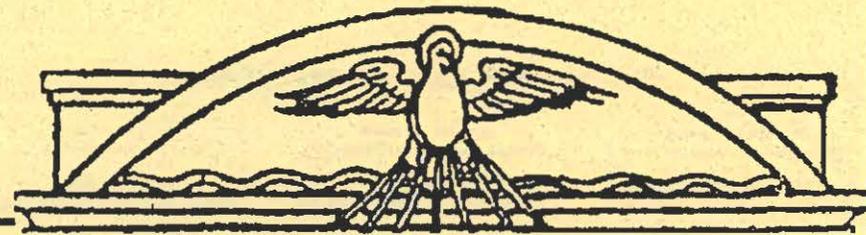
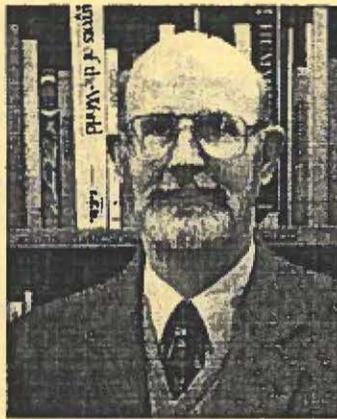


Charles F. Thompson grew up in the 1950s near Dayton, Ohio, where he and his friends, largely beyond adult supervision, explored the countryside's streams, woodlots, and fields. During high school he spent two summers in the mountains of North Carolina at Camps Sequoyah and Tsali, where the owner, C. Walton Johnson, a founding member of the North American camping movement, labored to civilize his adolescent charges and to instill in them a love of woodcraft, camping, hiking, and nature study. It was there that Charlie decided to become an ecologist who would study birds, despite having never met anyone who did such a thing. To accomplish that goal and to see the wider world described in books, he enlisted for four years in the U.S. Air Force immediately after high-school graduation. His plan was to save enough money to go to university while serving as a medical technician, clearly the Air Force job closest to his interests. The Air Force had other plans, sending him instead to language-training school at Indiana University and then on to further training in the tradecraft of intelligence. This was followed by a tour of duty in West Germany, where thanks to an excellent base library he was introduced to the writings of Julian Huxley and Ernst Mayr on evolutionary biology. The comparative *gemütlichkeit* of Cold War Germany was replaced by assignment to a remote island in the Bering Sea, where he spent his abundant spare time traveling with the local Eskimos and studying the island's bird life, which led to his first publications in the scientific literature in 1965 and 1967. He left the Air Force in 1965 in possession of a savings account (and access to the Viet-Nam-era GI Bill), a valuable set of lessons on the importance of teamwork, a healthy respect for the chain of command, a well-developed skepticism about the infallibility of those in authority, and an abiding interest in both evolution and ecology.

Returning to Indiana University, he enrolled in the Department of Zoology, earning his B.A. (1967), M.S. (1970), and Ph.D. (1971). Four individuals at IU had a profound effect on his life. He met Karen during the shared dissection of a marine polychaete and they were married in 1967. Val Nolan Jr., professor of law and professor of zoology, supported his research in birds as an undergraduate, directed his Ph.D. dissertation, and demonstrated by example that no question about birds is uninteresting. Charles Krebs, a population ecologist, and Robert Briggs, an embryologist, convinced him that an experiment is the biologist's most powerful tool. Charlie found that Indiana's zoology department, dominated as it was by geneticists and developmental biologists, provided an excellent environment for developing respect for the breadth of biology and for learning how non-ecologists think, lessons that later proved invaluable. After Indiana, he obtained a research post-doctoral position at the University of Georgia, where, happily, his advisor told him he did not care what he worked on just as long as it was on birds. This was followed by a teaching post-doc at Miami University in Ohio and an Assistant Professorship at SUNY, Geneseo. After three years at Geneseo, he moved to Illinois State in 1978 in order to be able to supervise Ph.D. students and to devote more time to research. He and Karen have had the good fortune of enjoying three, year-long sabbaticals, the first split between New Zealand and Oxford, England, and the others in Oxford and Glasgow, Scotland.

Charlie believes that the excellent intellectual climate of the Department of Biological Sciences at Illinois State has made it possible for him to combine his love of research with the pleasure of supervising an outstanding group of highly talented and motivated graduate and undergraduate students. He is most grateful for the support, help, and encouragement that he has received from his colleagues and students, past and present.



The Arts and Sciences Lecture Series

Program

Welcome

Dr. Gary A. Olson
Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

Introduction of Speaker

Dr. Steven Juliano
Colleague, Department of Biological Sciences

“Life in Little Wooden Houses on the Prairie: What House Wrens Have Taught Us About the Evolution of Reproductive Tactics”

Dr. Charles F. Thompson
Professor of Biological Sciences

Medallion Presentation

The Lecture Series and Its Purpose

The Arts and Sciences Lecture Series was established by action of the Arts and Sciences Council on March 8, 1968. Its purpose is to honor Arts and Sciences faculty members who have made outstanding scholarly contributions to the University and to their disciplines. There are two lectures each year, a Fall Lecture and a Spring Lecture.

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