

Günther Theischinger

On July 17 Günther Theischinger, born 1940, Austrian immigrant to Australia, picked up from the Australian Museum his Lifetime Achievement Award that would have been presented to him at the XXI. Plecoptera Symposium in Turin (Italy) a few days later.

Günther (or Gunther) started to study Plecoptera in March 1974 with finding a new species on his first stonefly collecting trip in Upper Austria and over the next five years made significant contributions to his home country's fauna as well as to the faunas of several other countries in Europe. In Australia he decided not to study stoneflies, because several of the great European, American, Australian and New Zealand plecopterologists (Hynes, J. Illies, P. Zwick, E. Riek, McLellan) had been working there extensively only years earlier. However, a closer look at some of his by-catches changed his mind and made him describe numerous species, revise several genera of three of the four Australian stonefly families and publish with J. Cardale a book to the then known Australian stoneflies that he went out of his way to present to the participants of a symposium on Plecoptera and Ephemeroptera in Marysville, Victoria in 1987. After that he continued to present mostly only novelties and environmental work, finally even involving molecular data.

Günther had an interesting life. He always used his various non-biological and biological professional careers as Stationmaster in the Austrian bush, Teacher and Educator, Museum Curator, Chemistry shift worker and Environmental Scientist and connected time and travel benefits for getting to know, distributing knowledge on and collecting insects wherever he lived. This led him to many places all over Australia. He restricted himself geographically to mainly regional faunistic and taxonomic studies of aquatic insects that resulted in the description of more than 800 species mostly in generic or higher level revisions in the orders Odonata, Plecoptera, Megaloptera and Diptera (Tipulidae and Thaumaleidae).

In Dragonfly circles particularly of Europe, Günther is well known as the 'father of heros' for his description in 1979 of *Cordulegaster heros*, the largest European dragonfly. In Australia he published, together with J.A.L. Watson and H. Abbey (1982), a book for specific identification of adults and with Hawking (2006, reprinted 2010, 2012, 2016), second edition with Hawking & Orr (2021, reprinted 2022) a field guide enabling the identification of larvae and adults at generic level. However, his main interest in dragonflies is, owing to their prominent role as indicator organisms for aquatic habitat quality the larval taxonomy, documented in a number of comprehensive reviews generally at superfamily level and summarized by Theischinger & Endersby (2014). He also focuses on dragonflies addressing conservation and climate change issues. In the last 20 years he also described and revised, mostly with S. Richards, taxa of the species and genus groups from the Oceanian, mainly Papuan, Biogeographic Realm.

Gunther's work on Megaloptera includes the description of numerous species and a comprehensive treatment of the adults (1983) and two of the larvae and adults from Australia (1999, 2000) as well as the publication as junior author to Tim R. New of the Megaloptera in Handbook of Zoology (1993).

Finally Günther's main work of Diptera is the description of numerous species of a particular mainly southern European tipulid genus as well as descriptions mostly in generic revision of several 100 Australian tipuloid species, naming many of them using words of Australian Aboriginal origin. This may have inspired a young PhD student, Z. Billingham, who Günther co-authored a few genera with, was then given all of Günther's comprehensive literature on

Tipuloidea and can now continue Günther's work making use of more modern tools and methods.

Substantial Collections of Günther were sold/donated to Oberösterreichisches Landesmuseum (Odonata, adults and larvae; Plecoptera; Tipulidae) and donated to ANIC (Odonata, adults and larvae; Plecoptera; Tipulidae) and to The Australian Museum (Odonata, adults and larvae).

Günther is a longtime volunteer/associate at the Australian Museum and a Visiting Fellow at the Smithsonian Institution, USA. His recognition in Australia was the Zoo le Souef Award in 1986. From Austria Günther was allowed to keep the Austrian Citizenship which normally is lost when acquiring a foreign citizenship. In 2009 he was awarded the professional title "Professor" by the Federal President of his native country, Austria.