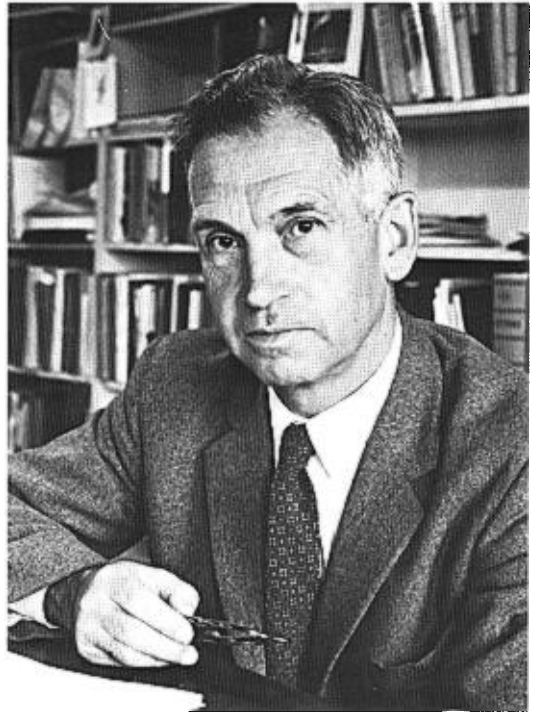


## BALZAN PRIZE AWARDED TO ERNST MAYR

On 17 February 1984, Professor Ernst Mayr was awarded the Balzan Prize in ceremonies at Berne, Switzerland, for his work in evolutionary biology. The publication of his book *Systematics and the origin of species* in 1942 established Mayr as one of the major architects of the "modern synthesis," which integrated basic natural history with neoDarwinian theory and population genetics. This work established his particular emphasis on the role of the process of speciation in evolution, a theme that, together with his establishment of the "biological species concept," was the focus of his attention over the following two decades. Mayr's views of speciation stressed allopatric and parapatric dynamics, fostering a merging of ecological and behavioral perspectives with more conventional systematic approaches to evolution. His thinking on these matters was again synthesized in 1963 in *Animal species and evolution*, a volume of monumental scholarship and lasting impact. I was a graduate student when this book appeared, and I can well remember how we devoured the book, delighting in the many elegantly documented examples and engaging in long discussions of the many fresh ideas it presented. It played a major role in impressing upon those of my generation the importance and relevance of an evolutionary perspective to any area of biological investigation. More recently, in *The growth of biological thought* (1982), Mayr has presented a personal view of the history of evolutionary biology. This book will play a similar role in emphasizing to all of us the importance of culture and context in the development of ideas and, indeed, of science itself.

Although the Balzan Prize does not convey to the public the image of accomplishment and recognition that the Nobel Prizes do, it is no less prestigious. The prize was established in 1961 in honor of Eugenio Balzan, former head of Italy's leading newspaper, *Corriere della Sera*. Up to three prizes are awarded annually by the International Balzan Foundation; recipients are selected by a committee of leading European scholars. The prize rewards areas of scholarship that are not included in the narrower domain of the Nobel Prizes and, thus, represents the highest form of recognition in many areas of science not considered by the Nobel Prizes.

Ernst Mayr received his Ph.D. from the University of Berlin in 1926, following which he led three expeditions to New Guinea and the Solomon Islands to



ERNST MAYR  
(in 1962, at the time of the completion of *Animal species and evolution*)

investigate bird distributions and systematics. He was curator of birds at the American Museum of Natural History until 1953, when he moved to Harvard as the Alexander Agassiz Professor of Zoology. He served as Director of the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard from 1961 to 1970 and, since 1975, has continued his activities as Alexander Agassiz Professor of Zoology Emeritus. He has made substantial contributions to the development of the American Ornithologists' Union, and served as President of the Union from 1957 to 1959.

Stephen Gould has put it most succinctly: "Ernst Mayr is a marvel and an inspiration to us all."—J.A.W.