

Biography of Prof. Esko Suomalainen, Honorary member of SEL

Kauri MIKKOLA

Zoological Institute, P. Rautatiekatu 13, SF-00100 Helsinki, Finland.



Prof. Esko SUOMALAINEN has had a long career as a lepidopterist. Born in 1910 in Helsinki, he began his diary on Lepidoptera in 1926 at his summer residence, Porvoo, 40 km E.N.E. of Helsinki. Now, over 60 years later, he is ready to publish the lepidopterous fauna of Porvoo. From the archipelago of the same area he published an article about an insect migration in the year 1935 and about the lepidopterous fauna in 1979. His first publication, which he wrote at the age of 19, deals with the fauna of Lapland, and his most recent paper on northern Lepidoptera, the important separation of *Xestia laetabilis* and *X. distensa*, was published in 1983. He has revised the Finnish "*Solenobia*" species, and his most recent interest deals with the chromosomal evolution of the South American Heliconiine and Ithomiine butterflies.

Throughout his scientific career, Prof. SUOMALAINEN was a geneticist. He dealt mainly with the parthenogenesis of beetles and other insects, and with the polymorphism and chromosomes of Lepidoptera. He completed his Ph.D degree (on Curculionids) in the year 1940 at the University of Helsinki. Here he was lecturer in genetics (1941-1948), professor of genetics 1948-1976, and head of the department of genetics (1949-1976). He also undertook research work at the Kaiser Wilhelm-Institut for Biology, Berlin-Dahlem, in 1942-1943 and lectured at the University of Lund in 1952. Prof. SUOMALAINEN has always been praised by his students as an excellent lecturer and teacher. Despite his retirement, he continues to be active in research work.

Prof. SUOMALAINEN was the first president of the Finnish Lepidopterological Society from 1955 to 1979. During this period, the number of members of the society grew from 32 to over 500, the society obtained an official subsidy and it began to publish its own journal "Baptria" (named after the Geometrid *Baptria tibiale*, the subspecies *fennica* of which is the emblem of the society).

Prof. Esko SUOMALAINEN is a cultured person. He was vice-president of the Finnish National Commission for UNESCO 1957-1965, and president in 1965. Besides lepidopterological research, and his beautiful personal collection, his hobbies include paintings, ethnographic objects and chinese porcelain. In addition, he is a well-known photographer and published with his brother in 1938 a book about the beauty of Finnish nature. Prof. SUOMALAINEN is one of the rare people who seem to be able to tell a cultural joke or story in every possible situation. It is not surprising that Prof. SUOMALAINEN is a member of several academies and honorary member of several scientific societies, that he has been presented awards, and that his friends and colleagues had a medal struck to celebrate his 75th birthday.