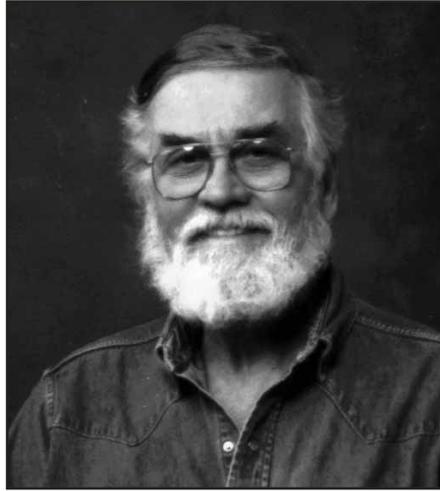


## 2006 DISTINGUISHED SCIENTIST



**Dr. Eric R. Pianka**  
**University of Texas at Austin**

Four decades ago, Eric R. Pianka produced the first synthetic review of latitudinal gradients in species diversity which has strongly influenced the field ever since. His own personal long-term panglobal studies of factors influencing desert lizard diversity are widely recognized as a modern-day classic. Pianka has also developed a remote sensing study of the effects of wildfires on spatial-temporal dynamic habitat mosaics as well as the interaction between local and regional phenomena as they affect biodiversity in the Great Victoria Desert of Western Australia. Pianka has demonstrated a determinedness and staying power rare among scientists and still avidly pursues his fieldwork. He invented many new techniques and concepts — his publications, including four “Citation Classics,” have changed the way most ecologists think, forever. Pianka’s conceptual contributions are wide ranging and include foraging theory, reproductive tactics, allocation theory and optimality, intercontinental comparisons, resource partitioning, community structure, species diversity, and, among his more recent interests, biogeography, landscape ecology, metapopulation structure, and phylogenetic systematics.

Pianka’s leadership in ecology is underscored by his classic textbook “Evolutionary Ecology,” which has persisted over 25 years (through 6 editions) and has now been translated into Greek, Japanese, Polish, Russian, and Spanish. An entire generation of ecologists have now been educated from this very important book. Pianka has also published several other highly significant books, including a synthesis of his life’s research, an autobiography, and a coffee table book on lizards. Many of his ex-graduate students are very well known and highly respected researchers, including Richard D. Howard (Purdue), Nancy T. Burley (U. C. Irvine), Jos. J. Schall (U. Vermont), Anthony Joern (Kansas State U.), Kirk O. Winemiller (Texas A & M.). Daniel T. Haydon (Glasgow), Gad Perry (Texas Tech), Christopher Schneider (Boston U.), Wendy Hodges (U. T. Permian Basin), and W. Bryan Jennings (Harvard).

Pianka holds the Doctor of Science degree (not an honorary, but an earned, degree) from the University of Western Australia. Pianka has given hundreds of invited lectures and keynote addresses at academic institutions all around the world. He has published a dozen papers in the prestigious journal *The American Naturalist* and has also published numerous times in *Ecology* (almost a dozen papers) as well as in *PNAS*, *Science*, *Trends in Ecology and Evolution*, among others. He is presently engaged in new path-breaking research exploiting molecular techniques and modern comparative methodology in phylogenetic systematics to trace the actual course of evolution. He has remained at the cutting edge of modern ecology for the last 40 years and is still going strong.

“Pianka” has become a household word to ecologists everywhere. He has been a professor at the University of Texas in Austin since 1968. Clearly, it is high time that he be recognized for his distinguished career and numerous seminal contributions to the burgeoning discipline of ecology.