

Yuiti ONO, museum director and ecologist: an overview of his academic and administrative career



Dr. Yuiti ONO (1930–), in front of a museum exhibit

Yuiti ONO, the first Director-General of the Kitakyushu Museum of Natural History and Human History, was born on 21 April 1930 in the city of Saiki, Oita Prefecture, Japan. He graduated from the Department of Biology, of the Faculty of Science, at Kyushu University in 1954. After graduation, he entered the Graduate School of the Faculty of Science at Kyushu University. In September 1959, Dr. ONO started his professional research and educational activities as a Research Associate in the Laboratory of Ecology at Kyushu University.

Dr. ONO was promoted to Associate Professor in 1966 and then to Professor in 1974. He remained in the same laboratory at Kyushu University, where he supervised and encouraged many students and guided the doctoral theses of more than 60 young researchers, until his retirement. Dr. ONO retired as a University Professor and was honoured by being named Professor Emeritus of Kyushu University in 1994. Dr. ONO was a member of many academic societies and was particularly active in the Ecological Society of Japan, where he served as president from 1998 to 1999. In 1990, he served as the head of the Program Committee when the 5th International Congress of Ecology was held in Yokohama, Japan. He played an important role in advancing the field of ecology and the Ecological Society of Japan as a member of the Science Council of Japan from 1991 to 1997. On the basis of these contributions, he was honoured with this Society's Achievement Award in 2003.

Dr. ONO's scientific interests extend to a broad area of ecology that includes both marine and land animals. Under the tutelage of Dr. Masaaki MORISITA, the late Professor Emeritus of Kyoto University who was an Associate Professor at Kyushu University at the time of Dr. ONO's graduate studies, Dr. ONO initially studied the bio-economical aspects of ocyroid crabs in an estuary. He received the degree of Doctor of Science from Kyushu University in 1964 upon completion of his study "On the ecological distribution of ocyroid crabs in the estuary", which was published in 1965. In this paper, he used quantitative analysis to identify the close relationships among the species living along the longitudinal lines of rivers and to examine their means of respiration, daily activities, spatial distribution, feeding habits, and areas of oral morphological divergence. Dr. ONO clarified the importance of chlorinity and the substratum condition in the pattern characterising the distribution of species and the development of their sorting ability. He also found uniformity and species-specific flexibility in the patterns of distribution of individuals by using the I_{δ} -method, which was developed by his supervisor Dr. MORISITA. His studies of marine animals were published in 1995 in the book "The Natural History of

Seashore Crabs”, which was written for a popular audience.

Dr. ONO both followed and extended Dr. MORISITA’s ideas in his pursuit of *quantitatively measuring and explaining the lives of creatures*. He always encouraged his students *not to lose their spirit of youth, to keep interested in everything, and to enjoy science*. Dr. ONO actively enjoyed engaging in fieldwork with young researchers focussed on wildlife. For example, he led an overseas research project on the socio-ecology of Ethiopian wildlife in 1978–1979 and 1981–1982. His work on mammalian society covered diverse foreign and Japanese species, particularly African and Japanese herbivores, such as the Japanese serow, as well as carnivores, including Iriomote cat and Tsushima leopard cat. He developed a unique method for measuring the density of Japanese serows according to the distribution of fecal pellets and, with his colleagues, created a monitoring and conservation system for this species in Japan. Indeed, the Japanese serow is currently considered to be the best-managed natural population in Japan. His representative works on the Japanese serow are reviewed in the “Conservation History of the Japanese Serow” published in 2000.

Dr. ONO performed both scientific and administrative functions. He contributed to countless national and local councils and committees, including the Central Environment Council of the Ministry of the Environment, the Cultural Affairs Council for the Protection of Cultural Properties, the Natural Environment Conservation Council of Fukuoka Prefecture, among others. In 1994, after his retirement from Kyushu University, he was invited to serve as Advisor on environmental policy to the city of Kitakyushu, a position he holds to this day. At the same time, he served as the Counselor of the Kitakyushu Museum of Natural History from 1994 to 1995, as the first Director of the Yamada Green Zone and Park in Kitakyushu from 1995 to 2001, and as the fifth Director-General of the Kitakyushu Museum of Natural History in 2001. The museum merged with the History Museum of Kitakyushu and the Archaeological Museum of Kitakyushu to form the “Kitakyushu Museum of Natural History and Human History”, which opened on 3 November 2002. As its first Director-General, Dr. ONO directed the activities of this new museum until March 2010, with the aim of demonstrating the coexistence of the natural environment and human beings. Although he has now retired from this position at the museum, Dr. ONO remains active in both its scientific and administrative functions as Advisor to the city of Kitakyushu.

Representative Bibliography of Dr. Yuiti Ono

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