

## Mr Harold George Cogger AM

The degree of Doctor of Science (*honoris causa*) was conferred upon Harold George Cogger AM at the ceremony held at 9.30am on 26 March 1997.

Dr Cogger is one of Australia's preeminent experts on reptiles and amphibians and served as Deputy Director of the Australian Museum for 19 years, until his recent retirement.

*From 'The University of Sydney News', 17 April 1997*



Harold George Cogger AM , photo, 'The University of Sydney News', 17 April 1997.

### Citation

*Presented by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor D J Anderson*

Chancellor

I have the honour to present Harold George Cogger for the conferring of the degree of Doctor of Science (Honoris Causa).

Dr Cogger has achieved international recognition for his research on amphibians and reptiles, and served as Deputy Director of the Australian Museum for nineteen years, until his recent retirement. Dr Cogger worked at the Museum throughout his professional life, joining as a cadet Preparator and moving up through the ranks. At the same time, he undertook studies at this institution to further his knowledge and his opportunities within the Museum. In the earliest days, his academic career did not reveal the full promise of what was to come. Indeed, Dr Cogger may be the first person to receive a Doctor of Science from this institution after failing his first-year zoology course here!

He nonetheless persevered, and completed his undergraduate degree at the University of Sydney in 1959. Already keenly interested in reptiles and amphibians, he immediately embarked on a Master's degree to investigate evolutionary relationships within Australian lizards. After obtaining his Master of Science degree in 1961, he transferred to Macquarie University, where he received the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in 1970 for detailed ecological research on small desert dragons.

Even before he had received his doctorate, Dr Cogger had become the pre-eminent Australian expert on the biology of amphibians and reptiles. His work encompassed many fields of study, with a strong emphasis on the importance of fieldwork, and the need to take the organism's general biology into account when pursuing specific research projects.

Dr Cogger has written over 100 scientific papers, reports and popular articles. He has also contributed chapters to a number of books, on subjects ranging from the venomous snakes of Australia to the biogeography of the Australian herpetofauna and the conservation of biodiversity.

He is the author of eight books, one of which - "The Reptiles and Amphibians of Australia" - is undoubtedly his best-known work. This profusely illustrated field guide to the entire herpetofauna of Australia was first published in 1975, and was an immediate success. It is now in its seventh printing, and its fifth edition. It is no exaggeration to say that this book, by bringing together a diverse and scattered literature, and through Dr Cogger's individual expertise, transformed the scientific study of Australian reptiles and amphibians. For the first time, herpetologists in Australia and around the world had a reliable compendium with which to appreciate the diversity of the Australian herpetofauna. By quantifying the ways in which these animals contributed to biodiversity, this book has helped to set the conservation agenda in Australia for decades to come.

Dr Cogger has also played a distinguished role in many national and international scientific bodies. He is currently Chair of several major committees, including the Australian Biological Diversity Advisory Committee, the Australian Biological Resources Study, and the Australasian Reptile and Amphibian Advisory Group (under the auspices of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature). He is also Vice-President of the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature. He has continued to provide active support for the research and teaching activities of the University of Sydney, and has contributed significantly to the close relationship between the University and the Australian Museum: for example, he has played a significant role in encouraging the use of museum collections by research scientists and students of the University.

These positions of responsibility attest to the high regard in which Dr Cogger is held by his colleagues. Less easily documented, but of equal importance, is Dr Cogger's enormous contributions to his field of study by dint of his enthusiastic encouragement of younger workers. He was made a Member of the Order of Australia, General Division, in 1996, "for services to science in the field of herpetology and as Deputy Director of the Australian Museum for 19 years", or, as the Frog and Tadpole Study Group of NSW put it in their newsletter "Queen recognises Cogger the Frogger".

Chancellor, I have great pleasure in presenting Harold George Cogger for admission to the degree of Doctor of Science (Honoris Causa).