
EDITORIAL PAGES

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EDITORIAL

Volume 35 of *Metamorphosis* published a similar number of articles but less than half the number of pages (11/64) to Volume 34 (12/142). Two obituaries of prominent lepidopterists that worked on African butterfly fauna are also published in the Editorial section of Volume 35. All articles are published on our Open Access website www.metamorphosis.org.za. The Table of Contents appears as usual on the back cover of the printed version, as well as being accessible through the website.

Editorial staff

I started as Editor-in-Chief in January 2024 taking over from Dave Edge after his 12-year dedicated stint. Dave initiated the handover with efficiency and professionalism, and I received the tiller of a smooth sailing ship, with Dave having kept detailed and meticulous records over the past 12 years of article statistics, including amongst others, reviewers' details, numbers of pages and articles published, time each article spent in review, updated author guidelines and strategic plans for the journal. Dave continues to play a pivotal role in *Metamorphosis*. Andy Noss (University of Florida) who had joined the editorial team in 2023, was already functioning as a highly competent member, dealing with a range of important issues, including amongst others, providing input towards the strategic plans for the journal, copy-editing, publishing and uploading new articles to the website, registration of new taxa on ZooBank, and generally ensuring a high standard of publication of *Metamorphosis* articles.

After a relatively slow rate of submission of articles during the first half of the year, a flurry of submissions came through in the second half. Submissions ranged in topic, from new species descriptions and natural history discoveries, through to articles investigating various ecological and evolutionary aspects of butterflies. Major challenges and goals for 2025 include applying to join the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), increasing the numbers of articles submitted and published, and further appointment of new members to the editorial board. In terms of the latter, two highly experienced scientists were appointed to the board in 2024: Prof Michelle Hamer (recently retired from SANBI), whom many of you will know through LepSoc's butterfly conservation projects; and Prof Rauri Bowie (University of California, Berkeley), a phylogeneticist who will assist with dealing with the increasing number of article submissions that involve the use of molecular data.

Printed version

We expect to have Volume 35 printed and ready for dispatch before the end of January 2025.

African Journals Online (AJOL)

AJOL publishes *Metamorphosis* articles on their website, which includes archives going back to Volume 30. Based on article downloads statistics from AJOL, the online visibility and access of *Metamorphosis* has increased impressively. For example, in 2024 over 12,500 article downloads across 103 countries were logged through AJOL. Interestingly, the United States accounted for over 50% of *Metamorphosis* article downloads in 2024.

Afrotropical Butterflies

Following the untimely death in August of the founder of the society, Mark Williams, we have been investigating how his monumental project "Afrotropical Butterflies (ATB)" can be continued. This has become a very valuable resource for all researchers and taxonomists working on the butterflies of Africa, which make up over 15% of the world's butterflies. The main products of ATB are over 360 genus articles which describe all the species and subspecies in each genus, a classification into genus/subtribe/tribe/subfamily/family document, and a checklist of all the taxa occurring in the Afrotropical region. A team of taxonomic experts has been assembled to keep these products up to date in the current PDF format. A longer term project, being led by ex LepSoc Africa President Jeremy Dobson, is to convert the entire product into a database format to allow manipulation of data and searches by any criteria, including producing country lists.

Indexing

Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ): We are confident that *Metamorphosis* meets the basic criteria for the triage stage of DOAJ's process: (Open Access compliance; copyright and licencing policies; aims and scope of the journal; editorial policies and processes; business model; adherence to publishing best practices; and website functionality). The second, more rigorous phase, will assess our Editorial Board credentials and relevant expertise; Editor-in-Chief's publishing track record; Editorial team and competency; and peer reviewing processes and implementation. Before we will be able to apply, we need to undertake an audit of our website to ensure that it demonstrates that we comply with all best publishing practices. Our application will be submitted during the first quarter of 2025. Acceptance by DOAJ will allow for accreditation by the Department of Higher Education & Training (DHET) and for articles published in *Metamorphosis* to receive National Research Fund (NRF) subsidies. This is an important consideration for researchers registered with South African universities and will hopefully increase the number of submissions to *Metamorphosis* as well as generate more interest on research into African Lepidoptera.



If we clear the DOAJ hurdle the next step would be to apply to the Web of Science to join their Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI), which would give us additional international exposure and the possibility of obtaining an Impact Factor.

Gratitude

One of the most impressive features of *Metamorphosis* that I soon came to realize is the dedication and passion of a core group of authors and reviewers, many of whom are recognized specialists in various fields of lepidopterology. This core group extends across both active and retired lepidopterists/entomologists from various international and local research institutions, and in-house expertise within LepSoc Africa, which has been built-up over several decades. This core group selflessly undertakes reviews – often one person will do several in a year – and has become dedicated to publishing in *Metamorphosis* – often annually – and often as part of a long series of articles focusing on a particular group of moths or butterflies. The editorial team therefore extends our grateful acknowledgement to our core team of peer reviewers and authors, and to our new authors and reviewers, who have supported *Metamorphosis* in producing Volume 35.

Personally, I would like to thank Dave Edge for his help and guidance in navigating my first year as Editor-in-Chief, and Andy Noss for his professional support and technical expertise as Copy Editor. I very much look forward to working with Dave and Andy in 2025 on the next volume of *Metamorphosis*.

I have thoroughly enjoyed the past year as Editor-in-Chief, working within an encouraging and collegial atmosphere associated with *Metamorphosis* and LepSoc Africa in general.

Finally, the editorial team would like to wish all authors, reviewers, and readers of *Metamorphosis* a prosperous and productive 2025, and we encourage you to send in your contributions for publication in Volume 36 to jonathan.colville@gmail.com.

With warm regards

Jonathan F. Colville
jonathan.colville@gmail.com

31st December 2024

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – THE LAST EIGHT YEARS

(Jeremy Dobson, Dave Edge, Peter Ward and Justin Bode)

Jeremy Dobson, Dave Edge and Justin Bode were elected to the respective positions of Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary of LepSoc Africa in September 2016 (in Dave and Justin's cases, they were the incumbent councillors). Peter Ward took over the Treasurer post in May 2019, so that Dave could focus his attention on *Metamorphosis*, (having done that in addition to the Treasurer role since 2012). All current councillors will be relinquishing their positions at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting on 21 September and, with the exception of Dave, will not be standing for re-election.

The last eight years have been a rollercoaster ride, but we'd like to take this opportunity to reflect on some of the achievements (and failures) experienced during this period.

BUSINESS OPERATIONS

Corporate governance

One of our early imperatives was to regain control of the statutory and fiduciary obligations of our Society, an aspect of business that had been neglected for several years. Due to the efforts of Dave and Hanna Edge particularly, we have ticked all the boxes and can now present:

- Meticulous membership lists along with timeous subscription notifications
- Audited financial statements
- Compliance with all Nonprofit Company requirements
- Compliance with FICA and POPIA regulations
- Full tax compliance
- A secure financial position backed up with sound management

Website

Hanna and Dave Edge produced a new LepSoc Africa website and introduced a revised cycle of membership and financial reporting, commencing on 01 January each year. An online shopping-cart for publications was added to the website in March 2018.

Member notifications

To comply with the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) member notifications are no longer sent via bulk emails, but through either Mail Merge, or via the website.

We believe the frequency and inclusiveness of notifications is higher than at any stage in LSA's history, certainly more than at any point in the last twenty years.

Membership

Reliable membership numbers are hard to reliably ascertain from previous records but based on the number of paid subscriptions - plus life members - our numbers (after an initial dip) rose from about 220 to the 300 mark, a number we have retained for the last three years. Whether this is good or bad you can judge, but the Botanical Society has experienced a drastic drop in membership over this period, and even Birdlife Africa has experienced a decline since Covid. Whatever the reasons, the fact remains that we could, and should, do much better.

An interesting trend is the growth in the percentage of non-South African members: South African citizens currently constitute less than 60% of our membership list. Highveld (the Gauteng, North West Province and Free State region) is our largest branch with 66 members, while Europe is in a not-too-distant second place with 48.

Membership Cards

Annual membership cards were introduced, on a permanent basis for the first time, in July 2019. Cards are produced on 1 July, once all subscriptions have been received, and are valid until 30 June the following year.

English Names

The "English Names" project commenced in 2019, with the objective of compiling a standardised and comprehensive list of English language common names for all Afrotropical butterfly taxa. We recently completed a draft list, although we still need about a year of internal vetting and approval by the English Names "panel", before this is published. There will then be a "call for alternatives" process and finally, a vote, which will be open to the entire LSA membership. A comprehensive list of English common names for all butterfly taxa (species and subspecies) has never been completed for any bioregion, including Europe. The Afrotropical region will be first!

THE LEPIDOPTERISTS'
SOCIETY OF AFRICA



Name: Mr Jeremy Dobson

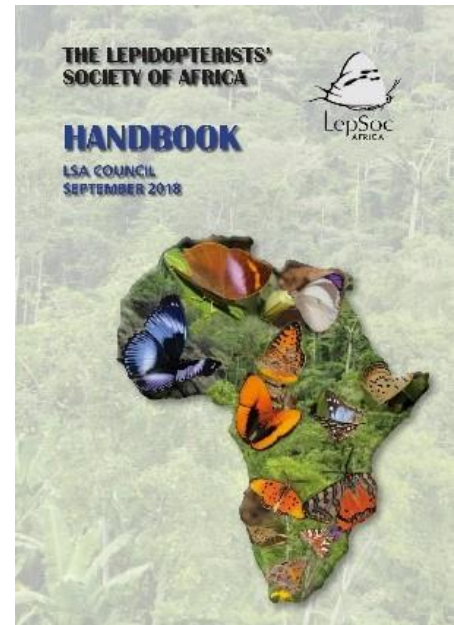
Category: Sponsor - RSA

Number: SPS06

Expiry: 30 June 2025

Handbook

In November 2018, LepSoc Africa completed the Society's Handbook. This is a compilation of policy documents, outlining all aspects of LepSoc Africa's business. The document should assist all current and future LSA Councillors with their duties, as well as being a useful reference manual for LSA members wishing to know more about the modus operandi of the Society. Andrew Mayer very kindly designed the cover-page.



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

LepSoc Africa hosted the 3rd Afrotropical Lepidoptera Workshop, which was held in Madagascar in April 2018. The workshop consisted of a Conference (based at ValBio, Ranomafana) between 9 and 13 April, followed by a week's field trip to the southern and western parts of the island. The Workshop was attended by 38 international delegates and 5 Malagasy representatives, and we consider that it was highly successful. Not only did we have a stimulating conference, but the weather was (generally) kind to us, and the butterflies were great. This was one of the most important achievements of our eight-year term.

PARTNERSHIPS

BBT (Brenton Blue Trust)

To lessen the administrative workload the BBT has been dissolved as a Trust and its assets transferred to LepSoc Africa as long as they are used to continue with conservation projects (COREL & SALCA)

SANBI (South African National Biodiversity Institute)

Following on from three successful projects (SABCA, Karoo BioGaps and SALCA), LSA are close to concluding a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with SANBI, and this relationship has also helped us to receive funding for the CAB collection via the Natural Science Collections Facility (NSCF).

CONSERVATION PROJECTS

COREL (Custodians of Rare and Endangered Lepidoptera)

Our flagship conservation project, COREL, (BBT), was initiated in 2011 by Dave Edge and funded by the Brenton Blue Trust. The programme, which is concerned with monitoring known sites of our rare and endangered Lepidoptera, as well as discovering new sites, was strongly supported by the current council. It was led by Dave Edge up until 2019 when Mark Williams took over the role of doing an annual summary of the work done by custodians on each species, and since Mark's passing is being done by Graham Henning. We introduced certificates, which were first awarded to the various custodians in 2020.

Southern African Lepidoptera Conservation Assessment (SALCA)

This project initiated in 2013 was the second one done in partnership with SANBI, who had also been our partners in the SABCA (Butterfly Atlas) project. The goal of this project was to get much more accurate distribution records for very rare butterflies and moths, and from this determine exactly how threatened they are and which sites needed to be conserved. Data gathering was done up until 2018 and then data analysis for two more years until the results were published. This information informs our COREL conservation efforts and also has led development of a butterfly screening tool which plays an important role in preventing developments on sites where threatened butterflies occur.

BUTTERFLY MONITORING PROJECTS

Botanical Gardens

We commenced butterfly-surveys of South Africa's National Botanical Gardens four years ago. Jeremy Dobson coordinates the program and is assisted by SANBI's Christopher Willis, the Chief Director of National Botanical Gardens, who surveys Lowveld; Lourens Erasmus (Walter Sisulu); Graham Henning (Harold Porter); Corrina Naidoo (KwaZulu-Natal); Dave Edge (Garden Route); Fanie Rautenbach (Kirstenbosch) and Hennie Vermaak (Pretoria).

This is an important programme, and if there are significant changes in butterfly numbers nationally, we will detect this.

South African Butterfly Index

The Butterfly Index (now the SA Butterfly Index due to a clash with a recent British program) commenced in January 2018. It is a broad-brush attempt to monitor trends in butterfly abundance nationwide, and to the best of our knowledge, was the first initiative of this type to be implemented in Africa.

It has received limited support from the LepSoc Africa membership, and while its objectives have parallels with the Botanical Gardens project, it has the advantage of three year's more data.

eBMS

Steve Woodhall is managing the introduction of this European-based butterfly monitoring scheme in South Africa.

iNaturalist

Steve Woodhall is also LSA's iNat representative.

RESEARCH

Karoo Biogaps project

This project was initiated by SANBI and ran from 2016 to 2019. The aim was to do butterfly surveys in the area of the Karro targeted by fossil fuel companies to extract gas by fracking. The biodiversity data gathered undoubtedly played a role in the eventual decision not to proceed with this project.

CAB (Centre for African Butterflies and Moths)

One of the most important LSA initiatives in recent years was the commencement of our lepidoptera museum, comprising various collections donated by LSA members.

LepSoc Africa estimate that there may be a million African butterfly specimens held in private collections in South Africa alone. The collections include representatives of species that will never be seen in the wild again, such as Scarce Silver-spotted Copper (*Trimenia malagrida malagrida*), Tygerberg Monkey Giant Cupid (*Lepidochrysops methymna dicksoni*) and Tygerberg Hillside Brown (*Stygionympha dicksoni*). There is growing concern that even species that were flying as recently as five or ten years ago may have gone extinct: butterflies such as the Brenton Blue (*Orachrysops niobe*) and Waterberg *Acraea* Copper (*Erikssonsonia edgei*) have not been recorded for several years.

Many private collections have no succession plan; they are - in general - not wanted by our national museums and in any case, the future curatorship at many of South African museums is far from secure. We initially investigated a major scheme at Happy Acres, Magaliesburg, and drew up a detailed prospectus and budget, along with schematic architectural drawings. Unfortunately, the development could not be justified as an ongoing commercial concern, and we were unable to raise the necessary funding from a benevolent donor.

LepSoc Africa member André Coetzer came to the rescue, and made a building on his property in Hekpoort, NW Province available for our purposes. Steve Woodhall and Graham Henning gave the scheme critical mass with the bequest of their collections, and we have subsequently incorporated several smaller collections and have been promised several more. We have set up a steering committee to manage CAB; Martin Lunderstedt is LSA's CAB representative and is responsible for its curation. We have arranged a few meetings at CAB and various volunteers have assisted Martin with cleaning and tidying the collection.

Thanks to SANBI, data-capture of the specimen records (plus the cost of consumables such as insecticides) is being sponsored by the National Science Collections Facility (NSCF).

TAXONOMIC PROJECTS

Chrysoritis Project

This project has been running since the 1990s, led by Alan Heath with the assistance of Harvard University's Museum of Comparative Anatomy. Several scientific articles have been published in *Metamorphosis*, with contributions from Ernest Pringle.

Lepidochrysops/Orachrysops/Euchrysops Project

This project was initiated by Marianne Espeland of the University of Bonn and supported by Mark Williams and all LepSoc Africa members with an interest in this genus and specimens or DNA samples to contribute.

Aloeides Project

The *Aloeides* Project commenced in September 2017. The initial aim was to construct an updated phylogeny (tree-of-life) for the genus *Aloeides* (Russets), based on mtDNA barcodes. The *Aloeides* genus contains some of the most frequently misidentified and confusing butterflies, as well as numerous undescribed species, and the genus has a wide distribution in southern Africa meaning that members from a wider geographical area can contribute.

The end-product will be a comprehensive *Aloeides* book, with accurate distribution maps, detailed images and diagnostic cues, plus new taxonomic descriptions where required. The project has made considerable progress, and taxonomic expert Graham Henning has recently volunteered to assist with the eventual descriptions that meet the requirements of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (ICZN).

Thestor Project

A similar undertaking to the *Aloeides* Project, *Thestor* commenced in November 2021. Unlike *Aloeides* however, *Thestor* had immediate ambitions in the field of taxonomic revisions. A provisional *Thestor* phylogenetic arrangement is already available, and the genus generally resolves itself fairly well at species level using barcodes.

We still require further DNA samples and, as for *Aloeides*, taxonomic expertise will be required.

Spialia Project

This started in November 2021, initiated by Johan Greyling who offered to sponsor the cost of a single plate (95 samples) for mtDNA barcoding. In addition to *Spialia* (and related genera) we intend to look at *Gegenes* and *Platylesches*.

Lepibase

Lepibase, LepSoc Africa's database, contains more than half a million records, but can only be described as having drifted sideways during the last eight years. No major design development has been reported, the number of users has not grown significantly, there is no online method of self-loading records, and the data is not readily available for research purposes.

Lepibase has been one of the disappointments of our term. As the database is effectively dysfunctional, Jeremy Dobson has temporarily taken over the role of data-compilation for the annual provincial data submissions.

LepiMAP

LepiMAP is a citizen-science driven lepidoptera database, hosted by the Fitzpatrick Institute. LepSoc Africa's Fanie Rautenbach undertakes most of the identifications, and we are using the data to produce distribution maps for the *Afrotropical Butterflies* encyclopaedia.

CRG (Caterpillar Rearing Group)

A citizen-science based project launched in 2012 and managed by Hermann Staude and Suncana Bradley. Volunteers find and rear caterpillars (or eggs or larva) and record the various stages. This has already greatly increased our knowledge of moth life histories, and was central to the publication, in 2023, of *Southern African Moths and their Caterpillars* by Hermann Staude, Mike Picker and Charles Griffiths.

PUBLICATIONS

Metamorphosis

Our peer-reviewed scientific journal, *Metamorphosis*, up until 2011 was printed annually. When Dave Edge became the Editor from 2012, he developed the *Metamorphosis* website and began publishing the journal electronically as well as continuing an annual printed version.

Metamorphosis has more than held its own over the last eight years, with Volume 30 (2019) being published in four parts of nearly 1000 pages. Attempts to gain accreditation with the Department of Higher Education and Training have not yet been successful.

Jonathan Colville has recently taken over the reins as Editor in Chief and is responsible for the 2024 edition (Volume 35).

Afrotropical Butterflies

Mark Williams began work on the *Afrotropical Butterflies* (ATB) encyclopaedia in the mid 1980's, and it was first published as a CD in 2004. Since 2016 it has been published on the *Metamorphosis* website and currently contains 334 genus PDFs, and a taxonomic list which has recently been recognised as the most authoritative in the world, and has been adopted by several important institutions in Africa as well as the GBIF (Global Biodiversity Information Facility).

As an interim measure after Mark Williams' passing away, Dave Edge and Thomas Desloges are producing any genus revisions for ATB while Jeremy Dobson maintains the taxonomic list. The eventual goal is to convert ATB to a database platform, although this is a huge undertaking and will require a considerable amount of time and effort from a team of volunteers.



METAMORPHOSIS

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ABN

Last, but not least, *African Butterfly News* has been a constant companion of Jeremy Dobson for the last eight years. He had believed, for several years prior to his Chairmanship appointment in 2016, that a regular newsletter was essential for a Society of our nature and volunteered to commence with one immediately following his inauguration. A bimonthly offering seemed like the most practical option, and the first edition of ABN (a modest 11 pages) was circulated in September 2016. 48 editions later, you have been provided with 3 742 pages of African

Jeremy Dobson
jchdobson@gmail.com

Chairman – LepSoc Africa

31st December 2024

HONORARY LIFE AND SPONSOR MEMBERS OF LEPSOC AFRICA

Below we list our honorary life members, who have been honoured by the Society for their outstanding contributions to the study and conservation of Lepidoptera.

HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS

Dr. Jonathan B. Ball
Dr. Bennie Coetzer
Stephen C. Collins
Colin E. Congdon
Dr. David A. Edge
Alan Heath
Graham A. Henning

Dr. Stephen G. Henning
Ernest L. Pringle
Clive Quickelberge
Hermann S. Staude
Stephen E. Woodhall
Richard Stephen

SPONSOR MEMBERS

The members below, apart from their significant contributions to the Society as ordinary members, have chosen to be Sponsor Members for 2023, and have through their generosity provided significant financial support, which is much appreciated by the Society. Any member of the Society can volunteer to become a sponsor member on an annual basis by making a contribution (for 2024) of R1 480 (Africa) or R 1 650 (International). Since the Society needs all the financial support it can get to provide services to members, and to fund our projects, more persons are encouraged to become Sponsor Members in the future.

Svenja Ahlborn
Ian Bampton
Dr. Julian Bayliss
Ben Breedlove
Anthony Cambitzis
Kevin Cockburn
Jeremy C.H. Dobson
Dr. Douwe de Boer
Dr. Stewart Fisher
Stephen Georgiadis
Tim Gilbert
Dr. Richard C. Greene
Dr. Johan Greyling
David Horne
Dr. Timm Karisch
Jeremy Kuhn

Dietmar Ley
Dr. Michel Libert
Dr. Duncan MacFadyen
Dr. Dino Martins
Dr. Wolfram Mey
Dr. Michael Ochse
Jean-Paul Peroni
Dr. Lorenzo Pizzetti
Michael Roberts
Hanna Roland
Peter Sharland
Harald Sulak-Wildenauer
Reinier Terblanche
Peter Ward
Ian Waters
Dr. Christian Widmann

DONATIONS TO THE SOCIETY WILL ASSIST BUTTERFLY RESEARCH & CONSERVATION

Donations through our website www.lepsocafrika.org.za can be made by clicking the “donate” button, or by making an electronic funds transfer to LepSoc Africa’s bank account, which is given below:

Nedbank account no. 1095032617

Your donation will be allocated to current research and conservation projects, coded as:

COREL – Custodians of Rare and Endangered Lepidoptera
CRG – Caterpillar Rearing Group
APP – *Aloeides* phylogeny project; TPP – *Thestor* phylogeny project
ABC – African Butterfly Centre

METAMORPHOSIS PEER REVIEWERS

Below we list our peer reviewers for Volume 35, who have given of their expertise and time to assist our authors to produce articles of high quality.

Peer reviewers

Principal affiliation

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Andrew Morton | Lepidopterists' Society of Africa |
| Dr. Boyan Zlatkov | Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences |
| Dr. Dave Edge | Lepidopterists' Society of Africa |
| Dr. David Agassiz | Natural History Museum, London |
| Dr. Fanie Rautenbach | Lepidopterists' Society of Africa |
| Graham A. Henning | Lepidopterists' Society of Africa |
| Dr. Hubert Thöny | Reserva Serra Bonita, Brazil |
| Dr. Ralf Fiebig | Rosslieben-Wiehe, Germany |
| Prof. Rauri Bowie | University of California, Berkeley, USA |
| Prof. Richard Cowling | African Centre for Coastal Paleoscience, Department of Botany, Nelson Mandela University & Department of Conservation Ecology and Entomology, Stellenbosch University |
| Prof. Roman V. Yakovlev | Altai State University, Russia |
| Dr. Silvia Mecenero | Lepidopterists' Society of Africa |
| Dr. Simon van Noort | Iziko South African Museum, Cape Town, South Africa |
| Steve Collins | African Butterfly Research Institute, Kenya |
| Dr. Szabolcs Sáfíán | Hungarian Natural History Museum, Department of Zoology |
| Dr. Thomas Baron | Istanbul, Turkey |
| Prof. Virginijus Sruoga | Life Science Centre, Vilnius University, Lithuania |
| Dr. Willy De Prins | Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences |
| Dr. Wolfgang Speidel | Zoologische Staatssammlung München, Germany (retired) |
| Dr. Wolfram Mey | Museum für Naturkunde, Berlin, Germany |
| Dr. Zofia (Ada) Kaliszewska | Center for Environmental Forensic Science, Department of Biology, University of Washington |