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The 2017 Alfred Russel Wallace Award

The IBS Board is pleased to announce that Margaret Bryan Davis will be the next to join the distinguished list of recipients of the Alfred Russel Wallace Award. The Wallace Award will be given at the upcoming IBS biennial meeting in Tucson, Arizona, USA (January 9-13, 2017), and was established by the IBS in 2004 to recognize a lifetime of outstanding contributions by an eminent scholar in any subdiscipline of biogeography.

Professor Emeritus Margaret Bryan Davis of the University of Minnesota has a long and distinguished career of outstanding contributions to biogeography, and deserves credit for placing paleoecology squarely in the mainstream of biogeography and ecology. Her papers combine magisterial reviews and thoughtful syntheses with a long series of carefully designed and elegant empirical studies aimed at addressing specific, focused questions.

Professor Davis' work established many of the current tenets of Quaternary biogeography: that species shift ranges in response to climate change, these changes are individualistic, and that as a consequence communities are transient. Other ideas, such as the role of pathogens in forest history and the timescale of migrational lags, remain on-going topics of research and productive debate. Her ideas opened up new fields of fertile investigation that continue today, including postglacial patterns and rates of plant migration, the transience of ecological communities, stand-scale forest history, the mid-Holocene hemlock decline in eastern North America, and how pollen data record vegetation.

A mark of a truly great scientist is the ability to reconsider, and revise or even reject, strongly held views. Margaret Davis welcomed critiques, and demonstrated that conceptual breakthroughs were not always as effective as hoped. She stood her ground and asked difficult questions, but when others provided compelling evidence, she yielded. Professor Davis was rigorous, critical, and set high standards for the field, always with a focus towards doing the best science and getting closer to the truth. She inspired countless young scientists by her professional example, as well as by the quality of her work and thinking.

Professor Davis had – and continues to have – few equals in combining rigorous, analytical approaches with broad, discipline-spanning syntheses.

The IBS Board notes with thanks, the work of the Wallace Award Committee: Ingolf Kuhn, Mark Lomolino, Jonathan Losos, Susanne Renner, Kathy Willis, and Dov Sax (chair).

International Biogeography Society
Board