

## **Dennis Hubert Chitty - Pioneer**

Dennis Hubert Chitty was born September 18, 1912 in Bristol, England. He earned a B.A. from the University of Toronto in 1935 and a D. Phil. from Oxford University in 1949. From 1935-1961 while at Oxford, he worked with Charles Elton for 26 years on rodent populations as a research officer for the Bureau of Animal Population. His pioneering studies on population fluctuations in small rodents and snowshoe hares culminated in the Chitty Hypothesis of population regulation that population growth is stopped by behavioural interactions that lead to the genetic selection of highly aggressive animals. Not all of his colleagues agreed with the hypothesis in the beginning but it was finally proven to have merit after many decades of research into the role of individual quality, genetics and behaviour in the population dynamics of animals. One of Chitty's students, Charles J. Krebs, devoted his entire career to further understand this Hypothesis.

Dennis became a Professor at the University of British Columbia in 1961 and taught ecology and the history and philosophy of biology until he retired from active teaching in 1978 in order to continue his research on rodent populations. In 1993, a lecture series, the Chitty lecture, was established in his honour. In 1993, Dennis published a book, *Do Lemmings Commit Suicide: Beautiful Hypotheses and Ugly Facts*.

Dennis Chitty was elected to the Royal Society of Canada in 1969. He also received the Fry Medal of the Canadian Society of Zoology

He died on February 3, 2010, after some months of illness.