

Obituaries

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Obituaries

RODERICK MURRAY BAXTER,
27 August 1951–17 October 2015

All of us who knew Rod Baxter were shaken by the news of his sudden death on 17 October 2015. Although Rod had entered the community of the “Dormousers” (specialists studying dormice and regularly communicating in meetings) late in his career, he played a prominent role in research on Southern African small mammal biology, ever since his studies at the University of Natal (South Africa) in the 1970s.

Roderick Murray Baxter was born on 27 August 1951 in Irene near Pretoria, Union of South Africa (now Republic of South Africa), to Patricia and Murray F. Baxter. His father was head of medical research at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research. The family has resided in South Africa since the 19th century. During the Anglo-Boer War, Rod’s great uncle Jack Baxter was executed by British troops for wearing a khaki suit, which was illegal lest for British soldiers. This tragic incident had left bitter resentment in Rod against British colonialists. Rod had spent his youth together with two brothers and one sister in an arid region, and frequently evoked his early experience of struggling with drought. He went to school in Irene and in Lyttelton (both Gauteng Province, South Africa). In the 1970s he joined the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg and started his professional career as research assistant of Waldo Meester, studying, at that time, less known small mammals. Although the title at first had sounded impressive to a young postgraduate, the workload was high and the salary was low. Besides, there was a generation gap between these two men. While Waldo Meester, an internationally recognized authority on the taxonomy of African mammals, had based his works on museum vouchers, Rod, just like the majority of other junior staff, had nursed interest on behaviour and was desperate to work with living animals. His colleagues remember Rod as a bright, intelligent, and dynamic young man with a wide interest and true passion, particularly for his beloved and “favourite” mammals: Shrews. His enquiring mind and his excellent powers of observation were equally admired as was his empathy and compassion



Fig. 1. Rod on his study plot in the Great Fish River Reserve (Eastern Cape Province, Republic of South Africa), with African dormouse in his hands. Photo courtesy: Emmanuel Do Linh San.

for his fellows. Caring about others, offering help and time lending an ear or even two to his students who sometimes had private, social, or family problems had top priority throughout his many years working with students and colleagues. At that time, Rod had long hair, a beard, and enjoyed smoking a pipe – he liked the smell of tobacco. He was not the only smoker among the University staff and in those days when people were still allowed to smoke inside, the smell of tobacco had filled the zoology department. After receiving his Master’s degree, he stayed in Pietermaritzburg for a short time before he joined the University of Cape Town. Thereafter, in 1983, he started lecturing at the University of Fort Hare, Alice, Eastern Cape Province, living in King Williams Town and later in Grahamstown together with his wife Ann, which meant long daily drives to and from work. In 2008 they moved to Venda,

Banthustan, northern South Africa, where he lectured at the University of Venda until his death. He had been working on his PhD Thesis on the distribution and ecophysiology of southern African shrews (*Myosorex*) ever since the early 1980s but never completed this work. He was constantly under pressure of very high teaching loads, but perhaps more importantly, Rod never finished his work because “there was always something to add”. Because of his intimate passion for the animals and nature, his PhD project mattered more to Rod than it would have been important for his academic career. He simply wanted to understand his animals properly. “Meticulous” was one of his favourite words. The University of Venda attempted to award Rod a PhD title on the basis of his publications, but this did not materialize. Rod was married twice, first with Marion Pike, an award winning author (in 1981), and afterwards with Ann Grewar (1992). He is survived by his son Crispian from his first marriage.

Rod was a complex personality, deeply passionate, quiet but persistent and most determined, not to forget his enormous sense of humour. Three topics dominated his life: mammalogy, his students, and marathons. Running was extremely important for him, above all for a spirit of comradeship. He regularly attended two major ultra-marathons, the Two Oceans Marathon (56 km) and the Comrades Marathon (89 km). The Comrades Marathon, between Pietermaritzburg and Durban, was founded by a WWI veteran to “celebrate mankind’s spirit over adversity”, and was therefore particularly close to Rod’s personality. Participants having run ten marathons receive a permanent start number. Typically, Rod got permanent numbers for both ultra-marathons.

Teaching and the wellbeing of his students was another of Rod’s passions. Before he switched to environmental sciences at Venda, his lecturing career was in zoology. At the University of Fort Hare in Alice he also conducted third-year practicals. He completed his Postgraduate Diploma in tertiary education in 2007 and was an outstanding lecturer. He would make sure that each of his students would fully understand a problem and never got tired of answering questions. “Patience” was another of his favourite words. Even after classes, he would always be available for his students. Rod loved teaching, even the very onerous task of dealing with many students of humble origin who brought with them their domestic problems and who followed the curriculum with great difficulty. At Fort Hare, he was not only a teacher, but also a caring “father” for his students. They could come to his office at any time to talk about private and social problems

or life in general. Rod respected the problems of each individual student and would consider this in his teaching assignments. The students liked and trusted him. Rod would often take a few students along on field trips, and the evenings were filled with “private” lectures, which the students very much appreciated.

Rod was primarily a mammalogist who is internationally recognized for his work on shrew biology. His early research was on various southern African species, and his publications were about shrew captive behaviour, activity patterns, reproduction and postnatal development, fostering, agonistic behaviour, moulting, (lack of) echolocation, “flehmen” (the catnip response), and predation upon them by carnivores and owls. As an indisputable authority on Southern African shrews, Rod authored, occasionally with Nikko Dippenaar, a number of shrew accounts for “The Mammals of the Southern African Subregion” (Cambridge University Press 2005), “Mammals of Africa” (Bloomsbury Publishing 2013), “The IUCN Red List”, and “The Red List of Mammals of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland” (South African National Biodiversity Institute and Endangered Wildlife Trust 2016). While monitoring small mammals in pine plantations around Hobbiton on Hogsback, a holiday and educational camp for underprivileged children in the Eastern Cape province, Rod became interested in forest damage by barking and published, together with Lennart Hansson from Sweden, an influential review on this topic. As a mammalogist, Rod maintained a wide international network of collaborators and correspondents and, as remembered by one of his overseas colleagues, “his communications and assistance ... was always very unselfish”. A flea parasitizing the forest shrew *Myosorex varius*, is eponym to Rod: *Hypsophthalmus baxteri* Hastriter, 2001.

As an academic, Rod was in position to change lives for the better, and there is no doubt he did that for many students and his colleagues alike. We sincerely miss his gentleness, his loyalty and willingness to step in where needed. As a mammalogist, he will be remembered above all for his mastering of Southern African shrews and as the first to establish long term monitoring of any *Graphiurus* dormouse anywhere in Africa.

Acknowledgements

We thank Ann Baxter, Jacques van Heerden and Rick Bernard for sharing their memoirs on Rod. Ilse E. Hoffmann is acknowledged for reviewing help.

Boris KRYŠTUFEK & Werner HABERL

PETER VOGEL, 1942-2015

It is a clear morning in March 1990 and I (MS) am waiting for the arrival of Prof. Peter Vogel at Palermo airport. We had exchanged letters and had already published a paper on the Sicilian shrew *Crocidura sicula* together with Rainer Hutterer (Vogel et al. 1989), but at that time, we had not yet met personally. I wander in the arrival hall among people without meeting him – it is only when the crowd fades away that a middle-aged man approaches me with the words “Hallo, I am Peter”. A bit astonished, I welcomed him: a smiling figure in blue jeans and trekking shoes, carrying a rucksack. I was awaiting an Ordinary Professor and Director of the Institute of Zoology and Ecology at the University of Lausanne, hence serious and dressed more like a businessman, as some of the people whom I used to meet in the corridors of the University of Palermo. “Where is the guitar?” was my first thought and “We will spend a very nice time together” was the second.

He had no guitar with him, but a dozen of Longworth traps together with t-shirts and a few other personal belongings in his rucksack. “I have only these, have you brought some more?” he asked while we were approaching my glorious Lada Niva to start our field mission. We had to cross Sicily to arrive at Porto Empedocle and get the ferry to Pantelleria in order to trap shrews there (Vogel et al. 2004). At that night, after the boat has left the Sicilian coast, Peter and I were already friends, talking about anything and everything. After almost 30 years, these scenes are still carved in my mind, as this was my very first meeting with an extraordinary scientist and person. This was such an experience that Werner (WH) vividly remembers this too, after I told him this story way back in 1998 when we were talking about our shrew friends.

Together with me and Werner, Peter was a Commission Member of the IUCN SSC ITSES, thereafter the Insectivore Specialist Group. He was a member of the Scientific Committee and an active contributor to “The Shrew Shrine” as well as to “The Dormouse Hollow, two internet newsgroups.

In the next twenty years, it was always a pleasure for both of us to meet Peter in the field or at international conferences on small mammals, and to exchange views on scientific issues. We corresponded on the phylogeny and phylogeography of shrews, the ecology and physiology of dormice, trapping methods and many other subjects. Peter always had precious suggestions and ideas for us, based on his long experience and dedication to nature.



Fig. 1. Peter Vogel during the field excursion at the 5th International Conference on Dormice in September 2002, Gödöllő, Hungary. Foto: W. Haberl.

Peter’s wide research interests ranged from development and reproductive biology to physiology of hibernation and competition, using small mammals (shrews, dormice, voles, bats) as model. His excellence domain, however, was the systematics of Soricidae. He essentially transformed the field in applying modern cytological and molecular methods to significantly unravel the taxonomy and phylogeography of this difficult and elusive taxon (Cosson et al. 2005, Dubey et al. 2007, 2008). Peter’s approach was unique, he was like a ‘one-man-band’, if you allow us the metaphor: he used to trap animals by himself, analysed the karyotypes or the DNA in the laboratory, and finally publishing most relevant and high-rated papers together with the highly qualified young researchers he had raised, motivated and taught. His travels to systematically collect shrews focussed on geographic areas where the taxonomy was unclear, equivocal or questionable, leading him from the Mediterranean islands and Africa to the Middle East and Japan. Consequently he established a large network of researchers and students across the world who enthusiastically assisted him.

Above all, Peter was a fine naturalist and excellent field ecologist, skilled to build an experimental design to study dormice hibernation in his cottage garden (Vogel 1997) or to trap with success the tiniest mammals of the world (Vogel 2012, Fig. 1).

Peter’s career was exemplary – after having obtained the PhD at Basel University (Switzerland) in 1970 with

his thesis discussing shrew ontogeny – he directed the Centre Suisse de Recherches Scientifiques in Ivory Coast for three years. Back home, he was recruited as Associate professor (1973) and later (1979) as Ordinary professor of Zoology and Ecology, at the University of Lausanne (Switzerland). For a long period (1973-1995), he held the position Director of the Institute of Zoology and Ecology, and actively participated in the academic life of the University of Lausanne as vice dean of the Science Faculty and Chair of the Biology section. After his retirement in

2007, he became Professor emeritus, still active at the University of Lausanne, until January 2015, when he passed away due to a serious heart disease at the age of 73.

He worked actively until his very last days, maintaining his network of international collaborations as the last papers attest (Vogel et al. 2014, Vogel & Gander 2015, Mori et al. 2016).

It is sad that Peter is not with us anymore, and we take leave of him with commotion and gratitude for the human and scientific example he has left us.

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Maurizio SARÀ & Werner HABERL

GERHARD STORCH, 1939-2017

Gerhard Storch was one of the greatest micromammalogists of our time, a scientist with excellent knowledge and expertise in both recent and fossil mammals. He was born in Frankfurt am Main and was a collector from his childhood. Already at the age of 15, he became a member of the Senckenberg Gesellschaft für Naturkunde. Gerhard studied biology in Darmstadt, Vienna, and Frankfurt, and got his doctoral degree from the Goethe-Universität Frankfurt with a thesis on the functional morphology of the chewing musculature and correlated structures of the cranium in recent bats. Afterwards, he was appointed as scientific assistant in the section Mammalogie of the Senckenberg Forschungsinstitut in Frankfurt am Main under the leadership of Heinz Felten and was supported by a scholarship of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) for two years. In his young age, he travelled to South Europe (Balkans, Italy, Spain), frequently with Franz Malec, for collecting small mammals. Material gathered on these trips yielded noteworthy faunal and taxonomic papers, and the discovery of a new species *Microtus felteni* endemic to southern Balkans. In 1969, the Senckenberg Institute employed Gerhard as a head of the newly founded section Mammalogie II (fossil mammals). From 1997-2000 he advanced to become head of the department Terrestrische Zoologie. Although he retired in 2004, Gerhard was honorary running the section until his successor was employed and he remained an active researcher until he passed away.

Gerhard published his first scientific paper in 1963. His scientific bibliography comprises an enormous and diverse scope of topics, covering recent and fossil micromammals, paleontological excavations at Hohensülzen (1971-1972), Dorn-Dürkheim (1972-1980) and Eppelsheim (1996-2000), and micromammals that turned to light during archeological excavations e.g. from the Brillenhöhle near Blaubeuren or from Petersfels near Engen (Hegau). Particularly important are his investigations and descriptions of mammals from the early Middle Eocene of Grube Messel near Darmstadt, such as bats including the new species *Archaeonycteris pollex* and *Trachypteran franzeni*. He also described the oldest complete skeleton of the most basal glirid *Eogiliravus wildi* (with Christine Seiffert), which led to reconsider the affinities inside Palearctic Glirimorpha. Furthermore, he described the new pholidote *Eomanis krebsi* (with Thomas Martin), *Leptictidium tobieni*, a new Pseudorhynchocyonid (with Wighart von



Koenigswald), and the marsupial *Amphiperatherium goethei*. Gerhard became worldwide renowned when he published *Eurotamandua joresi* as the first and only representative of myrmecophagids in Europe. Valuable were also Gerhard's additions to the famous middle Eocene fauna of the Geiseltal near Halle e.g. Didelphidae, Nyctitheriidae, and fragments of a humerus and an ulna, representing the only other specimens of *Eurotamandua* beside the holotype. However, it was not only taxonomy that interested Gerhard. As biologist, he was particularly attracted by paleobiological aspects such as flight and echolocation in Eocene bats e.g. *Trachypteran franzeni* (together with Jörg Habersetzer and Bernard Sigé) or the various forms of erinaceomorphs (together with Gotthard Richter). Moreover, the paleobiogeographic relationships of the mammal fauna of Messel and of the whole European Eocene was a special field of his investigations.

In 1985 Gerhard described together with Norbert Schmidt-Kittler a complete skeleton of a theridomyid from the Oligocene of Cereste (southern France). The analysis by him and Burkart Engesser of the complete skeleton of a gliding eomyid from the late Oligocene site of Enspel (Westerwald) including the preserved patagium was particularly exciting, because it became evident for the first time that at least this eomyid was a glider representing the oldest fossil record of this kind of locomotion in rodents. A paleobiogeographic highlight was the Ruscinian rodent fauna with Asian affinities, which Gerhard discovered together with Oldrich Fejfar in a block of limestone from Gundersheim near Worms.

Soon, Gerhard expanded his field of investigations over the borders of Europe. In 1983, he contributed significantly to the taxonomy and distribution of

small mammals from Anatolia, also by describing with Heinz Felten a new dormouse *Dryomys laniger*, still known only from Turkey. During Gerhard's curatorship of the mammal collection, the Senckenberg Forschungsinstitut gathered large samples from Thailand, resulting in another discovery of a remarkable recent mammal, a vespertilionid bat which he described with Dieter Kock as a genus and species new to science, *Thainycteris aureocollaris*. In 1983 Gerhard began field work in the Neogene of the Mongolian part of China and evaluated the discovered micromammals together with Qiu Zhuding and Volker Fahlbusch, whereas he described new murids and eulipotyphlan insectivores together with Qiu Zhuding from the hominoid locality of Lufeng, late Miocene of China. In 2003 he published together with Gregg Gunnell, Jörg Habersetzer and others an Eocene microchiropteran from Tanzania, the oldest placental mammal from Sub-Saharan Africa.

Working on fossils led to biochronology. Based on micromammals, Gerhard recognized that the newly discovered fauna of Dorn-Dürkheim 1 represents the first and up to now only Turolian fauna from the whole of Germany. Other topics of this kind were the biochronologic significance of *Arvicola mosbachensis* and the faunal change at the Pleistocene-Holocene boundary.

Gerhard was also interested in the history of paleontological science. Together with Thomas Keller he published a book on Hermann von Meyer, Senckenbergian and most important vertebrate paleontologist of the 19th century in Germany. With Oldrich Fejfar he reconsidered the famous dormouse skeleton from the early Oligocene volcanic strata of Valeč-Waltsch (Bohemia). Subjects of Gerhard's studies were also Goethe's discovery of the premaxillary bone in man and his theory of cranial development in vertebrates.

Getting time by time deeper and deeper into the fossil record, Gerhard arrived finally to the Paleocene, the earliest period of Tertiary, when he described together with Kenneth D. Rose and Katrin Krohmann small mammal postcrania from the cave of Walbeck near the boundary between Niedersachsen and Sachsen-Anhalt. Published in 2013, this was Gerhards last of about 240 scientific publications.

Summarizing, Gerhard had a sharp eye for morphological details and an extremely good feeling for their taxonomic importance. For example, he elevated *Apodemus flavicollis alpicola* to species level (with Otfried Lütt), entirely on morphological characteristics, what was later fully confirmed by

molecular studies. He was also able to recognize slight morphological differences between species of *Apodemus* in Turkey, although all his predecessors failed in this. Gerhard advocated the taxonomic split of *Apodemus mystacinus* and *A. epimelas* long before molecular evidence provided support and the view became widely accepted. Careful classification and mapping of molar morphotypes in these sister species of *Apodemus* resulted in an early phylogeographic analysis based entirely on morphological markers. Again, subsequent molecular evidence confirmed and refined conclusions by Gerhard with a lag of decades. Dormice were Gerhard's particular passion. For the Handbook of European mammals (edited by Jochen Niethammer and Franz Krapp, 1978) he elaborated all five species of European dormice, which was the first synthesis on continental scale. He attended the International Conferences on Dormice in 1993 and 1996. At the 2nd Dormice Conference in Fuscaldo, Italy, he presented an important review on phylogenetic relationships among dormice genera (published in 1994). At that time the enigmatic Chinese dormouse *Chaetocauda*, known only from two individuals, was synonymized with the genus *Dryomys*. Gerhard opposed this view merely from reading the description. Years later, when he had the opportunity to study the originals, one of us asked him for the opinion regarding this name. "Still the same" was the reply, and Gerhard was correct; *Chaetocauda* is now unanimously accepted as a genus on its own right.

However, Gerhard was far more than an excellent scientist with worldwide reputation. He was a warm-hearted human and colleague, who was generous, and showed respect to the work of others, no matter how tiny it was in comparison with his own large-scale studies. And he had a special sense of humour. His death means a great loss for all of us.

Gerhard Storch leaves behind his beloved wife Katrin, who gave him strong support throughout his scientific career, their daughter Anne, their son Hannes, and three grandchildren.

Jens Lorenz FRANZEN, Irina RUF
& Boris KRYŠTUFEK

p.s.: It is possible to order a complete list of the scientific publications of Gerhard Storch at the section Mammalogie of the Senckenberg Forschungsinstitut in Frankfurt am Main; e-mail: irina.ruf@senckenberg.de. An obituary evaluating particularly Gerhard's great personality was published in Senckenberg • Natur • Forschung • Museum 147 (9/10), 2017.

DOUGLAS WOODS, 1921-2003

It was Doug's idea, about 1985, to build special nest boxes to attract dormice, rare and appealing animals, about which very little was known. This was a simple idea, but the best ideas are usually simple- once someone else has thought of them. In this case it was a real breakthrough. It's hard to think of many other ideas that have so revolutionised fieldwork on a mammal species in such a short time. We worked together using his nest boxes to sample dormice regularly. For the first time we were able to collect basic biological data that had been available for other small mammals for over half a century. Doug's agreement to allow his idea to be developed as part of my dormouse research project made a huge difference to studying these formerly elusive animals that previously hardly anyone ever saw alive.

Doug and his wife Olive were very generous with their hospitality during our fieldwork and there seemed to be no limit to the help he could call upon locally. Need a place to park a caravan? – no problem, need 100 nest boxes – OK, when do you want them? When I suggested we could do with a few plastic pots, within days 150 of them appeared on the doorstep!

The dormouse research project was a huge success. Previously there had been only three scientific papers on British dormice published in the past hundred years. Now we have a very extensive literature, including a paper with Doug as joint author. Today there are thousands of dormouse nest boxes in place throughout England and Wales, enabling many hundreds of people to see these animals, greatly adding to their interest in mammals. Thanks to Doug's support, the dormouse is now one of Britain's most thoroughly understood small mammals, allowing an extensive national conservation programme to be based on a sound scientific footing. Planning law has even been amended to take account of dormice, affecting the way that roads and major infrastructural building is carried out. Dormice focus attention on how woodlands should be managed to benefit wildlife, and they highlight issues to do with management of the countryside in general, because what is good for dormice is good for many other species too.

Doug's special nest boxes not only helped to boost the numbers of dormice, but now also form a basic tool for monitoring their populations, nationwide. In 1992 the dormouse became the first terrestrial British mammal for which a national monitoring programme was established, comparable to the monitoring of birds that is now so widely accepted. Doug himself,



Fig. 1. At the top of the rocky hill in Croatia during the 3rd International Dormouse Conference with his pacemaker.

despite his advancing years played a very active role in checking nest boxes and running training days to help hundreds of others to become involved. He was also very successful in breeding these animals in captivity. His "dormouse factory" in the garden of his Somerset home was the principal source of animals

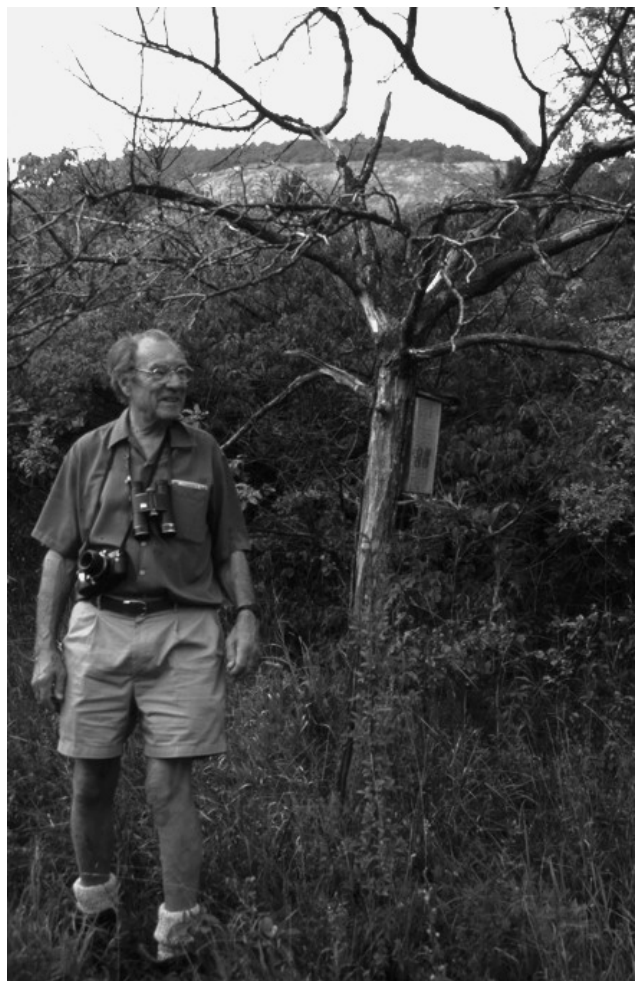


Fig. 2. On field trip from the Dormouse Conference in Hungary.

for the first reintroduction of dormice in 1993, re-establishing them in Cambridgeshire for the first time since 1908. He contributed to most of the subsequent releases that have helped to restore this species to areas where it has been extinct for more than 50 years, a lasting memorial to his efforts.

Doug also attended the first International Dormouse Conferences, eager to share his knowledge and expertise. Many students and fieldworkers gained a lot of ideas and encouragement from him, helping to develop studies of dormice across Europe. I fondly remember him on a conference excursion in Croatia, climbing to the top of a very steep rocky hill. Soon he had left others in the party way behind. He looked out over the surrounding countryside, tapped his chest and grinned “good advertisement for pacemakers eh?”. He also glumly reflected that he probably wouldn’t make the next conference in three years time. But he did, and was with us at the 5th International Dormouse

Conference in Hungary. He greatly enjoyed that too, especially the young ladies who were a quarter his age. Doug was a retired tradesman not an academic biologist. He ran a family butcher’s shop in London, and came to natural history late in life. Yet he made a greater contribution to British mammal studies than many full-time professional biologists ever did. Apart from dormice, he was active in his local badger group and bat group, and frequently went out to rescue snakes and other wildlife from farmers and householders who would otherwise have killed them. It’s hard to think of another person who, beginning only after he retired from work, contributed so much and with such success. He leaves a legacy which cannot be overlooked and of which he could be justly proud. His death in 2003 was a shock to us all, taking away a significant personality from British natural history, and also an ebullient, generous and enthusiastic friend.

Pat MORRIS