

Alessandro Ghigi

Necrologio

Nature, vol. 229, February 19 1971

Alessandro Ghigi, professor emeritus of the University of Bologna, who died in Bologna on November 20, 1970, in his ninety-sixth year, was born in that city in 1875. He was held in very high esteem in Italy, and was a member of the Pontificia Accademia delle Scienze and the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei and also of the Accademia delle Scienze of Bologna, Torino and Modena, and many scientific societies in other countries. He was awarded honorary doctorates at the Universities of Boston and Coimbra.

His long and distinguished career encompassed many aspects of zoology; from 1902 to 1915 he was lecturer in zoology and agricultural entomology in the School of Agriculture of the University of Bologna, and subsequently lecturer in zoology and comparative anatomy in the University of Ferrara from 1904 till 1908, when he became professor, a position he held until the end of 1922. That year he was appointed to the chair of zoology at the University of Bologna, where he became Rector in 1930, a position he held for the unprecedented period of thirteen years. He directed the Institute of Zoology of the University which he established for almost thirty years, and which attained a high reputation both for its scientific and teaching standards.

He laid the basis of practical aviculture in Italy, which previously had been completely neglected, and also founded the Institute of Aviculture in Bologna. He was very interested in these subjects, and became Honorary President of the World Poultry Science Association. He was also a leading authority on ornamental pheasants and guinea-fowl. He studied the problems of game animals in relation to hunting, and contributed much biological information by the institution of observations on migration and the establishment of a laboratory of applied zoology concerning game animals, including birds.

Ghigi made several zoological expeditions: to Cyrenaica in 1920; the Dodecanese Islands in 1926; Tehuantepec, Mexico, in 1927; Marocco in 1930; and Lake Chapala in

Patzcuaro, Mexico, in 1932; on which he collected numerous species, several new to science. His publications, of which there are more than 350, cover a wide range of subjects on various aspects of zoology including morphology, genetics and systematics, and deal with mollusca, crustacea, insects, mammals and especially birds.

He made a great contribution to the conservation of wild life, both nationally and internationally, and undoubtedly did more than any single individual to secure a better preservation of wild birds in Italy. He was a vice-president of the International Council for Bird Preservation from 1954-1966, and chair-man of the Italian National Section for thirty-five years, only relinquishing this position in 1970 on account of ill health, when he was immediately elected honorary president of the section.

Ghigi was a great traveler until just before he died, and attended many international conferences. In 1968, at the age of 94, he attended a conference in Venezuela in March, followed by another in Hungary in May, and a third in Rumania in June. Ghigi was an outstanding personality wherever he went, and he will be mourned all over the world.