

IN MEMORIUM

Joachim Illies (1925-1982)

On 3rd June 1982, our science lost one of its foremost proponents when Professor Joachim Illies died unexpectedly of a heart attack at Frankfurt/Main. He was born on 23rd March 1925 at Ketzin, near Berlin.

Joachim Illies was a born naturalist. Already as a school boy he gathered an important beetle collection and obtained detailed knowledge of the German Coleoptera. Although only few of his early papers are on this order, his interest in it persisted throughout his life. As a student of Adolf Thienemann, then head of the Hydrobiologische Anstalt der Max-Planck-Gesellschaft (the present Max-Planck-Institut für Limnologie), Joachim Illies worked on a small stream in northern Germany, Mölle. It was during this and subsequent work on the river Fulda that his interest in the badly neglected Plecoptera arose. No stonefly species had been named from Germany since 1923, until Illies' description of Isoperla goertzi, in 1951. The specific name acknowledges the generous support by count Otto Hartmann, Graf von Schlitz, genannt von Görtz. He had donated a stream research station at Schlitz, on a tributary of the river Fulda, to a group of enthusiastic students of limnology of which Joachim Illies was a member. The little laboratory was officially opened on June 4, 1951 and was successively extended to become the present

Limnologische Flusstation which is part of the Max-Planck-Institut für Limnologie at Plön. Joachim Illies had been the Director of the Flusstation from the start until his early death, except for a few years of work in the main laboratory at Plön.

There is no need to describe or list the stonefly work of Joachim Illies in detail here. Whoever works on the group comes across his name and contributions. His early interest and knowledge soon expanded to the world fauna. A year of collecting in South America, especially Chile (1958) was particularly stimulating. Collecting trips to Australia and New Zealand (1966) and to South Africa (1979) followed. Joachim Illies produced a wealth of papers on Plecoptera, these included individual descriptions as well as major synopses. A work known even to non-specialists is his fundamental catalogue of the recent stoneflies of the world.

Joachim Illies' main interest was always to promote science. He never believed to present the ultimate answer to a question but viewed his contribution as a point in an ongoing discussion. Consequently, he would always support other work, e.g., his students', regardless of whether or not they shared his views. Having had the privilege to work in his laboratory for many years, I have myself experienced his generosity many times.

Joachim Illies was an outgoing, most charming, charismatic personality. Quite naturally, he became the center of the group he joined, no matter which. During meetings and congresses, his paper

was invariably one of the highlights, scientifically as well as popularly because of his exceptional eloquence. He hosted two of the international stonefly symposia and attended all others except the one at Nara, Japan, because his doctor would not let him go. Those who have met him during these symposia will remember his ability to discuss whatever subject in a fascinating way, and usually with a sense of sparkling humor. Likewise, his university teaching (limnology, general ecology, zoogeography, methods and principles of systematic zoology) at Giessen, Kiel, and later also Kassel was not only scientifically rewarding, but in fact entertaining, an ideal combination of profound knowledge and unusual ease of presentation.

Much as Joachim Illies has contributed to our science, it would nevertheless be grossly incorrect to describe him only or even only mainly as an expert on stoneflies and other aquatic insects. He was a general limnologist (e.g., the rhithron-potamon-concept that he developed) and, indeed, his activities extended much further than average science. He did not only contribute to science, but took a critical interest in and was most concerned about the general effects that modern science (or rather its abuse) has on human life and thinking as a whole. He was opposed to the presently widespread belief that scientific thinking is the only legitimate or at least only reasonable way of thinking. In uncounted lectures, many papers and books as well as several plays he most ably dealt with the contact zones of science with philosophy and theology. He fought a passionate

fight against man's reduction to an object of zoology, and against the idea of man's origin as by-product of an accidental evolutionary process. Certainly, we who have mainly appreciated Joachim Illies' contribution to science and in particular to stonefly research are only a minority amongst those who do and will miss this exceptional personality.

Peter Zwick

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Autor(en)/Author(s): Zwick Peter

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