Dictionaries attract an eclectic audience and have enjoyed a long and distinguished history ranging from early classics, such as Samuel Johnson’s (1755) *Dictionary of the English Language* through your grandfather’s Funk & Wagnalls, to today’s multiple online incarnations. Recently dictionaries specific to an increasing array of fields and developing bodies of knowledge have appeared. This is hardly surprising, given the increasing level of specialization in all fields of science.

In the natural sciences a few broadly used dictionaries are of high utility. These include dictionaries of biology, zoology, and other disciplines (Abercrombie et al. 1973; Allaby 2003; Cráciun and Cráciun 1976; Walker 1989). The *Eponym Dictionary of Mammals* is the 1st of its kind that explains who all those folks were who have scientific or vernacular names of mammals named after them.

An important distinction should 1st be made between etymology and eponyms. The 1st refers to the origin of a word, explaining the evolution of the “etymon” (Greek for truth). Eponym also has Greek roots (epōnymos or eponūmos), including the prefix epi = on + oynma or onoma = name. To illustrate this distinction consider the etymology of the words Columbus, America, and Athens. Columbus Day is an eponym for Christopher Columbus, America is an eponym for Amerigo Vespucci, and the capital of Greece is an eponym for the goddess Athena.

In the case of mammals common or vernacular and scientific names of species frequently honor a person and therefore are eponyms. The term patronym is frequently used in this sense, but it is restricted more properly to family names derived from paternal ancestors. Interestingly, occasional eponyms are indeed patronyms. In describing *Anoura luismanueli*, Jesus Molinari (1994:84) wrote: “The specific name, a noun in the genitive case, is a patronymic that I dedicate to the memory of my father, Luigi Emanuele Molinari Tani ….”

Following a similar work on birds (Beolens and Watkins 2003), the *Eponym Dictionary of Mammals* is an original and useful reference explaining the origins of the names of 2,290 vernacular names and 2,166 scientific names of mammals. A brief introductory section explains how to use the book, a simple process. Let’s say, for instance, you are curious about the name of Duthie’s golden mole, *Chlorotalpa duthieae*. The alphabetical arrangement of the book will quickly lead you to the entry for Dr. Augusta Vera Duthie, a South African botanist who founded the Stellenbosch Herbarium in 1902. Or, to continue in fossorial mode, perhaps *Mogera imaizumii*, the lesser Japanese mole, catches your fancy. A quick look at page 204 reveals that Professor Yoshinori Imaizumi, who was Director of Animal Research at the National Science Museum in Tokyo, was the inspiration for the naming of this species of *Mogera*. Cat fanciers also will remember him as the author of the name *Prionailurus iriomotensis*, the Iriomote cat.

The eponyms for mammals refer both to legendary and real persons from antiquity (priestess Io, goddess Iris, and Hector), through classical scientists (Linnaeus, Darwin, and Cuvier), up to contemporary folks (Sydney Anderson, David Frederik Attenborough, Howard and Rhonda Hawk, Lady Alison Jolly, and Anita Kelley Pearson). Mammalian eponyms are not restricted to scientists or academics. Some honor military luminaries (General Petr Kuzmich Kozlov, Colonel Henry Nason Dunn, and Major Friedrich Robert von Beringe), physicians (Clark Abel, Richard Harlan, and Charles Grove Young), explorers (Roy Chapman Andrews, Lieutenant Colonel Frederick Markham Bailey, and William Astor Chanler), expedition leaders (Malcolm Playfair Anderson, Marius-Gustave Dalloni, and Adolph Friedrich Albrecht Heinrich), collectors (J. Ray Alcorn, Audley Cecil Buller, and A. W. Waters), diplomats (C. D. Adams, Captain Francis Rickman Barton, and John Lane Harrington), travelers (Guy Babault, Colonel Stephenson Robert Clarke, and Pavel Grigorevich Demidoff), traders (Charles Dewitt Brower, James Chapman, and Colonel Cornelis Johannes Marius Nagtglas), ship owners (Peter and Joseph Bernard, Jean-Jacques Dussumier, and Marie-Jules Dupré), archaeologists (Susan Bulmer, Tadeo Kano, and Sven Nilsson), artists (George Francis Angas, Cornelius de Bruijn, and Ferdinand Deppe), adventurers (Captain John Beecroft, Johan Ludwig Gerhard Krefft, and Richard Lemon Lander), and others.

Some mammal species enjoy vernacular names referencing a place or country, county, village, or habitat of collection, but their scientific names are dedicated to a person: eastern Amazon climbing mouse (*Rhipidomys emiliae*), eastern gorilla (*Gorilla beringei*), Mindanao tree-shrew (*Urogale everetti*), Malagasy mountain mouse (*Monticolomys koopmani*), Malayan tailless leaf-nose bat (*Coelops robinsoni*), steppe field mouse (*Apodemus witherbii*), steppe polecat (*Mustela eversmannii*), or the eponym is a combination of the name of a place and of a person, Phillips’ Congo-shrew (*Congosorex philipporum*).

Appendix 1 with 52 pages includes 2,290 vernacular names of mammals. In this case it might be more appropriate to say English names, because few are in other