

Gratulation : Dr. Bernd Hauser, honorary curator at the Museum d'histoire naturelle de Genève, is 80

Autor(en): **Lienhard, Charles / Hollier, John / Schwendinger, Peter**

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Gratulation

DR BERND HAUSER, HONORARY CURATOR AT THE MUSEUM D'HISTOIRE NATURELLE DE GENEVE, IS 80



East Malaysia: Sabah: Kabili-Sepilok Forest Reserve near Sandakan, March 1983 (photo C. Lienhard).

Bernd Hauser, a member of the Swiss Entomological Society since 1969 and the SEG committee representative for Geneva from 1970 to 1977, was born on 19 May 1936 in Munich, but was brought up and went to school in the Austrian city of Innsbruck. He enrolled at Innsbruck University in 1955, taking a doctorate in 1962 whilst already teaching as an assistant to Prof. Otto Steinböck. With the support of Steinböck's successor, Prof. Heinz Janetschek, he subsequently taught as an assistant professor at the Alpine Research Centre (at Obergurgl), and later also at the Zoological Institute of Innsbruck University.

Hauser became the curator of the Department of Arthropods and Entomology 1 at the Muséum d'histoire naturelle de la Ville de Genève (Geneva Museum) in June 1968, and so responsible for all arthropod groups except the four mega-orders of holometabolous insects. His career at the Geneva Museum was devoted to his lifelong passion, the study of soil and cave microarthropods. His arrival followed the premature death of Hermann Gisin in August of the previous year, soon after the collections had been installed in the new building at Malagnou. Gisin had left a project to revise the Collembola genus *Pseudosinella* unfinished, and Hauser's first challenge was to arrange for its completion. Thanks to the expertise of Maria Manuela da Gama (University of Coimbra, Portugal), who had worked with Gisin as part of her doctoral studies, this was technically possible, but funding was required. With the help and support of René A. Descombes (the administrator of the museum) and Villy Aellen (the director), Hauser established a source of funding.

Thus was born the “Expertise” budget of the Museum, which has continued to prove fruitful until the present day, allowing outside specialists to work on and enrich the Geneva Museum collections.

Using the leaven of the Expertise funding, Hauser enlarged the network of taxonomists that he had already started to create at Innsbruck University. His network eventually included Max Beier (pseudoscorpions and mantids), Lazare Botosaneanu (caddis flies), Richard Bott (decapods), Paolo Brignoli (spiders), Bruno Condé (bristly millipedes, palpigrades and diplurans), Franco Ferrara (isopods), Kurt Günther (grasshoppers), Richard Hoffman (millipedes), Herbert Hölzel (lacewings), Sigfrid Ingrisch (bush crickets), Wilson Lourenço (scorpions), Sándor Mahunka (mites), Raymond Manning (stomatopods), Luis Mendes (thysanurans), Josef Nosek (proturans), Jean Pagès (diplurans), Jean Péricart (true bugs), Roger Roy (praying mantis), Ulf Scheller (pauropods and symphylans), Helmut Schmalzfuss (isopods), Fernand Schmid (caddis flies), Raoul Serène (decapods), Karl Strasser (millipedes), Hans Strouhal (isopods), Stephano Taiti (isopods), Konrad Thaler (arachnids), Michael Türkay (decapods), Max Vachon (scorpions), Tamas Vasarhelyi (true bugs) and Peter Zwick (stoneflies). Many of these long-term collaborations became lifelong friendships. They also greatly enriched the Geneva Museum collections; Sándor Mahunka alone wrote 110 papers based on Geneva Museum specimens, describing 740 species and depositing all of the primary type specimens in the Museum collection. In addition, Hauser arranged for Hoffman and Nosek to have monographs published through the Geneva Museum, and played a very important role in the editing of these works, as well as revising many of the papers published by his network. He became a member of the «Denkschriften-Kommission der Schweizerischen Naturforschenden Gesellschaft» in 1988 and acted as president from 1994 until 2000.

Hauser organised his department to feed the network he had created so that the experts could be confident of finding interesting soil and cave arthropods to study at the Museum. He collected assiduously, arranged for the material to be sorted into groups for the specialists to use and ensured its storage in the best possible conditions. A team of competent technicians capable of sorting microscopic soil arthropods, such as palpigrades, pauropods, symphylans, Collembola and mites was formed and trained. He also provided the infrastructure for research, with excellent equipment, the necessary literature and every attention to detail. Hauser was responsible for the operation of the Museum’s first Scanning Electron Microscope from its arrival in 1977 until 1980, and helped to organise the installation of a gas disinfection system adjacent to the collection hall to facilitate the preservation of the dry holdings.

At the same time Hauser completely reorganised the storage of the existing collections, replacing the containers for the alcohol collection and ensuring that all species were housed in separate jars, moving the microscopic slides from boxes to cabinets with drawers and introducing a species card file system that remains an essential collection management tool.

The first author is greatly indebted to Hauser for the ideal research conditions offered by his department, and his support for his taxonomic work on Psocoptera as a research officer from 1981 to 2009. In particular, Hauser introduced him to cave biology, a subject which would prove particularly fruitful.



Singapore: Palm Garden of Raffles Hotel. From left: B. Hauser, D. H. Murphy, R. Yoshii, November 1987 (photo C. Lienhard).

Fieldwork was carried out regionally and further afield. Hauser's expeditions were carefully planned, usually in collaboration with his research officer, who accompanied him on most of his field trips, and with local contacts, or scientists who had already worked in the area visited. Thus his exploration of Greece and its islands benefited from collaboration with botanists at the universities of Patras and Athens, while the experience of the Japanese Collembola specialist Ryozyo Yoshii facilitated work in Malaysia, Indonesia and Japan. Hauser had a special travelling Berlese extraction system for fieldwork, and brought back specimens as well as soil samples. Hauser's expeditions, official and private, covered a vast array of countries and all the continents apart from South America and Antarctica. His contacts with scientists and other travellers spread the scope of the Museum's holdings even further.

Soil samples, either collected during expeditions or sent to him by a network of travellers (not all of them scientists), were treated in the dedicated Berlese extraction room in the Museum. Hauser's speciality was slow extraction, each sample worked on for weeks or months without a heat or light source until as many arthropods as possible had been extracted. Once extracted, the material was sorted into groups suitable for examination by a specialist, normally to order for insects and arachnids, and coarser groupings for the other taxa. For groups that were actively researched by the network, more precise sorting was undertaken, e.g. tingid bugs for Péricart, japygid diplurans for Pagès, labidostommatid mites and cyphophthalmid opilionids for interested researchers. This total sorting meant nothing was missed and all of the material was available for study. For some groups of very small and elusive organisms like the palpigrades, pauropods and hapacticoid copepods, the Geneva Museum collections represent a considerable fraction of the known specimens.

Hauser oversaw the acquisition by the Geneva Museum of personal collections of arthropods, some of them of major importance, from various researchers, through gift, purchase or legacy. These include millipedes of Karl Strasser and

Richard Hoffman, mites of Claire Athias-Henriot and Paul Vercammen-Grandjean, spiders of Stefan Heimer and Christa Deeleman-Reinhold, springtails of Ryozyo Yoshii, dragonflies of Alois Bilek and Antoine Senglet, true bugs of Hans Eckerlein and Rudolf Kappeller, orthopteroid insects of Hannes Baur, Kurt Harz and Adolf Nadig, and fleas of Fritz Peus.

One of Hauser's principal interests, apart from soil arthropods, is biospeleology. This he shared with Villy Aellen, who was the director of the Geneva Museum when he arrived, and with Pierre Strinati, with whom he still pursues his studies. This interest has led him to explore caves in Bavaria, Switzerland, Greece and the Balkans, and world-wide, and brought him into contact with other experts such as Egon Pretner. He arranged the posthumous publication of Pretner's gazetteer of the caves studied by Leo Weirather, whom he had known while in Innsbruck, providing a major resource for biospeleology of the Balkans. Weirather noted the details of his collecting localities in his own shorthand, giving the caves pseudonyms to protect them from unscrupulous collectors. Deciphered by Pretner, this information was used to revisit Weirather's caves. On one occasion, when Hauser was searching for a Greek cave in the Ossa Mountains apparently unvisited by anyone since Weirather, he found the name of the village, the date of Weirather's visit and the guide's name. Going to the village, he went into the village café and asked about the guide. To their mutual astonishment the latter was sitting there in the café and, assuming that Hauser was Weirather's son, he agreed to act as guide again 51 years after the original visit.

Hauser is a historian of the Museum and has contributed articles about the historical figures associated with its development and compiled information about past researchers, collections and publications. As well as some luminaries of cave exploration, he has also researched the works and career of Giovanni Antonio Scopoli and Frater Vinzenz Maria Gredler. Scopoli, the early and eminent Tyrolian naturalist, needs no introduction. Gredler, in his day head of the Franciscan Gymnasium in Bozen, was a prolific nineteenth-century naturalist who published on the geology, mineralogy, botany and zoology of the Tyrol, as well as art and anthropology.

In 1993 Hauser received the medal of honour «PRO STUDIO ET FIDEI» for scientific cooperation from the Hungarian Museum of Natural History (Budapest), the first foreigner to be thus honoured after WW2.

Bernd Hauser created a vast and efficient machine to engage in a race against time, collecting specimens from around the world while it was still possible, and making them available for study. Interested in all arthropod groups, and with a capacious memory, he generously assisted researchers, often in unexpected ways. Happy to facilitate the findings of others, he refused invitations to be a co-author of many works. There are over 80 species of arthropods that carry his name as a dedication however. Hauser is the living memory of the department and is still active in matching specimens with taxonomists in the most fruitful fashion, while the huge depot of unidentified specimens continues to be a resource as greatly appreciated by the specialists of today as it will be by those of tomorrow.

CHARLES LIENHARD, JOHN HOLLIER* & PETER SCHWENDINGER

Muséum d'histoire naturelle de Genève, C.P. 6434, CH-1211 Genève 6

* corresponding author: john.hollier@ville-ge.ch