

In Memoriam: Peter Hättenschwiler 26.09.1927–17.08.2021

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At the age of 93, Peter Hättenschwiler (Fig. 1) passed away on August 17th 2021 at Uster (Switzerland). He is well known to the readers of this journal as a leading specialist of the Bagworm moths, in German “Sackträger” (Psychidae). Some of his most important publications appeared in the “Nota Lepidopterologica”, e.g. all papers “Zum System der paläarktischen Psychiden” (1991, 1999, 2004), written together with Prof. Dr. Willi Sauter (1928–2020) which are still of tremendous meaning for Psychidae research. Since 1977 Peter was an ordinary member of Societas Entomologica Europaea and became honorary member in 2007.



Figure 1. Portrait Peter Hättenschwiler, 1998 (Photo: Author unknown).

Peter was born on September 26th 1927 at St. Gallen (Switzerland). After school, he started an apprenticeship as a precision mechanic at the former Zellweger AG at Uster (ZH). He remained closely associated with this town during his whole life. Peter worked on the development of machines for testing yarns, especially of silk, and on the establishment of quality standards, which are still relevant today as the “Uster Statistics”. Due to his professional activities as a customer consultant, he visited many countries and on these occasions he took advantage of many opportunities to collect Bagworm moths. Later on he advanced to become the company’s chief technology officer and continued to work with silk until after his retirement.

The fact that Bagworm moths became his lifelong passion probably is closely connected with his decades-long friendship with Prof. Dr. Willi Sauter. Sauter received his doctorate in 1956 with a thesis on the morphology and systematics of the Swiss species of the genus *Solenobia* auct. (= *Dahlica* Enderlein) with Prof. Dr. Jakob Seiler (1886-1970) at ETH Zurich. Later he was considered one of the best European psychid experts. He encouraged and supported Peter in 1977, based on the knowledge gained together, to describe the first three new taxa, later followed by many others. One of these (*Dahlica sauteri*) he dedicated to his friend.

Already about 30 years ago, I (TS) was fascinated during my first contacts with Peter by his careful way of handling his collection objects. Packages which I received from him were small works of art, showing accurately placed different stamps; small jars filled with a special mix of alcohol and formalin containing the wingless females of the Psychidae were individually wrapped in pink tissue paper and packed in absorbent cotton. It was only later during visits to Uster that we got to know each other personally.

It was Peter’s warm-heartedness and willingness to help which deeply impressed me (TS). He supported me with literature, exactly and precisely pinned psychid specimens and expertise, which he freely shared without any reservation. Thus, over time, a friendly collaboration developed. Peter was a family man. His family supported Peter’s entomological work with the careful rearings, travel companionship and their own collections during their holiday trips. He was married to his wife Ruth for 65 years. They have three children, seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. At Christmas time, Peter’s annual summaries written jointly with Ruth, were eagerly awaited by our family. (Fig. 2)

On our silver wedding in 2016 my wife Ute and me (TS) took a trip to New Zealand to the Bay of Islands. We also searched for *Scoriodyta* species there and were successful. As a small episode on the side, it may be noted that I noticed after our return that Peter had collected *Scoriodyta* at that same place almost 35 years earlier for his revision of that genus. When I shared this with him, he reported with a smile that the occasion of his trip was also his silver wedding anniversary.

Peter’s kindness of heart was almost proverbial. When I (WRA) met Peter in 1974 as a young entomologist on the occasion of my first small essay about Bagworm moths in the “Entomologische Zeitschrift”, he literally bound me to the psychids, eventually with his extensive experience and knowledge as well as with the already described and excellently pinned specimens which he always generously exchanged. Hence, Peter’s support was one reason that I have remained faithful to psychids until today.

One of his mentors was the well-known Austrian psychid expert Leo Sieder (1887-1980). When I (WRA) visited Leo in Klagenfurt in 1975 he told me that Peter had a very close personal relationship with him which went far beyond the regular exchange of Bagworms and expertise. In the 1960th Sieder gave his large psychid collection to the Karlsruhe Natural History Museum due to health reasons. Because he missed his work with his beloved Psychidae, shortly thereafter he fell



Figure 2. Peter with his wife Ruth in his study in Uster, Seeblickstraße, approx. 1990 (Photo: Sereina Parpan-Hättenschwiler).

into a deep psychological crisis. It is characteristic for Peter's empathy that he was able to convince the old man to start collecting Bagworms again to overcome his problems. The result was several more boxes of valuable material and Sieder's health improved over the years. Similarly, after the death of my son Christian in 2000, followed by a difficult time of grief, I (WRA) was convinced by Peter to resume my entomological activities, of course with an extensive package with literature and Psychidae from him.

Besides some essays on silk and yarn production, Peter's entomological publications are significant. They deal exclusively with the Psychidae over a period of 50 years. He published more than 50 papers, 20 of them in the "Nota Lepidopterologica". The faunistic treatment of the Psychidae in the Swiss "Schmetterlinge und ihre Lebensräume" (Hättenschwiler 1997) is to be emphasized as a good example of the profound research on this family with aids for species determination and equipped with excellent photos. (Fig. 3)

Peter introduced the family group names of Placodominae (Sauter & Hättenschwiler 1991) and Scoriodytinae (Hättenschwiler 1989). Altogether he described 31 taxa, but it is difficult to identify his main focus or special interests in the Psychidae, because Peter's publications cover a wide range. Due to his enormous notoriety as a leading Bagworm specialist, many entomologists have turned to Peter with their questions. Thus, a very broad spectrum of different publication themes has resulted over time, with descriptive taxonomy probably accounting for the largest proportion.

Travels took him to many countries in Europe and other continents, for example to the USA, China and New Zealand.



Figure 3. Peter in determining Psychidae (2005) (Photo: Franz Lichtenberger).

As a very active member, he was the soul of the Entomological Society of Zurich and its president from 1968 to 1974 and he became honorary member in 1979. Peter was associated with all important Psychidae specialists worldwide, for example Dr. Wolfgang Dierl (1935-1996) in Munich, Dr. Jean Bourgogne (1903-1999) in Paris, Leo Sieder in Klagenfurt, Dr. Donald R. Davis (*1934) in Washington, Dr. Gaden Robinson (1949-2009) in London and Prof. Toyohsei Saigusa (*1937) in Japan. But he was also in contact with specialists of other Lepidoptera families, e.g. with Dr. Chunsheng Wu from China, Ole Karsholt (*1948) in Copenhagen, Erik van Nieukerken (*1952) in Leiden and many others. The type specimens of the species described by him and also other specimens are deposited in numerous museums and private collections. He greatly supported the psychid research of many other lepidopterists and these achievements are evident by the acknowledgements in numerous publications.

After his move to the Tertianum “Residenz Brunnehof” in Uster in 2017 Peter transferred his entire collection of about 40,000 specimens (mainly Psychidae) and associated archival materials to the Entomological Collection of ETH Zurich.

With the passing of Peter Hättenschwiler, lepidopterology has lost an outstanding specialist. All who knew him will miss his friendly manner, his helpfulness and his competent professional advice.

We sincerely thank his daughter Sereina Parpan-Hättenschwiler (Uster) for her support and information about Peter’s life. We would also like to thank Don Davis for reviewing the manuscript and linguistic corrections.

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Described taxa

Subfamilies

- Placodomininae Sauter & Hättenschwiler, 1991
Scoriodytinae Hättenschwiler, 1989

Species

- Dahlica sauteri* (Hättenschwiler, 1977) (*Solenobia*)
Dahlica simplonica (Hättenschwiler, 1977) (*Solenobia*)
Dahlica ticinensis (Hättenschwiler, 1977) (*Solenobia*)
Dahlica rianella Hättenschwiler, 1981
Reisseronia magna Hättenschwiler, 1982
Leptopterix himalayalta Hättenschwiler, 1985

- Oreopsyche dellabrunai* (Hättenschwiler, 1985) (*Standfussia*)
Scoriodyta dugdalei Hättenschwiler, 1989
Scoriodyta rakautarensis Hättenschwiler, 1989
Scoriodyta sereinae Hättenschwiler, 1989
Scoriodyta virginella Hättenschwiler, 1989
Scoriodyta suttonensis Hättenschwiler, 1989
Scoriodyta patricki Hättenschwiler, 1989
Typhonia christenseni (Hättenschwiler, 1990) (*Melasina*)
Proutia chinensis Hättenschwiler & Chao, 1990
Dahlica vaudella Hättenschwiler, 1990
Pseudobankesia casaella Hättenschwiler, 1994
Pseudobankesia contractella Hättenschwiler, 1994
Montanima aurea Hättenschwiler, 1996
Ptilocephala piae Hättenschwiler, 1996
Sciopetris karsholti Hättenschwiler, 1996
Eumasia brunella Hättenschwiler, 1998
Eumasia ziegleri Hättenschwiler, 1998
Typhonia beatricis Hättenschwiler, 2000 (syn. zu *Typhonia melana* Frivaldski, 1838)
Oiketicoides jamaicana Hättenschwiler & Rezbanyai-Reser, 2003
Phalacropterix fritschi Hättenschwiler, 2003
Acanthopsyche muralis Hättenschwiler, 2004
Amicta sericata Hättenschwiler & Alemansoor, 2006
Manatha conglacia Hättenschwiler, Dewhurst & Nyaure, 2013
Amatissa bilomia Hättenschwiler, Dewhurst & Nyaure, 2013
Amatissa nava Hättenschwiler, Dewhurst & Nyaure, 2013

Patronyms

- Peloponnesia haettenschwileri* Hauser, 1996
Placodoma haettenschwileri Sobczyk, 2013