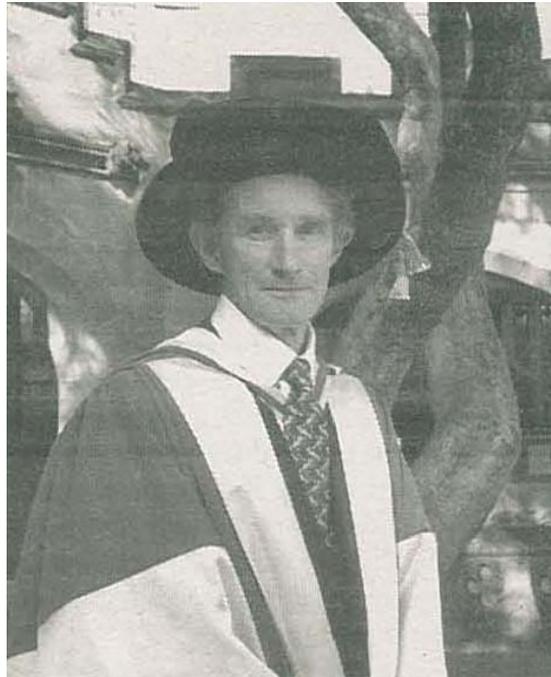


Professor Robert McCredie May

The degree of Doctor of Science (*honoris causa*) was conferred upon Professor Robert McCredie May at the Science ceremony held in the Great Hall at 9.30am on 19 May 1995.



Professor Robert May, photo, Tracey Schramm, 'The University of Sydney News', 12 July 1995.

Citation

Presented by the Vice-Chancellor and Principal Professor D McNicol

Chancellor

I have the honour to present Professor Robert McCredie May for admission to the degree of Doctor of Science (*honoris causa*).

Professor May has a record of outstanding achievement in two very different fields of science - theoretical physics and population biology. Born and educated in Sydney, Professor May graduated BSc at this University with the University Medal in Physics in 1956, and PhD in Theoretical Physics in 1959, supervised by Dr M.R. Schafrath.

After a brief interlude at Harvard University, he returned to join the academic staff of the School of Physics in 1962. For his distinguished theoretical contributions to the physics of ionized gases, he was awarded the Pawsey Medal by the Australian Academy of Science in 1967. In 1969 he was the first to be appointed to a Personal Chair in this University.

The metamorphosis from physics to biology began with Professor May's investigation of the problem of the relation between stability and complexity in natural communities. His elegant mathematical solution to the predator-prey problem later led to him being regarded as one of the fathers of the modern theory of chaos. The transition to biology was completed in 1973 with his appointment to Princeton University to take up the Class of 1877 Professorship of Zoology. Since 1988 he has been a Royal Society Research Professor at Oxford University and Imperial College.

Professor May is considered the world's leading theoretical population biologist. Throughout his career he has brought the best of basic science research to bear on pressing social concerns. Through a series of pioneering studies in ecology, evolutionary biology and parasitology, he has altered the way biologists

interpret and study the complexities of nature. His work has led to the recognition that communities of high diversity, such as rain forests and coral reefs, are inherently more fragile than lower-diversity communities.

More recently Professor May has studied the epidemiology of AIDS and provided rigorous modelling of AIDS transmission. These studies have had important consequences in changing public policy. He has displayed a willingness to interpret and publicise science and an ability to write and lecture about it in a lucid and lively fashion that few can equal.

Chancellor, I have the honour to present Professor Robert McCredie May for admission to the degree of Doctor of Science (honoris causa).