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Frontiers of Biogeography

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obituary: Professor Chris Humphries (1947—2009)

Permalink

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Journal

Frontiers of Biogeography, 1(1)

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Publication Date

2009

DOI

10.21425/F5FBG12234

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conservationists adequately communicate their information needs to biogeographers?

NB: I think that there is a general lack collaboration, understanding and acceptance. This might be because the agendas are different: the academic agenda is to try and publish papers in the best scientific Journals whereas the NGO agenda is to identify areas where they can work on practical conservation on the ground. Often their approaches are simple and quite rapidly undertaken, so that they are easy to explain, can become part of the agencies 'brand', and help direct the work of the NGO. Once the work is finished, the NGO is then likely to stick to what they developed as it becomes a part of the institutional structure and public face of that organisation.

AA: Is an intensified exchange between conservationists and biogeographers necessary, and if so, where do you see potential platforms for this?

NB: One of the problems is that most conservation organisations have already defined their conservation biogeographical frameworks of the world. In order to develop a meaningful interaction between academic and conservation biogeographers, one or more of the NGOs would

need to decide they wanted to look again at the conservation prioritisations that had developed. At this point there could be extensive opportunities for collaborations and to use the latest scientific findings and techniques for the development of such schemes. Another option for extensive collaboration between biogeographers and conservationists would arise if the conservation organisations all decided to sit together and to develop a joint set of conservation priorities.

AA: Thanks very much for this interesting interview! Are there any further thoughts you would like to share?

NB: I think that an extremely valuable contribution academic biogeographers could make would be to develop a statistically defined hierarchical model of conservation prioritisation areas that would include aspects relevant to conservation, such as endemic species, species richness, threatened species and important ecological processes.

obituary

Professor Chris Humphries (1947—2009)

Botanist and biogeographer, Natural History Museum, London

Chris Humphries, a major player in the cladistic revolution in systematic biology, a revolution that changed the way biologists established evolutionary relationships among plants and animals and interpreted their geographical distribution, died Friday 31st July, 2009.

Chris was trained as a botanist specialising in Asteraceae, a group of daisies, but would eventually publish on a wide range of scientific issues. Aside from botanical taxonomy, Chris published on general issues in systematic biology, botanical art and its relation to 19th century scientific exploration, and conservation biology. He was a talented lecturer, held in high esteem by his many students. His infectious enthusiasm and considered knowledge meant he was sought out by many, none would he refuse to talk to, from undergraduate student to minister of state.

Chris spent his entire career as a research scientist in the Botany Department of the Natural History Museum, London, starting in 1972 as Assistant Curator of the European Herbarium, becoming its Head Curator in 1979 and, after some departmental restructuring, Division Head of Flowering Plants Research in 1997 until his retirement in 2007. During that period Chris had three sabbaticals, the first as a Research Fellow at the University of Melbourne, Australia (1979—1980), the second as a Senior Research Fellow at Melbourne (1986), and third as a Fellow of the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin (Institute for Advanced Study, Berlin) (1994).

Chris's gained his PhD from Reading University in 1974 working on the endemic genus *Argyranthemum* from Macaronesia. This study was Chris's entry into systematics and biogeography, a

study that coincided with the beginnings of the cladistic revolution. Alongside Scandinavian colleagues, Kåre Bremer and Hans-Erik Wanntorp, also studying Asteraceae, the 1970s and 1980s was significant for developing, exploring and promoting cladistic systematics and cladistic biogeography in botany, ideas which have their origin with the German entomologist Willi Hennig and the interpretation of his core ideas by the Swedish entomologist Lars Brundin. Brundin's work was embraced and developed by the palaeoichthyological community who went to study at Stockholm University with Erik Helge Osvald Stensiö (1891–1984). These scientists included Gareth Nelson and Colin Patterson, the latter of the Palaeontology Department of the Natural History Museum, although Chris did not meet Colin until 1975, after he (Colin) had lectured to the staff of the Museum in London on cladistics. Of Brundin, Patterson later wrote: "After ten years work in that field, I read Brundin and still recall the excitement with which I realized that there is a logical basis to evolutionary relationships which I had never seen discussed". Brundin was first a biology teacher; one of his pupils was Hans-Erik Wanntorp; Bremer and Wanntorp were both at Stockholm University.

If Hennig's work could be summed up succinctly one can do no better than note the unpublished words of Colin Patterson (1933–1998), spoken at his Systematics Association annual general meeting lecture in 1995: "What we all learned from Hennig back in those early days boiled down

to just one thing, what relationship means. No one had put it plainly before. Once you agreed what relationship meant, how to recognise it became obvious – synapomorphy, and then it was also obvious what was wrong with systematics as we'd been practising it in the 50's and early 60's, when everyone was preoccupied with polyphyly. Our mistake was thinking in terms of origins rather than relationships – Darwin may well be to blame for that preoccupation. Anyway, origins has been a dirty word to me ever since, a symptom either of ignorance or of creationism".

The revolution in historical biogeography also had its beginnings with Hennig and, again and more significantly, with Brundin's vicariance interpretation of the southern hemisphere patterns of distribution in chironomid midges.

Bremer and Wanntorp were the first to note vicariance biogeography in the context of botanical phylogenetic systematics, but it was not until Chris's vicariance interpretation of the southern beeches (*Nothofagus*) that any serious work on cladistic biogeography was undertaken by a botanist.

Chris's interest in biogeography developed during these next years, significantly enhanced by his association and collaboration with Lynne Parenti (of the Smithsonian Institute, Washington, USA) and Pauline Ladiges (of the University of Melbourne, Australia), producing two editions of the classic textbook *Cladistic biogeography* with Parenti and a series of papers applying rigorous cladistic biogeographic analyses to several groups of Australian eucalypts with Ladiges.

All revolutions lead to conflict with the prevailing orthodoxy, and the battles between the old and the new slipped out of the genteel academic circles of the Natural History Museum and into public view. Eventually, cladistic systematics and biogeography became accepted helped along by the publication of *Cladistics: A practical course in systematics* (1992), which Chris co-authored, and *Cladistic Biogeography*, both becoming standard texts.

At the same time, Chris's interest in art and Australia made him perfect for organising and annotating the first complete full-colour edition of



Chris Humphries in June 2006. Picture courtesy of Dick Vane-Wright

Banks' Florilegium, published between 1980 and 1990. The *Florilegium* consists of over 700 botanical line engravings made from Sydney Parkinson's watercolours, recording the plants collected by Joseph Banks and Daniel Carl Solander on Captain James Cook's first voyage around the world (1768–1771).

After 1990, Chris, with Dick Vane-Wright and Paul Williams, both (then) of the Entomology Department, the Natural History Museum, pooled their collective systematic and biogeographical expertise together and began to address questions relating to conservation biology with their synthetic 'WorldMap' approach. After a decade of fruitful collaboration Chris returned to studying the distribution of plants on Macaronesia, the islands he cut his teeth on as a student.

Chris received many honours: the Linnean Society's Bicentenary Medal in 1980 and their Gold Medal in 2001; he was also an Honorary Fellow of the American Association for the Advance-

ment of Science. He was President of the Systematics Association (2001–2003) as well as its Treasurer (1996–9), and President of the Willi Hennig Society (1989–1991), being elected a Fellow *honoris causa* in 1998. Chris was also Vice-President and Botanical Secretary of the Linnean Society (1994–1998).

In 2008, a three-day Meeting was held in his honour at the Linnean Society; a Festschrift will be published in early 2010.

David Williams

Natural History Museum London, UK

membership corner

ISSN 1948-6596

IBS-sponsored events

Latest news from the forthcoming 2011 IBS meeting at Crete

The four invited-speakers symposia that will be held in the Crete meeting have now been decided upon. The list includes the following:

1. Analytical advancements in macroecology and biogeography (organizers: Alexandre Diniz-Filho & Carsten Rahbek)

2. New Perspectives on Comparative Phylogeography – novel integrative approaches and challenges (organizers: Ana Carnaval & Mike Hickerson)

3. Biogeography and Ecology: Two Lenses in One Telescope (organizers: Dave Jenkins & Bob Ricklefs)

4. Mediterranean biogeography: where history meets ecology across scales (organizers: Spyros Sfenthourakis & Rémy Petit)

Besides these symposia, additional thematic sessions will host contributed presentations, following the model started in the Mérida meeting. The nature and topics covered by each session will be decided in the near future.

Jens-Christian Svenning

V. P. for Conferences

Spyros Sfenthourakis

Organizing board of the 2011 IBS meeting

You can find information about the **International Biogeography Society** at <http://www.biogeography.org/>, and contact with other biogeographers at the **IBS blog** (<http://biogeography.blogspot.com/>), the **IBS facebook group** (<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=6908354463>) and the **IBS twitter channel** (<https://twitter.com/biogeography>).