



The Ladyslipper and I, Autobiography of G. Ledyard Stebbins

G. L. Stebbins

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The Ladyslipper and I is the autobiography of G. Ledyard Stebbins (1906-2000), widely regarded as one of the most influential evolutionary biologists of the twentieth century. His opus, *Variation and Evolution in Plants* (1950), is perhaps the best known among his seven books and other major scientific contributions and provided the conceptual framework for the emerging field of plant evolutionary biology. Stebbins influence extended well beyond botany, and with his colleagues Theodosius Dobzhansky, Francisco Ayala, James Valentine, and countless others, would fundamentally shape modern genetics and Darwin's theory of natural selection toward what is now acknowledged as the modern evolutionary synthesis. Stebbins worked on *The Ladyslipper and I* in various drafts over the course of his long and productive life. As Betty Smocovitis notes in her foreword, Stebbins was renowned as a biological scientist for his ability to synthesize disparate ideas into coherent and novel frameworks. It's quite fitting, then, that in his memoir he intertwines the many strands of his life --- as a scholar and scientist, husband and father, mountain climber and music lover, world traveler, ardent naturalist and conservationist, and a celebrated and engaging teacher. The stories Stebbins recounts here --- his first plant-collecting foray at the age of four to a New England bog; his deep friendships with other major figures in twentieth-century biology, including Edgar Anderson and Ernst Mayr; his role in establishing the Department of Genetics at the University of California, Davis; and his many treks in California, the state whose landscape and flora meant so much to him --- reveal a life unified by his profound regard for the natural world and by the need to understand and preserve it.

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