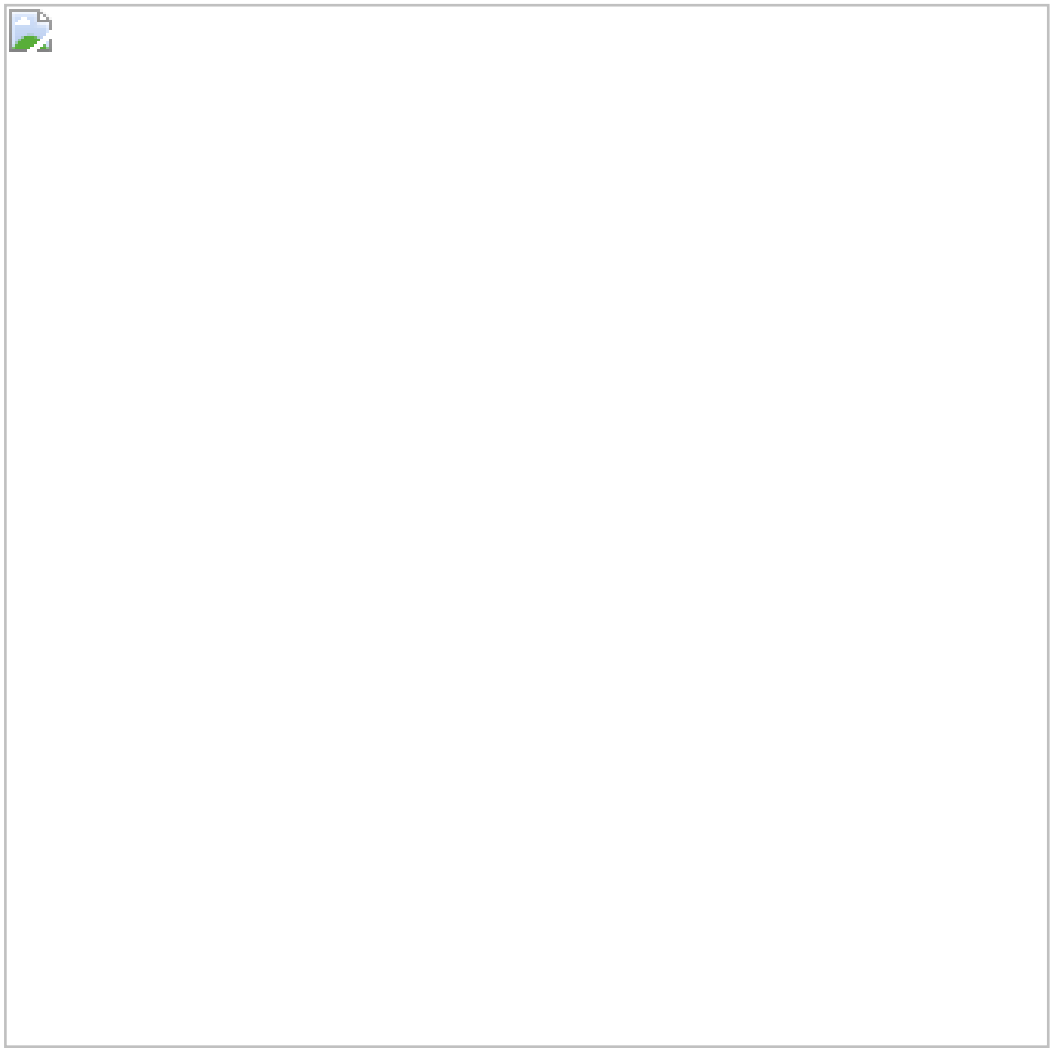

In Memoriam: Dr.Roland Grimm (1948–2021)

Authors: Schawaller, Wolfgang, and Staniczek, Arnold H.

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OBITUARY

In Memoriam: Dr. Roland Grimm (1948–2021)

Wolfgang Schawaller & Arnold H. Staniczek

Roland Grimm (Fig. 1) was born on 24 March 1948 in Ellwangen (Jagst), a Swabian town in the eastern part of Baden-Württemberg. Already as a child, he developed a strong interest in insects and started to collect butterflies at the age of 14. He finished high school in Ellwangen in 1968 and then carried out his military service until 1969.

Following his interests in natural history, he studied biology at Eberhard-Karls-University in Tübingen from 1970 on, with a focus on zoology and entomology. He dedicated his diploma thesis to mayflies, therein describing the modified internal reproductive organs of Leptophlebiidae, which possess immotile spermatozoa and a derived sperm pump. He accomplished his doctoral thesis in 1983 at the Zoological Institute of Tübingen University under the supervision of Dr. Gerhard Mickoleit. In this important contribution to the phylogeny of mayflies, he compared the abdominal musculature across different families of Ephemeroptera. He subsequently contributed to the faunistics of mayflies in Baden-Württemberg throughout the 1980s. He did not continue to work on mayflies after that, but he is still highly regarded among ephemeropterists for his substantial contributions to the field.

During his early scientific career, Roland had also become interested in darkling beetles, the group for which he would soon become renowned as an eminent taxonomist, with focus on the Palearctic and Oriental regions. His first contribution on Tenebrionidae, a treatise on the darkling beetles of the Greek island Santorini, was published in 1981 in this very journal (Stuttgarter Beiträge zur Naturkunde, Serie A).

From March 1984 to February 1986, Roland held a position as scientific trainee at the State Museum of Natural History in Stuttgart. During this time, in March 1985, he visited together with Wolfgang Schawaller the Hungarian Natural History Museum in Budapest, where Zoltán Kaszab, who was the museum's director and a leading world specialist on Tenebrionidae, taught them the first steps in tenebrionid taxonomy.

But Roland's professional career took a turn towards freshwater biology. From 1986 to 1990 he worked as a freelancer providing ecological assessments, followed in 1990–1991 by a position at the Institute of Hydraulic Engineering in Karlsruhe. From 1991 to 1995 he contributed his expertise to the Fisheries Research Centre in Langenargen. Finally, from 1995 until his retirement in 2013 he was education and conservation officer at the Baden-Württemberg State Fisheries Association, from 2005 as office head.

Fig. 1. A photograph of Dr. Roland Grimm (1948–2021) from his personal archives (author unknown).

Roland's ultimate passion, however, was for darkling beetles. His first collecting trips led him to Mediterranean countries like southern Italy, Spain, Greece, Turkey, the Canary Islands, Madeira and the adjacent Porto Santo, Malta and the adjacent Gozo, and Cyprus. Subsequently, he visited the Saharan regions of Morocco, Algeria, Niger and Mali, as well as Gambia and Kenya. In recent years he focused his collecting activities in South East Asia and travelled several times to northern Thailand and Borneo (Sabah and Sarawak). Although he usually preferred to plan and carry out fieldwork alone, the three joint collecting trips with Wolfgang Schawaller in SE Asia (Thailand, Sabah, Sarawak) were enjoyable and very successful.

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When in the field, ROLAND also enjoyed hunting for good restaurants that served various seafood dishes.

ROLAND was a successful collector. He focused his collection on Tenebrionidae and collected only a few beetles from other families, mainly as exchange specimens for other coleopterists or as gifts for friends. On his collecting trips he would explore the area for suitable habitats during the day, often by car, particularly looking for old trees and forest remnants. He would turn stones, sift rotten wood and inspect barks and fungi, often also collecting by fogging with mosquito spray. At night he would usually set up a light trap or would walk in the dark with a torch to check the desert floor or trees in forests, parks or along roads.

GRIMM's collection of Tenebrionidae is one of the largest private collections of this family and is stored in about 260 large drawers. It was not only expanded through his own collecting trips, but also through specimens obtained from colleagues who allowed him to keep duplicates in exchange for his thorough identifications of their material. ROLAND's beetle collection contains a large number of type specimens from his various publications. It is now deposited in the State Museum of Natural History in Stuttgart according to his wish. Also stored here is his aquatic collection, with about 30,000 specimens that mainly represent the local mayfly fauna of Baden-Württemberg.

ROLAND regularly visited the museum in Stuttgart for comparative studies with specimens in his collection, for literature searches in the library, and for discussions with WOLFGANG SCHAWALLER about taxonomic problems, doubtful taxa, or joint projects. He was also a regular visitor in Munich (H. J. BREMER collection) and Basel (H. GEBIEN collection). During the annual German meetings of coleopterists in Beutelsbach ("Deutsches Koleopterologentreffen") and Munich ("Bayerischer Entomologentag"), he would receive numerous tenebrionid specimens for identification, on loan or as gifts, from museums as well as from amateur coleopterists.

Although he was a somewhat reserved person, ROLAND was fully integrated and respected in the international team of tenebrionid workers because of his high taxonomic expertise. He cooperated with all of them and was even visited at his home by ROLF AALBU from Sacramento (USA) and KIYOSHI ANDO from Osaka (Japan). He also participated in all of the International Tenebrionoidea Meetings: Munich (2002), Lyon (2005), Phoenix (2013), Mendoza (2015) and Prague (2018). He only missed the last meeting in 2021, which was held as a video conference due to COVID-19 restrictions. ROLAND usually travelled with WOLFGANG SCHAWALLER to these meetings. In connection with the meetings in Phoenix, Arizona and Mendoza, Argentina, the two of them privately organised some additional fieldwork with American colleagues ROLF AALBU, GUSTAVO FLORES, WARREN STEINER and others in California, Utah and Arizona as well as in Argentina and Chile. These trips and the interesting habitats of the New World deserts and Andes mountains were an unforgettable experience for both ROLAND and WOLFGANG.

It was most unfortunate to see the rapid progress of Parkinson's disease, which severely affected ROLAND in the last few years and which prevented him from travelling and studying and dissecting beetles. He passed away on September 11, 2021 in his home in Neuenbürg.

Acknowledgements

THIJLBERT STRUBELT (Neuenbürg) provided valuable information on ROLAND's life; MARTIN LILLIG (Saarbrücken) kindly corrected and completed the list of publications.

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