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Journal of East African Natural History **85**: 1–3 (1996)

KENNETH R. BOCK (1930–1996): IN MEMORIAM

Ken R. Bock died on 23 June, 1996, of an inoperable brain tumour. In this issue of the Journal we have included his paper 'Checklist of Reef Fishes of Diani and Galu, Kenya'. Unfortunately, Ken did not live to see the publication of this paper, having died before he had the chance to see the reviewed manuscript. The manuscript was, in fact, submitted in excellent form and the editors decided to publish it more or less as it stood.

With his work on the reef fishes of the Kenya Coast and Western Indian Ocean, Ken made real contributions to the literature on the natural history of the marine environment in East Africa. A selected bibliography of his works will be found at the end of this memoriam.

Ken Bock was born at King Williams Town in South Africa and was raised in that country. He attended Imperial College of Science, University of London, where he took an Honours Degree in Botany in 1953. Except for a brief stay in England, he spent his whole working life in East Africa and retired in Kenya in 1989. From 1955 to 1963 he worked in Kenya and during that time obtained a PhD from University of London. He continued working in Kenya, Tanzania and Malawi.

Ken had a highly successful career as a plant pathologist. He was a meticulous and very successful researcher, who worked on many crops including coffee, sisal, coconuts, maize, cassava and groundnuts. He was an enthusiastic and dedicated scientist and was able to pass this enthusiasm to his work team. Many Kenyan scientists acknowledge the help and encouragement they received from him during the early days of their careers.

The aspect of Ken's career that is of most interest here, however, is his parallel career as a marine biologist. He seemed to be a born 'natural historian' and kept meticulous records of observations of plants, birds and animals. His real love, however, was for the coast and in particular the reef and reef fishes. The identification of fish and the study of the populations on the reef and in the lagoons at Diani went on from year to year. This resulted in the publication, in 1978, of the book *A Guide to the Common Reef Fishes of the Western Indian Ocean*. This guide has been reprinted by Macmillan Press four times and is still on sale and much used. While in Malawi, he also became interested in the chiclid fish of that country and became a supporter of the Wildlife Society of Malawi.

On his retirement in Kenya in 1989, the interest in the reef continued and Ken became highly involved with the conservation of reef habitat and the impact of tourism, and all that follows, on the fish and coral populations. He was able to provide the Kenya Wildlife Service planners with much basic information which helped them to decide on the most important areas to be included in Marine Parks and Reserves, mainly on the coast south of Mombasa. He had again, as in his formal career, very good relationships with inexperienced wardens assigned to deal with marine matters, and his wise counsel will be greatly missed.

Because of his stimulating and optimistic outlook on life he was able to make even dull subjects interesting and was in frequent demand as a lecturer on natural history subjects.

Before his death, he had revised his monograph on the reef fishes of the Western Indian Ocean and was looking for a publisher. He had also completed the manuscript for a 'Guide to the Reef Fish of the Kenya Marine Parks and Reserves'.

Ken died peacefully at his daughter's house in UK with his family in attendance, having laughed and reminisced with close friends earlier in the day. Ken was a very good friend to many and will be greatly missed by friends and fellow scientists world-wide.

(This memoriam relies almost entirely on notes supplied by Dr Ian Robertson to whom we are deeply grateful.)

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