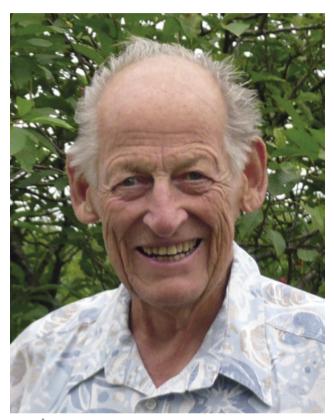
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Bertil Åkesson (1928 – 2013) obituary

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Bertil Åkesson (photograph from a private source).

Bertil Åkesson passed away June 25, 2013 at the age of 85, mourned by his wife Birgitta and son Bengt with family.

Bertil was born in Lund and grew up at Skabersjö Castle, where his father Alfred Åkesson worked as estate trustee. After graduating in Malmö, Bertil started his academic career at Lund University in 1948. He took his master's degree in 1951 and his doctorate in 1958 in zoology on sipunculids. Bertil married Birgitta Stendahl in 1960, also a biologist working as a teacher trainer. Bertil had a position for 12 years as Associate Professor of Zoology in Lund, but in 1970 he transferred his personal research fellowship to the University of Gothenburg, where he got closer to the marine facilities on the Swedish west coast.

As the Department of Zoology in Gothenburg grew, the broad topic of structural and ecological zoology became unmanageable to be handled by a single professor. As a professor in Zoology, Bertil Åkesson then in 1986 took over the responsibility for the ecological activity at the Department. He was also Head of Department for two periods. He retired in 1993 but continued his research at the institution for many years, publishing what became his last paper in 2011. Bertil's

long research career reflects the major changes in zoology during this epoch. Throughout the first part of his career he developed a great skill in comparative morphology and published three major studies on sipunculans. During the 1960s, he broadened his research field with embryology, mainly working with polychaetes, soon to become his central model and analysed with dedicated enthusiasm.

Bertil's influential pioneering work showed that a group of polychaete species (*Ophryotrocha*), with small body size, short generation time and resistance to a broad range of environmental conditions, was well suited for laboratory experiments. In these polychaetes, he saw great potential to analyse some of that time's central research problems, such as speciation, behaviour, mode of reproduction and life cycle strategies. Bertil's work established the group as a model organism for both basic evolutionary questions as well as an ecotoxicology model for the effects of marine pollutants. He held more than 20 species in culture in his lab, some of them continuously for 30–40 years, and he played a key role in distributing these species to laboratories all around the world.

Bertil Åkesson was well known in his field of research and he had broad international collaboration with marine research stations and universities in Europe as well as in the USA and Australia. His international contacts were beneficial to graduate students as well as younger colleagues in that he enthusiastically encouraged and arranged for their visits to foreign institutions. In Sweden Bertil contributed to the expansion of the marine field station at Tjärnö at University of Gothenburg, where he also supervised a number of PhD students. He was also active at the field station at Kristineberg, from where it is not far to Högby, where Bertil and his family have had their summer residence since 1966.

Bertil Åkesson's work at the department was dominated by research and, in the years closer to retirement, administration as Head of the Department. He was also a tutor and university teacher. In all, Bertil was factual, honest and impartial, efficient, positive, and supportive. He was gifted with much humour that helped to solve many knots, often with a merry laugh. We miss our dear colleague Bertil, his good humour, positive view on life, and irrepressible enthusiasm for science.

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