



PROFESSOR BRIAN MOSS
The IEEM Medal
for
Distinguished Lifelong Contribution to the Theory and Practice of Limnology
23 June 2010

Brian Moss has been one of the most influential freshwater ecologists in Europe during the past three decades and without doubt the world's leading scientist on shallow-lake ecology. Much of his research extends well beyond lakes, for example his identification of alternative stable states, studies on trophic dynamics, and his work on climatic effects on lake ecology. As a teacher, he has been an inspiration to students, but also to many fellow professionals.

Born in Stockport, his school days were spent learning plants in the Peak District before undergraduate studies and a PhD in Botany at the University of Bristol. He then spent time abroad, studying tropical limnology at Lake Chilwa in Malawi and thereafter the impacts of nutrients and fish predation on the structure of a deep, eutrophic lake in Michigan using large-scale experiments. His next move, to the University of East Anglia, saw him blossom further in the interdisciplinary School of Environmental Sciences, beginning his world-renowned work on the eutrophication of the Norfolk Broads. At this point, he also entered the field of restoration ecology, making a first attempt at restoring the conservation value of such systems through biomanipulation, innovatively engineering fish communities and zooplankton grazers to affect algal stocks. He was involved in projects that led to removal of phosphate from several Broadland wastewater treatment works. He has maintained an active research interest in the Broads ever since and his popular "New Naturalist" account summarised their history and ecology, all interwoven with Brian's radical ecological thinking.

Some seventeen years after joining UEA, Brian succeeded Professor Tony Bradshaw FRS as Holbrook Gaskell Professor of Botany at the University of Liverpool. Here he continued his research on shallow lake systems in the North West of England. He also developed an extensive experimental pond system where he assessed ecological function in relation to nutrient and climate manipulation – in other words pond warming. This was yet another ground-breaking step with which others are still trying to keep pace.

Brian has published an impressive number of publications, and the fourth edition of his standard textbook on freshwater ecology is now released. He is a superb communicator and very popular plenary speaker. Brian has been President of the British Phycological Society, Vice-president of the British Ecological Society, and both Vice-president and currently President of the International Society for Limnology. In 2009, he was awarded the August Thienemann–Einar Nauman Medal – the highest international honour for outstanding contributions to scientific limnology.

Beyond this very impressive curriculum vitae, Brian has three important qualities that are altogether more human.

The first is an uncompromising approach to "doing the right thing" environmentally and in his relations with others. He is always prepared to argue his corner, quietly and effectively. He's done this always with the politeness and elegance of a true gentleman, and without upset. However, he has no truck with bureaucracy for its own sake, seeing it as an unnecessary intrusion, preferring to trust students, staff and colleagues to take responsibility for their own actions. His poetic blasts at bureaucrats are legendary and extremely witty, particularly for anyone able to follow insults that issue sometimes in spontaneous Latin.

Second, Brian is a superb, boundlessly enthusiastic and inspirational speaker. His taught courses often attracted an audience from those who were not enrolled, particularly for sessions in which he conducted second year students in Flanders and Swann's immortal song, "The Hippopotamus". Brian's rendering is now so famous that it can be viewed on YouTube, where it has scored thousands of hits.

Third, Brian has an utterly compelling sense of humour. In the last ten years or so at Liverpool he took up playing the double bass, recording faithfully his progression through each musical grade on all annual reports to the University. Even his research grant applications were graced by knowledge of his current musical level. All of these idiosyncrasies make Brian an enigmatic but truly inspirational teacher and leader in environmental science. However, none of his quirks have ever diminished Brian's influence as a individual moved by his unfailing commitment to the environment, and by the conservation ethos of one his great heroes, Aldo Leopold.

It is impossible to capture Brian's true scientific contribution, huge character and sense of fun in these few lines. Perhaps the most apposite distinction is to borrow from Leopold himself, to say that: "There are some who can live without wild things and some who cannot."

Professor Brian Moss, clearly sits in the latter group. But hugely more important is that, through his work and actions, he has made it far more likely that so many of the rest of us sit there too, and for this we owe him a huge debt of gratitude. There is no doubt that everything about Brian Moss makes him an ideal recipient of the IEEM Medal.

This citation has been written by Professor Rob Marrs CEnv FIEEM and Professor Steve Ormerod FIEEM.

Professor Steve Ormerod, IEEM President