



## **Ingvar Svensson**

27 July 1919 – 17 February 2011

*On his 90th birthday, when his family and colleagues from the Nordic countries gathered to celebrate this happy event, Ingvar Svensson was still enthusiastically engaging in discussions about taxonomy of Lepidoptera. Photo: Hans Karlsson.*

Ingvar Svensson was born in Glimåkra, Skåne in the southernmost part of Sweden on the 27<sup>th</sup> of July, 1919, and he passed away in his sleep at the hospital in Kristianstad on the 17<sup>th</sup> of February, 2011 after a short illness. He was active as usual until the very end. The day before he died he was planning for next summer's trips and was working on the annual report on Swedish Microlepidoptera, which he had written for the last 38 years! But since his beloved wife Elsa's death in November of 2009, life had become harder and he never fully recovered from this major blow.

As a young boy, in the mid 1930s, Ingvar started collecting butterflies and moths in the rich and beautiful environments of his home area. At an early age he became interested in all animals and plants. This led him to study forestry, completing his formal education after the war in 1946. In the years that followed he was sent to work in many different areas of Sweden, particularly the northern parts. Both while working and in his spare time he made many new remarkable entomological discoveries. He visited and "discovered" many interesting habitats where nobody had ever collected insects before. However, one evening in 1946 he made a different sort of capture, one of criti-

cal importance for his life, when his future wife Elsa was attracted to the light. They rapidly became partners and she gave him unequalled support for the rest of her life. Many of us have met them somewhere in Sweden, Ingvar working in the field and Elsa painting or providing the necessary support.

In February 1953 Ingvar and Elsa settled down in Österslöv, north of Kristianstad, not far from his native village. He then worked as a forest officer for the regional forest authorities until his retirement in 1984. During this period he was able to combine his duties with exploration of remote and less well-known parts of the southern Swedish forests. As a result of his long experience in forestry, Ingvar gradually realized that the clear-cutting method used in Sweden was devastating for the biological diversity and also not compatible with sustainable forestry. He then, with his usual straightforwardness, started strongly advocating alternative practices. This made him less than popular among parts of the industry, but over the years most of his ideas had been shown to be correct.

From the 1950s he had travelled around Sweden every summer, often finding new places where nobody had sampled insects before. He knew his country better than most people and prepared himself carefully for each journey by studying floristic and geological reports on the areas he intended to visit. Soon he discovered his first species new to science. In northern Sweden he found a tineid that was later, in 1953, described as *Tinea bothniella*, alluding to the provinces where he found most of this species' type material.

During the 75 years in which Ingvar collected Lepidoptera, his collection grew to museum-size, containing more than 120,000 exceptionally well-prepared and correctly determined specimens representing more than 3000 species, which are now mostly held by the University of Lund and the Christian-Albrechts-Universität in Kiel. He described 19 species new to science and found further six species that were described by other scientists. He also discovered almost 200 species new to Sweden and recorded more than 2000 species new to different provinces, altogether an unsurpassed accomplishment.

He was extremely rigorous at determining species, both in his own collection and also when he helped colleagues. He would not accept a noteworthy record without carefully examining the specimen in question. He had a rare talent – or intuition – to pick out sibling species, those which others had overlooked. His eye for unusual habitats with interesting flora plus his immense floristic knowledge were a powerful combination which made him an outstanding field entomologist helping him find rare habitats and moths unseen by others. He was also incredibly helpful to less experienced collectors and he willingly joined them when they searched for a specific species. Many of us have heard him saying that “this is a useless plant” if there are no interesting Lepidoptera species feeding on it!

In 2009, while attending the SEL meeting in Cluj, Romania, he was awarded honorary membership in the society, which made him truly happy. He was also an honorary member of several other associations, such as SHILAP in Spain, The Lepidopterological Society in Finland, and The Entomological Society in Lund, Sweden. Ingvar attended most of the SEL meetings over the years. He had a vast network of

colleagues all over the world and was respected as one of the leading taxonomists in the Microlepidoptera with an overview granted only to a privileged few.

A remarkable person with great integrity, an extraordinary eye, and outstanding knowledge of Lepidoptera is no longer with us. We think of Ingvar's great deeds and his family being influenced by his scientific work in different ways, supporting him and joining him in his explorations of life. We miss him greatly!

BENGT Å. BENGSSON<sup>1</sup> & NILS RYRHOLM<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Lokegatan 3, SE-386 93 Färjestaden, Sweden; [bengt.a.bengtsson@gmail.com](mailto:bengt.a.bengtsson@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> Flogstavägen 158, SE-75272 Uppsala, Sweden; [nils.ryrholm@hig.se](mailto:nils.ryrholm@hig.se)