THE PYRALOID PLANET

Volume 3 – 15 June 2009
A newsletter for the Pyraloidea fans

Dear Pyraloidea fans,

Welcome to this third issue of our newsletter. Year 2009 will be remembered for the death of one of our most prominent colleagues, **Michael Shaffer**, on March 23 at 72 years of age. Remember that last year we reported the passings of Eugene Munroe and Hiroshi Inoue. A generation of greatly respected Pyraloidea taxonomists is thus slowly fading away. Alma Solis kindly answered my request to provide an obituary for Michael (see below).

Michael has had a huge impact on Pyraloidea taxonomy and on many projects for which identifications were needed. One of these is reported upon by Terry Whitaker, on the Pyraloidea of Borneo, on page 3.

Also noteworthy since the publication of PP # 2 last year was the publication of a second volume on Pyraloidea of Europe by Frantisek Slamka, on which I have written some more below.

Finally, I was quite excited to read the article by Nakano et al. (2008) on the close-range ultrasound communication of *Ostrinia furnacalis* (Guenée). It opens up a new frontier of implications regarding the importance and evolution of tympanal organs in Pyraloidea and other tympanically-endowed Lepidoptera. Thanks to Alma Solis for forwarding this paper. Remember that all new publications on Pyraloidea are or will be indexed in GlobIZ (www.pyraloidea.org) and so are not always recorded here.

To be added to (or removed from) the "Membership" list, or for changes to your addresses, please contact me. You are welcome to forward **The Pyraloid Planet** to whoever may have an interest. Please send me the addresses and emails of anyone you might want to see added to our "Membership" list.

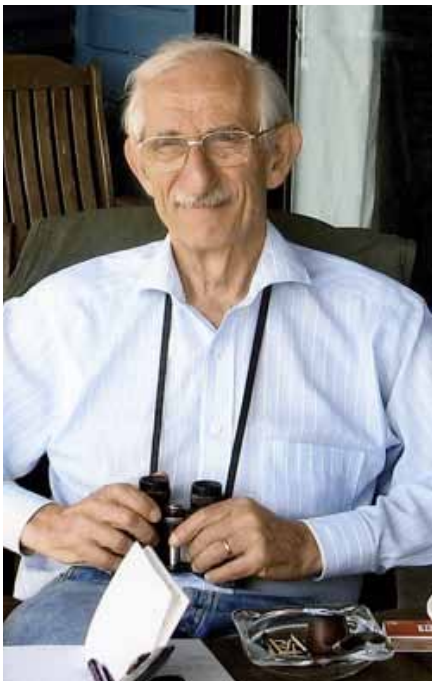
This issue was made possible with the help of Matthias Nuss, Monika Shaffer-Fehre, Alma Solis, Kevin Tuck, and Terry Whitaker.

Unless a new editor would like to stand up, I can produce the next issue, which will come out next year, or in 2011, depending on interest and availability of relevant information to disseminate.

The logo of The Pyraloid Planet was created by Florence Marteau of the Muséum d'histoire naturelle, Geneva, Switzerland. And the layout of this issue was made by Florence as well.

Enjoy PP, and all the best in your research efforts on Pyraloidea!

Bernard Landry
Editor



Michael relaxing and bird-watching in the Lamington National Park north of Brisbane, Australia. He was watching brush turkeys, parrots, and a Lewin's Honeyeater was fed with some sugar. Of course, the tea (with milk and two spoons of sugar) was prepared by Monika. Photo taken by Monika Shaffer-Fehre and used here with her permission.

Michael Shaffer, 6 July 1936 to 23 March 2009: A heartfelt tribute

Michael Shaffer, retired curator of the Pyraloidea at the Natural History Museum (BMNH), London, passed away on March 23, 2009. I was at the Natural History Museum in Feb-

ruary, 2009 and he appeared to be in good health. On March 24th I received an e-mail from Klaus Sattler that Michael had failed to wake the previous morning. Michael was cremated on Thursday, 16th April 2009 at the Putney Vale Crematorium. The Order of Service was a Spring Sonato by L.V. Beethoven, an Address by Klaus Sattler, a Sermon by Rabbi Charley, a Committal to a Medley of Australian Birds, and the Departure was a Medley of European birds.

Most of us in the world of Pyraloidea remember him in a particular way and I take the liberty of reprinting a paragraph written by Klaus Sattler in the Entom News, No. 202, April 2009: "Michael's dedication to the pyral collection, large parts of which he had curated to the highest standard, was legendary. He jealously guarded it and defended it vigorously against anything he considered improper use. A generation of pyraloid workers will remember, some with wry amusement, how Michael hovered over them, visibly reluctant to let them even lift a drawer." I still remember many years later when he stopped hovering over me. That was a very good feeling because it meant he trusted me with the collection.

I refer you to a Festchrift for Michael Shaffer, Entomologica Scandinavica, 1997, Volume 28, No. 4, a volume edited by myself and Marianne Horak that was done in honor of Michael's retirement from the Natural History Museum. It includes an article by Gaden Robinson on Michael's entomological career, his contributions to the BMNH, his publications, and publications he illustrated. I will add two more recent publications: Solis, M. A. and M. Shaffer. 1999. Contribution towards the study of the Pyralinae (Pyralidae): historical review, morphology, and nomenclature. Journal of the Lepidopterists' Society. 53 (1): 1-10; and Shaffer, M. 2008. Channel Islands Lepidoptera: A history and compilation of the recorded butterflies and moths, 1830-2003. 710 pp.

Michael and his wife Monika on the occasion of a small celebration held in Wandsworth to commemorate the publication of Michael's monograph on the Lepidoptera of the Channel Islands, UK. Photo provided by Kevin Tuck.

Michael always took me and other pyraloid workers for lemon tea and dessert at The Daquise, a Czech establishment right around the corner from the museum. It was fascinating to hear him talk about pyraloids and, if I was unfamiliar with a genus, he would make sure I saw it the next day and share information with me about it. As he got to know me better, he would point out pyraloids of interest, for example, the Wurthiinae. And much later, we would talk about pyraloid taxa that he suspected were improperly placed. He went to the Hope Museum, Oxford University, with me the first time to photograph and study the Walker types. I also learned that if I was looking for pyraloid taxa that were currently misplaced in genera of the Western Hemisphere, he could quickly share which Old World genera would be likely candidates for further study. I was very fortunate that USDA allowed me to go to London for two months each year in the early 1990's. Not only was I photographing all the Neotropical Pyraloidea types, but I was learning new information about pyraloids everyday from Michael. Needless to say I learned broadly, at the world level, about pyraloids very early on, thanks to Michael. This was key to my ability to deal with pyraloids worldwide as they were intercepted at U.S. ports. I quickly learned which taxa I could confidently identify and which would have to wait until I visited and worked in the collection in London again. There will never be another person as knowledgeable about worldwide pyraloid taxa as Michael.

Another known, but surprising, fact about Michael was that he dissected very little. I remember a time in the mid 90's when I was working on a project regarding Old World musotimines with Shen-Horn Yen on the table next to Michael's desk. He later said to me: "I was listening to your conversation and I was surprised that you and Shen-Horn spoke exclusively about genitalia morphology." I explained to him, that although we had pinned down which genera were new and which were not, the genitalia were crucial at the species level. He often told me he wished he had time to dissect more.

In 1997 the Smithsonian Institution Collections Improvement Fund sponsored Michael's visit the National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. to help me hunt for pyrals (as he would say) in the Lepidoptera pro tem. At the time, we were making a concerted effort to sort through all the pro tem before our move to the new facility in the East Wing. He was a great help, but I had to convince him to take time to sightsee with his wife, Monika. I drove them into the wilds of the Catoctin Mountains west of Washington, D. C. to the Color Festival usually held in October to celebrate the brilliant leaf colors. The festival was offering helicopter rides to see the leaf display on a grander scale in support of a charity and I asked Michael if he was interested. It was a helicopter with just a clear capsule around us, the pilot, and the two of us. Needless to say, all I could think of was how much pyraloid knowledge would be lost if we had an accident. But it all ended well and we returned to ground where Monika was waiting for us. I thought they might also be interested in seeing some of the few remaining covered bridges nearby in the U.S. There happened to be some heavy-duty Civil War re-enactors next to one of the bridges. Michael's face lit up when he heard the re-enactor speak in character with a thick southern drawl. During their visit I also took Michael and Monika to the National Rifle Association Museum. Michael was very interested in holding the rifle that belonged to Sitting Bull, a Native American Indian chief, but unfortunately it was in a case being exhibited in the American Museum of Natural History. I mentioned this to Jay Shaffer (the peoriine worker) and his wife when he invited us to the Faculty Club at George Mason University for lunch. The next day Jay's wife called and said she had arranged for us to visit the NRA Museum and gave me the contact information for the curator. I called and told him a curator from the British Museum was visiting and would like to see his collection. The NRA curator took us into the back rooms where he was restoring a rifle of the same kind that Sitting Bull owned. He let Michael hold it and several other western style guns. Needless to say, Michael was thrilled and couldn't stop smiling.

I felt a great impetus to visit the BMNH collection in Wandsworth before they moved back to Kensington. Michael looked fine, we enjoyed a few cups of (terrible) tea in a nearby establishment, and he and Monika invited me and the Sattlers over to his house for dinner. We had a wonderful evening, discussing all that had gone on in our lives. I also asked about his newly self-published book on the Lepidoptera of the Channel Islands. He and Monika had visited the islands for many years and he had been passionately working on this manuscript ever since I could remember. I was pleased that he finally published it with help from Monika's colleagues at Kew Gardens. He kindly donated a copy to the Smithsonian Institution Entomology library.

Michael Shaffer's lifelong dedication to the Pyraloidea collection at the Natural History Museum, and his knowledge about the location of type specimens and literature was remarkable and unparalleled. I have hundreds, maybe even thousands of examples of Michael's knowledge and his ability to resolve issues, but I offer just one classic example from as recently as January 6, 2009. I had been unsuccessful in locating the Schaus types described from Sierra Leone in a paper by Schaus and Clements. I sent him an e-mail on December 18, 2008 and asked him if he knew where they were supposed to be because the paper did not indicate a depository. He wrote on January 6: "in our copy of Schaus & Clements, 1893, Sierra Leone Lepidoptera, there is attached a handwritten letter from Schaus to Tams dated 24.x.1937. Schaus stated in this letter that he had forgotten where the types had been sent, but they had evidently been passed on to the American Museum in New York along with all his Old World Lepidoptera and that 'Watson (in New York) has just written and said the types were all in the American Museum…' which would seem to confirm this fact." Needless to say, Michael and his unique expertise will be greatly missed by those of us who will continue to reap the benefits of his lifelong, exacting work with one of the most important pyraloid collections in the world.

Alma Solis
May 2009

An overview of the 'Pyralids of Borneo Project' - POB

Terence M. Whitaker, Stephen L. Sutton and Henry S. Barlow are intent on producing a taxonomic overview of the Pyraloidea of Borneo with TMW as the main worker. The intention is to provide an up to date photographic guide to the Thyridoidea and Pyraloidea of Borneo as far as the current state of taxonomy of those groups allows. In view of the fact that no detailed genitalia dissection or DNA analysis has been undertaken for the work, for the purposes of zoological nomenclature, the work will not be published within the meaning of the ICZN. Hence the works will contain no formal taxonomic changes.

Thyrididae: Thyridinae, Unamed Dysodia *sp. from Sabah (Kampung Poring). Possibly a var. of* D. fenestrata *(Moore, 1881) ©POB; photo Jonathan Brunton*

Why Borneo? Borneo is a regional centre of diversity in Asia and in addition it has been the location where many workers have undertaken extensive recent lepidopteran collecting and research. These include collections from

Thyrididae: Thyridinae. ♀Glanycus tricolor Moore, 1879 and ♂ G. insolitus Walker, 1854 from Thailand, Chiang Mai ©John Moore

Sabah near to the Danum Valley Conservation Area (DVCA) (Chey, 1994; Willott, 1999; Beck *et al.* 2006; Whitaker and Kitching, 2008 & Barlow unpubl. RIS trap data.); from Mount Kinabalu National Park and Poring Hot Springs (Holloway, 1976, Beck, 1998, Schulze, 2000); Sarawak (Holloway, 1984); Brunei (Kitching, Sutton, Allen unpubl. data) and Kalimantan (Indonesia) (Deaton unpubl., 1992). Borneo is the only tropical area where the lepidopteran fauna is relatively well known but it has been estimated that it would still require 50 years of detailed taxonomic work to revise all the Bornean genera and describe new species of the thyridids and pyralids (currently estimated by us at about 3000 species) and it was realised at an early stage that whilst the need for a thorough taxonomic revision was urgent, a convenient identification guide with colour photos of the species was even more important. Unlike the 'Moths of Borneo' series (Holloway, 1986-2008), the work is not intended to revise the taxonomy of the group, it is simply intended to provide a snapshot of the superfamilies to date, complete with an imperfect taxonomic framework. It is hoped this readily available guide will aid field workers to identify most thyridid and pyralid moths towards generic status and it is hoped to provide a significant stimulus to the study of these groups in Southeast Asia, by drawing attention to species groups and other anomalies (including potential synonymies) which would benefit from more detailed treatment. For the same reason, discussions of features of the genitalia have been omitted, except where they are quoted from an authoritative earlier work.

How did it start? Stephen Sutton had been skirting around undertaking a detailed study of the group from about 1981 to 1996 and had undertaken much light trapping in SE Asia but the identification of his extensive collections, of mainly pyralids, was proving very difficult. I became involved in my spare time with the collections and started by sorting an extensive series of unspread samples mainly from DVCA. In 1996 I started to compile a numbered morphoseries and visual database from these with the intention of calculating diversity indices for various biotopes. As someone used to the limited suite of UK pyralids my immediate impression of tropical forest pyralids was 'what a lot of species! surely these large and often bizarre specimens can't all be pyraloid!' So how was I to start on more detailed identification? When the project started our only guide was Barlow (1982), photographs of the plates of Moths of Japan (Inoue, 1982), Smaller Moths of South-east Asia (Robinson *et al*. 1994) and a few reprints. Although access to the national collection in the Natural History Museum London was difficult due to distance we needed to get the measure of our accumulated collections against a well curated taxonomic rock. It was a shock to discover from my visits that many pyraloid genera are repositories for superficially similar (or not) often unrelated morphotypes. Their 'rag-bag' of contents range from species left languishing since their original description or the victims of a style of lax taxonomy 'if its small and brown and has a looped postmedian fascia - lets call it Omiodes!' approach and a relatively small proportion of well described species with associated genitalic preparations. It was also obvious that few morphotypes in our extensive collections corresponded in detail with named species. It was also noteworthy that many designated 'syntypes' in the national collections bore little morphological resemblance to the relevant holotype and had never been genitalically compared.

When the POB project was formally initiated in 2004, Henry Barlow provided the financial aid to allow me to look at and photograph specimens in the NHM collections. Later I visited Malaysia to photograph his large collection at Genting and some Bornean regional collections at the Forest Research Centre, Sepilok and the Agricultural Research Centre, Tuaran. About this time I discovered that Christian Schulze, as part of his PhD project (Schulze, 2000), had amassed what is probably, currently, the largest collection of Sabahan pyraloid moths and both he and his head of department in the University of Vienna, Konrad Fiedler, are most generously allowing us to use it as a central source of the morphotypes to be illustrated in our publications.

When our pyralid studies started the thyridids were also included, as they had been long considered as part of the Pyraloidea. Dugdale *et*

Crambidae : Pyraustinae, Pagyda botydalis (Snellen, 1880) from Sabah (Danum Valley) ©Michael Cermak

al. (1999) was unpublished and like Shaffer's list of the Australian pyraloid species (Shaffer *et al*. [in Nielsen *et al*.] 1996) these expensive publications containing modern taxonomic revisions were inaccessible to persons like myself working outside of the national museums' framework. Rather than waste our work on the Thyridoidea it is planned to produce the POB work in two parts. The first part deals with the introduction to both parts and a Thyridoidea catalogue. The thyridid work, relatively modest in size, as befits the relative rarity of the moths, is currently almost complete and we hope to publish it later in the year. It will contain information on 297 Thyridoidea from Borneo and Southeast Asia, comprising 167 named species (107 from Borneo) & 130 unnamed morphotypes (74 from Borneo). The second part with eight times as much material in two volumes, will cover the Pyraloidea '*sensu*' Dugdale *et al.* (1999). The first volume will cover the key to the subfamilies and text and the second will include references, checklist and plates.

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Terry Whitaker
t.whitaker1@btinternet.com

Book review

Slamka, F. 2008. Pyraloidea (Lepidoptera) of Europe, vol. 2, Crambinae & Schoenobiinae. Published by author, Bratislava. 223 pp. incl. 24 colour pls, 51 b/w pls.

As mentioned in the introduction, the aim of this book is to 'offer a clear and concise, iconographic representation of the European species'. Here Europe is taken in the biogeographical sense and extends from Iceland and the Azores, Madeira and the Canary Islands in the west, Scandinavia and Russia west of the Urals in the north, the Urals, Ural River and Caspian Sea in the east, and the Mediterranean Islands, including Cyprus, the European part of Turkey, and the territories north of the Black Sea and Caucasus in the south. More or less 187 species of Crambinae are said to occur in Europe in the introduction section while 181 are treated in the book, along with 6 species of Schoenobiinae.

Following an introduction including a short preface and acknowledgements, there is a Special Part beginning with a short outline of relevant taxonomical literature, where one may be surprised to read that famous Crambinae specialist Stanislas Bleszynski died 'last Christmas', while the tragic event actually happened in 1969 as correctly recorded in the line above. This section also includes relevant web sites, such as GlobIZ. The world, Palaearctic, and European numbers of species in each subfamily are then given. In Crambinae 1877 species are given for the World and 169 for Schoenobiinae. GlobIZ would thus include 90% of the valid species names of Crambinae, which makes sense given my count of 1851 in the early 1990's (Landry 1995), but 198 valid species of Schoenobiinae are already recorded in GlobIZ although more than 30 species from the Neotropics are not yet recorded in GlobIZ. The systematic works on which the book is based are mentioned just before a one-page illustrated synopsis of the morphology of Crambinae. This is followed by a brief account on biology, one explaining the species distribution maps provided throughout the text, an explanation on the geographical boundaries of Europe, abbreviations of a list of 12 museums from which specimens were examined, other abbreviations, and symbols used in the maps.

Treatments of taxa follow between pages 13 and 110. Most genera are briefly described and their synonyms are listed when applicable. Each species is provided with a list of synonyms, references to the plates, a brief description of the imago, a section on habitat and biology, one on distribution, remarks, a useful section on similar species, and an entry where other references describing genitalia are provided. Smartly, each species treatment is given a number which is repeated in the colour and male and female genitalia plates, thus facilitating consultation. A black and white photo of the right half of a moth is provided for some species to help their determination. Sometimes part of an antenna is also shown. There is one map for each species.

The colour plates are very nice. Only the right side of the specimens is illustrated at 1.75 or 2 times natural size. Type specimens (including non-primary types) are marked with a red dot on the plates. Most species are illustrated by 3-4 specimens, but often more, and up to 14 in one case.

The genitalia plates that follow are also nicely presented, although here most illustrations are drawings taken from Bleszynski (1965, Microlepidoptera Palaearctica, Vol. 1), which are too schematic in some cases. However, the male genitalia of 49 species are illustrated as well with photos, sometimes with several photos/drawings in difficult species. Similarly, the female genitalia of 47 species are illustrated with photos. The book is completed by a list of mostly post-1965 references, and an index to moth names.

To sum up this book is a must to anyone working with this fauna. Its strong points are the colour photos and diagnoses of external characters. As mentioned in the preface of this volume and that of the first volume of the series, it is not a taxonomic revision. I realized that when I tried to identify a Swiss specimen of *Catoptria* which seems to have characters of both *C. petrificella* (Hübner) and *C. combinella* (D. & S.), for which differential characters of the male genitalia are not provided. Finally I must say that the language of the text could have been improved, especially grammatically.

Bernard Landry

GlobIZ News

The number of data in the Global Information System on Pyraloidea (GlobIZ) is continuously increasing. As of May 22, 2009, 2,260 (+1,379 synonyms) genus-group names, 10,663 (+3,890 synonyms) species-group names, and 5,931 references had been included. In terms of completeness of species, the Acentropinae, Galleriinae, Heliothelinae, Noordinae, and Scopariinae are already completed. Crambinae (by Bernard Landry and Rob Schouten) and Odontiinae (by James Hayden) are close to be completed in the near future. In Crambinae the Afrotropical species were all completed in the beginning of the year.

Since the beginning of 2009, the following numbers of records have been edited in GlobIZ: Andreas Tränkner 630 records, Reinhard Gaedike 456 records, James Hayden 933 records, Bernard Landry 1,396 records, Richard Mally 24 records, Matthias Nuss 1,492 records, and Tatyana Trofimova 26 records. Additionally, Jurate de Prins provided a list of African pyraloids and Alma Solis a world checklist of Epipaschiinae, both being incorporated.

Find out more about pyraloids at www.pyraloidea.org. Possible comments, suggestions and corrections may be sent to matthias.nuss@senckenberg.de.

Matthias Nuss
Dresden, May 22, 2009

Collaboration on the Systematics of the Pyraloidea of China

A joint project is running in 2008 and 2009 to study Chinese Pyraloidea. Collaborators are Houhun Li and his PhD student Weichun Li from Nankai University, Tianjin and Matthias Nuss and his PhD student Andreas Tränkner from Senckenberg Natural History Collections Dresden, Museum of Zoology. The collaboration is funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the China Scholarship Council. During this project, focus is given to the following topics:

(1) Revision of Chinese Scopariinae
(2) Biogeography of Chinese Pyraloidea
(3) Systematics of Palaearctic Pyraustinae
(4) Completing a checklist of Chinese Pyraloidea using GlobIZ

A first paper has been published on the systematics of *Anania* (Tränkner et al. 2009), and work is ongoing on the other topics. In the framework of his PhD, Weichun Li is working on the Chinese Crambinae and Scopariinae, planning to graduate in spring 2010.

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Matthias Nuss
Dresden, May 22, 2009

Update: Pyraloidea USNM/NMNH Type Database

Images of 2646 type specimens have been taken and entered into a database. It includes images of the dorsal habitus, labels, 1,149 slide mounted dissections, and PDF scans of the original description. I am currently proofing the database, particularly the current placement and type status. I hope to have this up on the web by the end of the year. Funding for this project was received from the Smithsonian Institution Type Imaging Project.

M. Alma Solis
29 May 2009

Towards a phylogeny of *Udea* Guenée

A pyraloid volume in preparation for the book series Microlepidoptera of Europe will treat the Pyraustinae and Spilomelinae. In this context we were wondering how to arrange the 36 species of *Udea*. Should they be arranged in alphabetical order or was there any chance to uncover their phylogenetic relationships?

With this in mind, Richard Mally (Dresden, Germany) focused his diploma thesis on the phylogeny of European *Udea*, based on morphological and molecular data. As a result, Richard found well supported species groups as well as interesting biogeographical aspects. At the moment he is preparing the dataset for publication by adding additional taxa to the sample, completing the sequence data, and revising the morphomatrix. Richard is interested to receive more material of *Udea* species, especially from East-Asia and the New World.

Besides *Udea*, Richard is interested in the phylogeny of Spilomelinae and is planning to make this the topic of his PhD thesis, for which he is currently looking for a grant.

Matthias Nuss
(Dresden, Germany)

"Membership" list

David Agassiz
The Garden House, Stafford Place
Weston-super-Mare BS23 2QZ
UNITED KINGDOM
e-mail: agassiz@btinternet.com;
D.Agassiz@nhm.ac.uk

J. E. F. Asselbergs
Neerland 20 NL-4614
GD Bergen-op-Zoom
NETHERLANDS
e-mail: JEF.Asselbergs@hetnet.nl

Yang Seup Bae
Incheon University
Incheon, KOREA
e-mail: baeys@incheon.ac.kr

George J. Balogh
6275 Liteolier Street
Portage, Michigan 49024-2394
U.S.A.
e-mail: bugdr@net-link.net

Hans Bänziger
Department of Entomology
Faculty of Agriculture
Chiang Mai University
Chiang Mai 50200
THAILAND
e-mail: sangda.h@chiangmai.ac.th

Alejandro Barro
Dpto Biología Animal y Humana
Facultad de Biología
Universidad de La Habana
Calle 25 # 455 entre J e I
Vedado CP 10400
La Habana, CUBA
e-mail: abarro@fbio.uh.cu

Graziano Bassi
Via San Martino 25
I-10051 Avigliana (TO), Italy
e-mail: graziano.bassi@alice.it

Vitor O. Becker
Reserva Serra Bonita
P.O. Box 001
45880-970 Camacan
BRAZIL
e-mail: becker.vitor@gmail.com

Richard L. Brown
Mississippi Entomological Museum
Mississippi State, MS 39762
U.S.A.
e-mail: moth@ra.msstate.edu

José Clavijo
Museo del Instituto de Zoología Agrícola
Facultad de Agronomía
Universidad Central de Venezuela
Apartado 4579, C.P. 2101-A
Maracay (Aragua)
VENEZUELA
e-mail: clamiche@telcel.net.ve

Julian P. Donahue
Natural History Museum of
Los Angeles County
900 Exposition Boulevard
Los Angeles
California 90007-4057
U.S.A.
e-mail: Bugbooks@aol.com

Yanli Du
Department of Entomology
China Agricultural University
Haidian, Beijing, 100094
CHINA
e-mail: ?????????

Clifford D. Ferris
5405 Bill Nye Avenue, R.R. #3
Laramie, WY 82070
U.S.A.
e-mail: cdferris@uwyo.edu

Reinhard Gaedike
Florusstraße 5
53225 Bonn
GERMANY
e-mail: tinagma@msn.com

Barry Goater
27 Hiltingbury Road "The Ridge"
GB-SO53 5SR Chandlers Ford (Hampshire)
UNITED KINGDOM
e-mail: barrygoater@tiscali.co.uk

Kurt Grimm
Fruthwilerstrasse 65d
CH-8272 Ermatingen
SWITZERLAND
e-mail: kurtgrimm@bluewin.ch

James Hayden
Dept. of Entomology
2144 Comstock Hall
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY 14853
U.S.A.
e-mail: jeh63@cornell.edu;
jehayden63@gmail.com

Bob Heckford
67 Newnham Road
GB-PL7 4AW Plympton (Plymouth), S. Devon
UNITED KINGDOM
e-mail: bheckford@bondpearce.com

John B. Heppner
Florida State Collection of Arthropods
Division of Plant Industry
Florida Department of Agriculture
P.O. Box 147100
Gainesville, Florida 32614-7100
U.S.A.
e-mail: JBHATL@aol.com

Alvaro Herrera Villalobos
Enlace con Investigadores
UEA de Vertebrados, INBio
Apdo Postal 22-3100
Santo Domingo, Heredia
COSTA RICA
e-mail: alherrer@inbio.ac.cr

Ronald W. Hodges
85253Ridgetop Drive
Eugene, Oregon 97405-9535
U.S.A.
e-mail: rwhodges@rhodges.net

Marianne Horak
Australian National Insect Collection
GPO Box 1700, Canberra, ACT, 2601
AUSTRALIA
e-mail: marianne.horak@csiro.au

Peter Huemer
Tiroler Landesmuseum Naturwissenschaften
Feldstrasse 11a
A-6020 Innsbruck
AUSTRIA
e-mail: p.huemer@natur-tlmf.at

Ole Karsholt
Zoologisk Museum
Universitetsparken 15
DK-2100 København Ø
DENMARK
e-mail: OKarsholt@zmuc.ku.dk

Valentina Kirpichnikova
Mountain-Taiga Station
Far Eastern Branch of Russian Academy of Sciences
RU-692533 Gornotajozhnoe,
Ussuri region
RUSSIA
e-mail: omelko@ott.ru

Gregor Kunert
Kunert Business Software
Deutscher Platz 5c, D-04103 Leipzig, Germany
e-mail: gregor.kunert@kbs-leipzig.de

Bernard Landry
Muséum d'histoire naturelle
Route de Malagnou 1, CH-1208 Genève
SWITZERLAND
e-mail: bernard.landry@ville-ge.ch

Jean-François Landry
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Central Experimental Farm, Neatby Bldg.
960 Carling Avenue
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0C6, CANADA
e-mail: landryjf@agr.gc.ca

Patrice Leraut
Muséum national d'histoire naturelle
45, rue de Buffon
F-75005 Paris
FRANCE
e-mail: pleraut@mnhn.fr

Houhun Li
College of Life Sciences, Nankai University
Tianjin 300071
CHINA
e-mail: lihouhun@nankai.edu.cn

Jean-Michel Maes
Museo Entomologica
AP 527, Leon
NICARAGUA
e-mail: jmmaes@ibw.com.ni

Koen Maes
AgroBioSys Intl.
Kleine Smetledestraat 192
B-9230 Wetteren
BELGIUM
e-mail: kvmaes@belgacom.net

Edda Martinez
Mississippi Entomological Museum
Box 9775
Mississippi State, MS 39762
U.S.A.
e-mail: elm110@msstate.edu

Eric Metzler
P.O. Box 45
Alamogordo, New Mexico 88311-0045
U.S.A.
e-mail: spruance@beyondbb.com

Wolfram Mey
Museum für Naturkunde
Humboldt-Universität
Invalidenstr. 43
D-10115 Berlin
GERMANY
e-mail: wolfram.mey@museum.hu-berlin.de

Joël Minet
Muséum national d'histoire naturelle
45, rue de Buffon
F-75005 Paris
FRANCE
e-mail: minet@mnhn.fr

Andrew Mitchell
Agricultural Scientific Collections Unit, OAI
NSW Department of Primary Industries
Forest Rd
Orange NSW 2800
AUSTRALIA
e-mail: andrew.mitchell@dpi.nsw.gov.au

Charlie Mitter
Department of Entomology
4112 Plant Sciences Building
University of Maryland
College Park, Maryland 20742
U.S.A.
e-mail: cmitter@umd.edu

Herb H. Neunzig
Department of Entomology
North Carolina State University
Raleigh, North Carolina, 27695-7613
U.S.A.
e-mail: h.neunzig@gte.net

Matthias Nuss
Staatliche Naturhistorische Sammlungen
Museum für Tierkunde
Königsbrücker Landstr. 159
D-01109 Dresden
GERMANY
e-mail: matthias.nuss@snsd.smwk.sachsen.de

Eugenie Phillips
COSTA RICA
e-mail: eugeniephillips@hotmail.com

Jerry A. Powell
Essig Museum of Entomology
201 Wellman Hall
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720
U.S.A.
e-mail: powellj@nature.berkeley.edu

Amanda Roe
Systematics and Evolution
CW315 Biological Sciences Bldg
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2E9
CANADA
e-mail: amandaroe5@gmail.com

Daniel Rubinoff
310 Gilmore Hall
Dept. of Entomology
University of Hawaii
3050 Maile Way, Honolulu
Hawaii 96822-2231
U.S.A.
e-mail: rubinoff@hawaii.edu

Akio Sasaki
11-5, Onoba 5
Akita City
Akita Pref., 010-1424
JAPAN
e-mail: scopar089@ybb.ne.jp

Brian Scholtens
Biology Department
College of Charleston
66 College Street
Charleston, South Carolina 29424-0011
U.S.A.
e-mail: scholtensb@cofc.edu

Rob Schouten
Museon, Dept. of Natural History
Stadhouderslaan 41
NL-2517 HV Den Haag
NETHERLANDS
e-mail: rschouten@museon.nl

Christian H. Schulze
Department für Populationsökologie, IECB / Universität Wien
Althanstr. 14, A-1090 Wien
AUSTRIA
e-mail: christian.schulze@univie.ac.at

Andreas Segerer
Zoologische Staatssammlung München
Münchhausenstr. 21
D-81247 München
GERMANY
phone: +49-89-8107-151; FAX: +49-89-8107-300
e-mail: Andreas.Segerer@zsm.mwn.de

Jay Shaffer
Department of Biology-3E1
George Mason University
4400 University Drive
Fairfax, Virginia 22030-4444
U.S.A.
e-mail: jshaffe1@gmu.edu

Ayuna A. Shodotova
Institute of General and Experimental Biology
Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences
Sakhyanovoi Street 6, Ulan-Ude, 670047
RUSSIA
e-mail: shodotova@mail.ru

Thomas J. Simonsen
Department of Biological Sciences
Biological Sciences Centre
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta, T6G 2E9
CANADA
e-mail: thomas.simonsen@ualberta.ca

Frantisek Slamka
Racianska 61
SK-83102 Bratislava SLOVAQUIA
e-mail: f.slamka@nextra.sk

M. Alma Solis
SEL, USDA, Smithsonian Institution
P.O. Box 37012
National Museum Natural History
E-517, MRC 168, Washington
DC 20013-7012 U.S.A.
e-mail: alma.solis@ars.usda.gov

Wolfgang Speidel
Museum Witt
Tengstr. 33
80796 München GERMANY
e-mail: speidel-wolfgang@web.de

Felix Sperling
Department of Biological Sciences
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2E9
CANADA
e-mail: felix.sperling@ualberta.ca

Hari Sutrisno
LIPI - The Indonesian Institute of Sciences
Zoological Division
Research Center for Biology
PO Box 25, Cibinong 16911, Bogor
INDONESIA
e-mail: sutrisnohari@yahoo.com

Stephen Sutton
Kota Kinabalu, Sabah MALAYSIA
e-mail: sutton@pc.jaring.my

Kevin Tuck
Department of Entomology
Natural History Museum
Cromwell Road
London SW7 5BD
UNITED KINGDOM
e-mail: K.Tuck@nhm.ac.uk

Héctor Vargas
Facultad de Agronomía
Universidad de Tarapacá
CASILLA 6D
Arica, CHILE
e-mail: havargas@uta.cl

Francesca Vegliante
Staatliche Naturhistorische Sammlungen, Museum für Tierkunde
Königsbrücker Landstr. 159, D-01109 Dresden
GERMANY
e-mail: francesca.vegliante@snsd.smwk.sachsen.de

Pierre Viette
F-10200 Montier-en-L'Isle
FRANCE

David L. Wagner
Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology
University of Connecticut
Storrs, CT 06269
U.S.A.
e-mail: david.wagner@uconn.edu

Terry Whitaker
4 Crowtrees, Low Bentham
Lancaster LA2 7EE
UNITED KINGDOM
e-mail: tmw1@globalnet.co.uk

Chunsheng Wu
Institute of Zoology
Chinese Academy of Sciences
Beichen West Road, Chaoyang District
Beijing 100101
P. R. CHINA
e-mail: wucs@ioz.ac.cn

Hiroshi Yamanaka
4-18, Eiraku-cho
Toyama City
Toyama Pref.
930-0853 JAPAN
e-mail: hycopm@po1.ctt.ne.jp

Shen-Horn Yen
Department of Biological Sciences
National Sun Yat-Sen University
Kaohsiung 804
TAIWAN
e-mail: shenhornyen@gmail.com