

Wolfgang SCHACHT (10 November 1939 – 10 April 2011)

An obituary

[Wolfgang SCHACHT (10. November 1939 – 10. April 2011). Ein Nachruf]

by
Marion KOTRBA

Munich (Germany)



Fig. 1: Wolfgang SCHACHT in June 2006. Photo: F. MENZEL.

Abstract

Wolfgang SCHACHT passed away on April 10th 2011 at the age of 71. He had been employed for 39 years as a museum technician in the Diptera Section of the Zoologische Staatssammlung München, and after his official retirement had volunteered for an additional 7 years. During this time he rendered outstanding service to dipterology in Germany and also in Taiwan. A German version of this obituary is being published in the journals Nachrichtenblatt der Münchner Entomologischen Gesellschaft and Entomofauna.

Key words

Wolfgang SCHACHT, dipterology, Tabanidae, biography, publications, obituary

Zusammenfassung Wolfgang SCHACHT verstarb am 10. April 2011 im Alter von 71 Jahren. Er war 39 Jahre als technischer Mitarbeiter in der Sektion Diptera der Zoologischen Staatssammlung München tätig und nach seiner Pensionierung weitere 7 Jahre ehrenamtlich. In dieser Zeit hat er sich um die Dipterologie in Deutschland und insbesondere auch in Taiwan außerordentlich verdient gemacht. Eine deutsche Version dieses Nachrufs erscheint im Nachrichtenblatt der Münchner Entomologischen Gesellschaft und in der Entomofauna.

Stichwörter Wolfgang SCHACHT, Dipterologie, Tabanidae, Biographie, Publikationen, Nachruf

Our friend and colleague Wolfgang SCHACHT has passed away, much too soon; he died on April 10th 2011 at the age of 71. To me he was not only a competent and loyal assistant but, in his own way, also a friend. I knew him well enough to value his work and personality, but still too little to claim that I could do full justice to his various achievements, including those beyond the realm of dipterology. But I will try anyway, for the sake of his memory.

We have all treasured Wolfgang as a quintessential veteran of contemporary German dipterology, pragmatic, capable, diligent, reliable and enormously competent. He was consequently committed to substance and cause rather than to superficial appearances, modest, helpful, often funny, even if a bit cynical at times, he focused on insects with his heart and soul. He was dedicated to Diptera, and among them, especially to the Tabanidae.

Wolfgang rendered greatest services not only to the organization and curation of the Diptera collections at the Zoologische Staatssammlung Muenchen (ZSM), but also to the surveying and cataloguing of the respective fly faunas of Germany and Taiwan. Very large parts of the ZSM's Diptera holdings stem from his indefatigable and extraordinarily successful collecting activities, especially as concerns material from central and southern Europe, but also from parts of Africa, Taiwan and Ecuador. From such material he has authored or coauthored descriptions of fourteen Diptera species new to science at the time. At least 147 new species have been described by various other authors based on type material procured by Wolfgang; at least 29 of these have been named after him. The lists of such names presented below are probably not complete. The fact that insect orders other than Diptera are also well represented, again points to Wolfgang's versatility. In addition, many colleagues have known him also as an editor for the journal "Entomofauna" since its beginnings in 1980, in which function he was as reliable, precise and detailed, as in his work on insects themselves.

Entomology was Wolfgang's passion, the ZSM more than a second home to him. With great enthusiasm he devoted also large parts of his times off duty to activities with insects or the entomological literature. So much so that there are a number of anecdotes about his single-mindedness in this respect. Like the one of a lady who had accompanied him on a trip to Spain and had to spend an entire day waiting by the car in a swampy area, tormented by the heat and the horseflies, while Wolfgang was entirely in his element, chasing flies.

It is this rarely paralleled dedication that Wolfgang was sought for, not only by colleagues at ZSM but also in dipterological circles at large, where he treated amateurs and professionals alike, never according to formal status but always to individual capability, skills and willingness as he saw them. Consequently he maintained a sizable network of contacts and collaborations that has resulted in countless additions to the ZSM Diptera collections, as well as in 72 publications, 32 of them coauthored with colleagues (see below). Letters of condolence from all over the world testify to the grievous loss his passing represents. In this context the Taiwanese colleagues again deserve special mention, whom Wolfgang had met on several collecting expeditions and with whom he had developed not only scientific collaborations but also friendships.