

In Memoriam

Helmut Sturm
1929–2015



With deep sadness we report that Prof. Sturm of the University of Hildesheim passed away on January 2015 at the age of 86. He was already unwell since 2004. We take the liberty to offer a brief statement of his life and work.

Education and work. Prof. Sturm graduated from the University of Mainz in 1954. The theme of his doctoral dissertation was 'Beiträge zur Ethologie einiger mitteleuropäischer Machiliden'. In the following year, he obtained a grant to work with Dr. Schaller on Zygentoma and Protura. In order to know part of the arthropod fauna of the tropics, he spent the years 1955/56 with Dr. Vogel in Colombia. From 1957 to 1959 he worked as a teacher in a secondary school in Bingen, Germany. In 1969/70 he accepted the position of assessor in the high school in Idar-Oberstein and Bad Kreuznach, Germany. In 1960/63 Prof. Sturm was an assistant and teacher at the college of higher education in Oldenburg with Prof. Kelle. From 1963 to 1970 he was a lecturer at the college of higher education (Hochschule) in Koblenz. In 1970 he became a Professor of Biology and Didactics of Biology at the University of Hildesheim (previously the Hochschule of Hildesheim) until his retirement. Simultaneous to his tasks at the University, he also enjoyed working in Latin America at the National University of Colombia in Bogota, especially during the years 1967/69 and 6 months in 1978. His interests mainly focused on ecology, ethology, taxonomy and zoogeography of the Microcoryphia of the Paramo region.

Decision to study biology. When Prof. Sturm finished his high school examinations before going to university, he was undecided whether to study biology or medicine.

Some subjects in medicine eventually did not agree with him and he finally opted for biology, thinking that this science would allow him closer contact to nature and to enjoy walks in the open air. Later photography became a hobby of his, where he focussed especially on flora, due to the influence of his father. With the predominant idea of studying botany, he began his studies at the University of Mainz. He received lectures on botany by Prof. Troll and found the subject somewhat difficult. Later, botany was taught by Prof. Buddenbrock, and he then found the subject even harder to follow. He had the impression that his failure to learn botany was due to a lack of basic knowledge and a deficient acclimatization.

He came to know Prof. Schaller more closely in a laboratory practical on animal physiology and this professor rendered biology less frightening; besides, students came to find it easier to talk with him. The change from botany to zoology was due to two concrete circumstances. The first was an excursion to the Alp Mountains to collect insects and in this area he observed some Machilidae for the first time. The second reason was his receiving tutoring by Prof. Schaller concerning insect biology, which made him realize how little was known about the biology of Machilidae. Prof. Sturm was immediately attracted to and interested in this group of animals; the situation he had always looking been for.

Later, Mr. Passt, the assistant of Dr. Schaller, began his doctoral thesis; and Prof. Sturm and a group of students of Dr. Schaller, which increased quickly in number, began to work together in a forthcoming atmosphere and all were highly interested in good results. Despite hard work, they organized regular drinking sessions in the laboratory.

His excursions to the Alps and to Colombia were special experiences for him. He always admired the routes chosen by Prof. Schaller and believed that these excursions in Colombia gave him his preference for the Paramo.

Scientific work. Our impression is that Prof. Sturm was more than an entomologist. He was a great naturalist and expert in the field of the ethology. He also provided many contributions to the taxonomy of Microcoryphia as well as on to their ecology. His greatest contribution – still unsurpassed today – is the publication in 2001 of Volume 4

of the Handbuch of Zoology: 'Archaeognatha' together with Prof. Machida. All scientists and students interested on Microcoryphia must consult this source in order to obtain a complete knowledge of the group.

We had the opportunity to work with him in Hildesheim during a month and he also visited us at the University of Cordoba during the time we worked there. As a result of these encounters, we were able to publish many results together.

Family. In 1964 Prof. Sturm married Miss Helga (born Görlitz). They had met in Helgoland during a course of the VDB (Berufsverband Deutscher Baubiologen).

They had two children: Michael, who was born in Koblenz in 1965 and Matthias, born in Bogota in 1967. He also had two grand children and they all have survived him.

Personal view. For these who were fortunate to know him, they certainly appreciated his pleasant personality, total commitment to his profession and his fervent Catholicism. The entomologist community will miss him.

We would like to finish this short obituary with an aphorism of Aurelius Augustinus that his family wrote in his memory and we have allowed for the English translation.

'The man, whom we love, is not here anymore, where he was, but wherever we will be, we shall remember him'.

Rest in peace.

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