

In Memoriam: Gerhard Scherer (1929 - 2012)

Elisabeth Geiser (Austria)

Dr. Gerhard Scherer died at 26th November 2012, a few months after his 83th birthday. He was one of the most important experts of the Alticinae of the southern hemisphere.

Scherer was born at 22th June 1929 in Bavaria, Germany. He spent his childhood and youth in the Chiemgau, one of the most southern regions of Bavaria and part of the northern edge of the Alps. He went to school in Traunstein (together with his schoolfellow Josef, who was only two years older, now internationally renowned by his synonym: pope Benedikt XVith).

Scherer was very fond of excursion to the Alps, like skiing in winter and climbing in summer. He got an abandoned military bicycle which he used with a lot of luggage to make tours together with his friends even to the Austrian and Italian Alps, which was illegal in the years shortly after 1945. But the custom officials knew these enthusiastic young guys and let them pass.

Scherer studied zoology, chemistry and botany at the University of Munich. For his PhD thesis he chose the topic "The Beetles of the Risserkogel and their relation to the environment". So he was lucky stay for several summers in the alpine hut (Freisinger Hütte) in southern Bavaria, though it was heavy work to transport the soil samples in the cliffy paths there.

In 1959 Gerhard Scherer got his first employment at the Museum Frey, a private museum for Coleopterology in Tutzing near Munich. Georg Frey, the owner was the head of the Loden-Fry company, which produces alpine style clothing (locally this label is as famous and expensive like Armani or Dior). Frey was an enthusiastic coleopterologist and he established a well employed

scientists, preparators and librarians. His collection contained more beetle specimens than the Bavarian State Collection of Zoology at this time! Gerhard Scherer started

there as a scientific fellow and advanced later on to the scientific director of the Museum Frey. There he got to research on Alticinae of the southern hemisphere. He started enthusiastic and acquired deep knowledge in the next years.

Also, Gerhard Scherer got the chance now to participate at International Congresses and to study Alticinae at the Belgian Central Africa Museum in Tervuren near Bruxelles and other famous collections. At the Natural History Museum in London he discovered three specimens of Alticinae, collected by Charles Darwin in Uruguay, during his voyage with the "Beagle". They were new and so he described them 1964 as *Distigmoptera darwini* SCHERER. In 1961 he stayed for four months in India, Sikkim and Nepal and returned with a lot of beetle specimens, pleasant connections to Indian Scientists and a lot of impressions of the very different living conditions in India compared with Central Europe. The most important scientific result later on was his comprehensive book "The Alticinae of the Indian subcontinent" in 1969. This book, together with a lot of scientific papers and useful keys dealing with Alticinae of South America and Africa was the main cause that Gerhard Scherer 1971 got an invitation for a Senior Foreign Scientist Fellowship at the University in Brookings, South

Dakota. Then his boss, Georg Frey, permitted him a sabbatical for one year.

Gerhard Scherer thus travelled with his family, his wife Elisabeth and his seven year-old son, to South Dakota.

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Although he was very busy there - lectures and courses at the university and many talks as an invited speaker - they visited interesting parts of the country. Scherer and his wife were so fond of the USA, that they returned to Yellowstone Park and several other places seven times after their retirement. At the end of his year in the USA, Georg Frey sent Scherer and his family for six weeks of field trips to several parts of Central and South America to collect beetles from interesting sites.

Although this looks like an ideal position for a coleopterologist (paid excursions and museum visits, congresses, sabbatical etc.), to be scientific director of the Museum Frey collection was a precarious job. It depended on Georg Frey only, who had had a heart attack in 1970. It was clear from the beginning that the family of Georg Frey, especially his wife, would never continue to employ even a single person for this private museum!

In the Bavarian State Collection of Zoology (Zoologische Staatssammlung München) the head of the coleopterological department, Heinz Freude, was close to his retirement. Gerhard Scherer applied for this position and started there at 1973. Georg Frey felt offended at first when his scientific director told him that he will leave soon, but then understood the situation and even supported Gerhard Scherer with specimens from the collection Frey.

Again the reader thinks perhaps: "What a wonderful position!" In 1973 the zoological collection of Bavaria was situated in an old and rather desolate building, because the former museum building was destroyed during World War II. Also there was a lack of adequate boxes and shelves, insect boxes were piled round the desks of the scientists, who worked with the strong smell of insecticides. This situation continued until 1986, when the Museum moved to a new building with modern collection facilities. Gerhard Scherer managed to improve the infrastructure of the beetle collection step by step and transformed it to one of the renowned collections in Europe. Additionally, he continued to publish a lot of scientific papers on Alticinae.

From 1980 on, I visited Gerhard Scherer often at the Bavarian State Collection in Munich, in his "partition" between the smelling boxes and later on in the more adequate "habitat" in the new building, when I recorded the site information of the beetles collected from Austria or near to Austria for the biodiversity database ZOODAT. It was at the beginning of my own chrysomelid studies. Scherer always answered my questions and gave me a lot of useful advice in a friendly manner. The later handy stored Chrysomelidae collection is still useful for my own work. Like me, many colleagues worldwide benefitted from his advice and scientific support.

Beside his employment at Bavarian State Collection, Gerhard Scherer acted as the editor of the journal "Entomologische Arbeiten aus dem Museum Frey" and managed the scientific and conservatory agenda of the Museum Frey, especially after the death of Georg Frey in

1976. Therefore he was involved heavily in the turbulences of the legacy of the Frey collection, which is now stored at the Natural History Museum Basel, Switzerland, against the last will of Georg Frey, who intended to devise it to the Bavarian State Collection of Zoology.

Gerhard Scherer liked to contact other scientists and to meet them face to face at congresses. At the beginning of his career this was essential for him when he had to train himself on Alticinae of the southern hemisphere without any colleague he could meet otherwise. Therefore he appreciated to organize large congresses and small meeting of experts. So he became a member - even sometimes a member of the council - of several entomological societies. He organized several meetings i.e. of Alticinae specialists. In 1975 he became one of the founder members of the Austrian Entomological Society. In 1994 together with Roland Gerstmeier (a specialist for checkered beetles: Cleridae, and professor at the University of Applied Science in Munich) he managed the 14th International Symposium in Entomofaunistic in Central Europe. This was a wonderful congress, including the meeting of the whole "family" of central (and also not central) european Chrysomelid specialists, a field trip to the Bavarian mountains (Berchtesgaden National Park) and other social events, which are so necessary for team work.

Although Gerhard Scherer was retired a few months before this congress, he was an enthusiastic organizer, because this type of Symposium was special for Central Europe. From 1945 on Europe - especially Central Europe - was divided into two departments, the western part and the eastern, communistic part. It was very difficult and for the most inhabitants of the communistic part actually impossible to visit the western part. But it was allowed for western inhabitants to visit the eastern part, although this was very expensive and a lot of bureaucracy has to be performed, you have to wait for hours at the border before you were allowed to pass, etc. But it was possible for western scientists to travel to a congress in the communistic part. Therefore the committee of the International Symposium on Entomofaunistics in Central Europe was founded, where Gerhard Scherer acted as deputy of Western Germany for a long time. This committee organized the symposium in cities behind the Iron Curtain. It was a wonderful chance to meet colleagues working at the same scientific topic from the eastern part of Europe. In 1989 communistic regimes collapsed in most European countries. Now the colleagues were allowed to travel to western countries and they were very interested in that, of course! But participation of congresses in western countries was very expensive for them, too. Gerhard Scherer managed the fund-raising to support these colleagues. So this symposium got 203 entomologists from 20 nations as participants.

Elisabeth Scherer, his wife (they married 1963), was a mathematics and physics teacher in a high school and

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supported him a lot by correcting his manuscripts. Together they built a house in Wolfratshausen near Munich. This house is full of souvenirs from an active life, with acquisitions from interesting voyages and collections of special Bavarian antiques. Here Gerhard Scherer established a home office after his retirement and continued his research on Alticinae. Even a cancer disease in the last years could not stop him. Thanks to modern surgery he got some more years and he spent it in further work, especially on the Bavarian State Collection, when his former colleagues brought boxes full with Alticinae which he identified at home.

The list of new species described by Gerhard Scherer would be too long, so let me finish with the list of new beetles dedicated to him by his colleagues. I am sure this list is incomplete, so let me know, please, when you find additional species dedicated to him.

Beetle species dedicated to Gerhard Scherer:

Angulaphthona schereri GRUEV, 1981
Aphthona gerhardschereri DÖBERL, in press
Aphthona schereri KONSTANTINOV, 1988
Aphthonoides schereri DÖBERL, 1991
Hemipyxis schereri DÖBERL, 2007
Ivalia schereri (MEDVEDEV, 1990)
Longitarsus gerhardschereri GRUEV, 1995
Microcrepis schereri (DÖBERL, 1991)
Minota schereri MEDVEDEV, 2004
Schereria MEDVEDEV, 1984 inzwischen bei Ivalia)
Sphaeroderma schereri MEDVEDEV, 1997

I thank Elisabeth Scherer and Manfred Döberl for information support. For more details and the complete list of the publications see
GEISER, E. 2010: Dr. Gerhard Scherer zum 80. Geburtstag. Entomologica Austriaca 17:193-213.

2012 Entomological Society of America Annual Meeting of Chrysomelid Colleagues

Eric Smith, Shawn Clark, David Furth, and Caroline S Chaboo (USA)



Fig. 1 (back, from left to right): Eric Smith, Anthony Deczynski, David Furth, Clayton Sublett, Lance Meinke, Ed Riley, Sasha Konstantinov. (front, from left to right): Choru Shin, Shawn Clark, Ken Miwa, Alexey Tishechkin (photo: Eric Smith).

The annual meeting of the ESA has been a traditional venue for chrysomelid colleagues to meet old friends and get to know new colleagues. It was no different on 13 November 2012, when Shawn Clark organized an informal meeting/lunch with 11 chrysomelid researchers and enthusiasts.

Altogether 62 talks and 22 posters about Chrysomelidae were presented at the 2012 ESA meeting. These dealt with many topics, including moss-inhabiting flea beetles (Konstantinov), chrysomelid pests of

curcubits (Minter et al., others), control of chrysomelid pests (Bean & Dudley; Chu et al.; Eigenbrodie; Franz et al.; Geisert; Rogers et al.; Tinsley et al.; Wang et al.; Wimer & Kuhar), *Microtheca* as prey (Niño & Cave), protenomids (Rasoolizadeh et al.), evolution of Bruchinae on *Astragalus* (Morse), diurnal activity in *Colaspis* (Miwa et al.), ischyrosonychine phylogeny (Shin), strawberry rootworm (Werle et al.), and a revision of *Metaparria* (Sublett & Cook).