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In memoriam Klaus Horstmann

(1938–2013)

Klaus Horstmann, one of the most highly respected specialists of Ichneumonidae in the last and the current century, passed away on 30 July 2013. Horstmann was born on 19 January 1938 in Saarbrücken, but in 1944 he and his family were forced to move to Einbeck, the birthplace of his mother, and this is where he graduated from secondary school in 1962. One of his teachers in Einbeck was Rolf Hinz, a well-renowned specialist of Ichneumonidae who dedicated his life to the study of these insects and their biology. As a teacher of biology, chemistry, physics, and mathematics, Rolf had the ability to get students

interested in natural history, particularly biology. It is therefore not surprising that Klaus went on to choose ichneumonids as the subject for his doctoral thesis. He studied biology, mathematics, and chemistry in Göttingen, Vienna, Würzburg, and Kiel, where Bernd Heydemann became the supervisor of his thesis entitled “Ökologie und Systematik der Ichneumoniden von der Nordseeküste Schleswig-Holsteins”. Klaus, who was fully aware that ichneumonids are among the taxonomically most challenging insects, assumed that Rolf, his former teacher, would assist him with the identification tasks. As it turned out, this was the



right thinking and decision, and led to Klaus' career as a world-leading specialist of Ichneumonidae. In 1964 he married his wife, Heidi, and soon after he finished his doctorate in 1965 he became an assistant at Würzburg university. He joined the team of Karl Gößwald, an ant specialist, who tolerated Klaus' interest in ichneumonids as long as the focus of paid activities remained on ant ecology. For this reason, Klaus did most of his ichneumonid studies at home, where he had his collection and library and, perhaps most importantly, where he was away from the hectic pace on the job. In 1974 he received his habilitation (postdoctoral lecture qualification) with a thesis on ant ecology, entitled "Der Nahrungserwerb der Waldameisen im Eichenwald und seine Beeinflussung durch Witterung, Nahrungsangebot und Regulationsreaktionen". Soon after, in 1975, he became professor at Würzburg university, where he stayed until his retirement in 2003.

Klaus Horstmann published around 200 publications, about 160 of them dealing with Ichneumonidae. Many of these are comprehensive revisions, often in some of the taxonomically most difficult groups that ichneumonids have to offer. If there is one of these contributions that stands apart, then it is the most comprehensive compilation of ichneumonid taxonomy and nomenclature that has ever been published. The 'Catalog of World Ichneumonidae' by Dicky Yu and Klaus Horstmann that came out in 1997 as a 1558-page, two-volume print version and, a few years later, electronically on CD-ROM. This catalogue includes virtually all ichneumonid

nominal taxa that have ever been described in the literature, altogether about 36 000 available names, including 21 805 regarded as valid for extant species. This work has been, and will remain, one of the most important references for studies of ichneumonids. To put this in perspective here, the 60 000 species estimated to exist in Ichneumonidae make the latter one of the largest families in the animal kingdom. The foundation for the catalogue and Horstmann's taxonomic work in general was his passion for history and philosophy, combined with his extraordinary skill to interpret taxonomic descriptions in the old literature, often dating back 100 years or more. The more or less sketchy early diagnoses have to be interpreted, ideally with original specimens at hand that the author of the taxon saw when preparing the original description. This task is often regarded as a necessary evil by taxonomists, as old type specimens are often difficult to locate in collections, and/or in poor condition. It is a special achievement of Klaus' studies that there is hardly an ichneumonid type specimen in any German or European collection that he did not examine at least once. Thanks to this dedicated work, the taxonomy and nomenclature of western Palaearctic ichneumonids have never been in better shape or more favourable for students who decide to dedicate their time to the study of this challenging but most interesting group of insects. Therefore Klaus Horstmann will be sorely missed not only by his family and friends, but also by the ichneumonid specialist community.

Stefan Schmidt

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Artikel/Article: [In memoriam Klaus Horstmann 263-264](#)