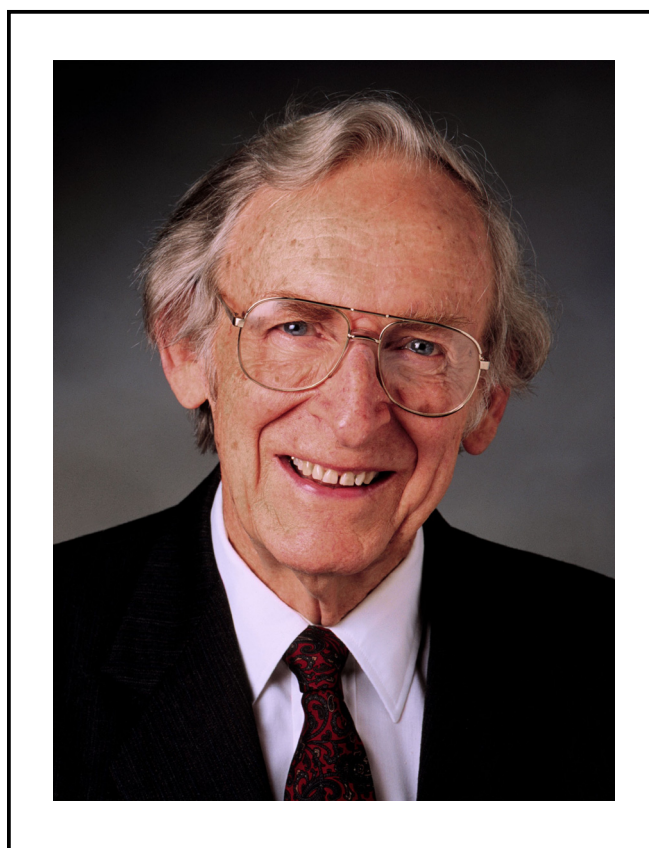


## Obituary

### Professor Eugene P. Odum (1913-2002)



Professor Emeritus Eugene P. Odum, 88, pioneer proponent of ecosystem ecology, died on August 10, 2002, at his home in Athens, Georgia. Dr. Odum, widely recognized and celebrated as “the father of ecosystem ecology,” founded the University of Georgia’s Institute of Ecology, and its successful satellite research sites: the Savannah River Ecology Laboratory in Aiken, South Carolina (in 1951), and the Marine Institute on Sapelo Island, Georgia (in 1954). Today the Savannah River Site, considered one of the world’s largest scientific preserves, is spread over 802.6 sq km.

Born on September 17, 1913 in New Hampshire, Eugene Pleasants Odum grew up in

Chapel Hill, NC. Eugene was the elder son of Howard Washington Odum, a Professor of Sociology at the University of North Carolina, and Anna Louise Odum, an Urban Planner. Eugene obtained his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from the University of North Carolina. He received his Ph.D. degree in 1939 from the University of Illinois, with Prof. S. Charles Kendeigh, on avian ecology. After a postdoctoral year at the Edwin N. Huyck Reserve in Rensselaer, New York, Dr. Odum moved with his wife, Martha, to the University of Georgia, where he rose through the academic ranks, and remained for all of his academic life.

Dr. Odum's initial endeavours to get ecology introduced as part of a core curriculum were virtually rejected. At that time ecology was considered marginal to biology – just collecting and describing plants and animals from different habitats – without any principles of its own. Early on, he realized that ecology needed a “voice” in contemporary academia and society, and was impelled to write the textbook, *Fundamentals of Ecology*, which was published in 1953. The book provided a theoretical base to ecology, its application to understanding the structure and functioning of different ecosystems, and resource management. This book has gone through several editions, has been translated into a dozen languages and is still an influential textbook.

Eugene Odum was the first member of the University of Georgia faculty to be named to the National Academy of Sciences, USA, in 1971. Jointly with his brother Howard T., Odum also received the Crafoord Prize of the Royal Swedish Academy, widely considered to be the equivalent of the Nobel Prize in Ecology. He received many other honors, which are too numerous to mention. Eugene Odum was always interested in the environment, *sensu lato*, including undergraduate and graduate students, and working with politicians on both state and national levels. He

led the fight to keep the barrier islands on the Georgia coast free of phosphate mining, and also served as an environmental adviser to Presidents Richard Nixon and Jimmy Carter.

Eugene Odum was a major moving force in the establishment of the US International Biological Program, in the mid-1960's. Funding for this program grew into the Ecosystem Studies Program of the National Science Foundation, with further spin-offs being the Long Term Ecological Research Program, which has been successfully underway in the USA for more than 22 years.

By example and written word, as well as his unflagging curiosity and drive, Eugene Odum has left a lasting legacy on ecological studies in all areas of the world. His biography (*Eugene Odum: Ecosystem Ecologist and Environmentalist*, University of Georgia Press, 2001) by Betty Jean Craige brings out the multifaceted personality of a man who strongly influenced the teaching and research in ecology during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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