

FIVE GREAT NEOTROPICAL ORNITHOLOGISTS: AN APPRECIATION OF EUGENE EISENMANN, MARIA KOEPCKE, CLAËS OLROG, RODULFO PHILIPPI, AND HELMUT SICK

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Resumen. Para marcar la ocasión de varios eventos relacionados con el desarrollo de la Sociedad de Ornitología Neotropical, especialmente la publicación del sexto volumen de su revista internacional, *Ornitología Neotropical*, y la celebración del V Congreso de Ornitología Neotropical, se presentan en este artículo recuerdos personales y una apreciación de la obra de cinco destacados ornitológos neotropicales: Eugene Eisenmann (1906–1981), Maria Koepcke (1924–1971), Claës Olrog (1912–1985), Rodulfo Philippi (1905–1969), y Helmut Sick (1910–1991). Cada uno de estos ornitológos, tenía cualidades humanas semejantes, especialmente una calurosa generosidad, y poseía una visión amplia de varios aspectos de la ornitología neotropical, incluyendo sus elementos museológicos y de terreno. No debemos olvidarlos o la influencia que han tenido sobre nuestra ciencia.

Abstract. In order to celebrate the occasion of various events related to the development of the Neotropical Ornithological Society, especially the publication of the sixth volume of its international journal, *Ornitología Neotropical*, and the celebration of the Fifth Neotropical Ornithological Congress, personal reminiscences and an appreciation of the work of five great Neotropical ornithologists are presented: Eugene Eisenmann (1906–1981), Maria Koepcke (1924–1971), Claës Olrog (1912–1985), Rodulfo Philippi (1905–1969), and Helmut Sick (1910–1991). Each of these personalities possessed similar human qualities, especially a warm generosity, and had a broad vision of various aspects of Neotropical ornithology, including its museum and field components. We should not forget them or the influence that they have had on our science. Accepted 1 August 1995.

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The year 1995 is important in the history of Neotropical ornithology. It is the eighth anniversary of the founding of the Neotropical Ornithological Society, an extremely significant event in the growth of Neotropical ornithology. It is also the sixth anniversary of the publication of *Ornitología Neotropical*, the widely respected International Journal of Neotropical Ornithology. It is finally the year of the Fifth Neotropical Congress of Ornithology (Asunción, Paraguay), which follows earlier meetings since the first one in Buenos Aires (Argentina, 1979), and the next three in Jalapa (Mexico, 1983), Cali (Colombia, 1987), and Quito (Ecuador, 1991). For the first time ever, Neotropical ornithologists, be they residents of Latin America or elsewhere, have a double forum for their ideas in the form of a first class journal and of a very important international congress convening every four years. These features are here to stay. It is unlikely that Frank M. Chapman or Carl E. Hellmayr, the fathers of modern Neotropical ornithology,

would have predicted such momentous developments.

In order to mark these events, and in an historical spirit, I believe that it is appropriate to publish in this journal an appreciation of five great Neotropical ornithologists whose passing has been mourned, and whose memory should be honored by all living Neotropical ornithologists: Eugene Eisenmann, Maria Koepcke, Claës Olrog, Rodulfo Philippi, and Helmut Sick. The profound mark they left on Neotropical ornithology must be remembered by those who had the privilege of knowing them in person, and be brought to the attention of a younger generation of Neotropical ornithologists, who may only be acquainted with them by name and by the record of their publications.

Clearly, other important Neotropical ornithologists of an earlier generation could be so remembered as well. They include, among others, Francisco Behn, James Bond, François Haverschmidt, A.W. Johnson, Rodolphe Meyer

de Schauensee, Antonio Olivares, William H. Phelps, William H. Phelps, Jr., Alexander Wetmore, and John T. Zimmer. In this tribute I focus on the five individuals listed above, in part because I knew them better than some of the other important figures, and in part because they have marked my own career and influenced my way of thinking and working on Neotropical ornithology.

Because obituaries of Eisenmann, Koepcke, Olrog, Philippi, and Sick have already been published, I will limit my remarks to personal reminiscences and appreciations of the ornithological accomplishments of these five persons, presented below in alphabetical order. Eisenmann's contributions covered especially Panamá and Middle America, the northern Neotropics, but his influence on Neotropical ornithology in general has been vast. Koepcke's work was centered on Perú, and her realm included the dry Pacific seaboard of that country, its high Andean reaches, as well as its eastern jungles. But Koepcke's sphere of influence extended beyond Perú to the western and central Neotropics. Olrog's field and museum work covered especially the southern Neotropics, including that large area of the region that extends south into the temperate zone, the *Cono Sur* of South America, from Bolivia and Paraguay southward all the way to the fringes of the Antarctic, although his main area was Argentina. Philippi's work was largely confined to Chile, so that his work and Olrog's are quite complementary. And Sick's influence is felt most in the center of the great Neotropical region, the Brazilian Amazon and neighboring areas. Thus, between them these five ornithologists have left the broadest possible geographical imprint on Neotropical ornithology. Even more importantly, they have left a legacy of work and thought that has changed the way we perceive Neotropical ornithology: their pioneering museum and field investigations have paved the way for more diverse approaches.

Eugene Eisenmann (1906–1981), (Fig. 1) For thoughtful memorial pieces about Eugene Eisenmann, I refer the reader to Bull & Amadon (1983; includes a selected bibliography of his writings) and Howell (1985). Alone of the five ornithologists whom I discuss here, Eisenmann

did not live permanently in the Neotropics. But he was born in Panamá, for years made yearly and lengthy visits there, and was totally bilingual, although his Caribbean Spanish had a trace of a New York accent in it. Eisenmann was not a trained biologist, but a lawyer, who, after receiving his degree at Harvard Law School, practiced for many years in New York City before retiring from this profession in 1956. From 1957 until his death in 1981 he devoted himself full time to his passion, Neotropical ornithology, working as a Research Associate at the American Museum of Natural History. Perhaps it was his training in law and his love of language that inspired his interest in both vernacular and scientific nomenclature (Eisenmann & Poor 1946, Eisenmann *et al.* 1971). Similarly, his sharp legal mind was put to excellent use in matters of conservation. Eisenmann was especially active in the (former) Pan-American section of the I.C.B.P. (International Council for Bird Preservation). Eisenmann was an excellent "chairman" and "mediator" at meetings and on the AOU Checklist Committee, where his fairness would prevail over others more given to impetuous argumentation.

Gene Eisenmann, as he was known to all, died in New York City on 16 October 1981. On that day I was studying birds in the llanos of Venezuela, one of the most extraordinary of all South American biomes. On my return to New York City, eager to share some of my observations with Gene, I was greeted instead with the news that he had died. I was unable to work for days after this stunning blow. Life without Gene as a friend, colleague, sounding board, and meal partner at the American Museum would not be the same, I reflected, and it has not.

My first contact with Gene goes back to the early sixties, when, after a field trip to the Río Conchos in Mexico's State of Chihuahua, I wished to confirm the identification of a few tricky specimens I had collected. We met in person in the mid-sixties, when I spent long periods of time studying the AMNH collections during my PhD thesis research. As a Frank M. Chapman Postdoctoral Fellow in 1967–68, I virtually lived at the AMNH and saw Gene daily. Our association became even stronger after I became a staff member at AMNH in 1974. Sadly, I never had the opportunity of sharing

time in the field with Gene, but this was amply made up by the innumerable hours we spent at the AMNH or having dinner together at some nearby restaurant.

Gene was what I would call a messy worker. His desk at the AMNH was covered by several crumbling skyscrapers made up of letters, manuscripts, notes, and reprints, amidst which an antique manual typewriter occupied a central position. Remarkably adept at typing — and at everything else — with his only one functional hand, Gene would produce streams of letters to correspondents all over the Neotropics, spending huge amounts of time to answer all sorts of inquiries. Extraordinary generosity with his knowledge and his time was one of Gene's most remarkable traits. Even though his list of publications is respectable, including short distributional and taxonomic papers (e.g., Eisenmann 1957, 1962, 1963, 1965, 1971, Eisenmann & Howell 1962) and seminal works such as his Annotated List of Birds of Barro Colorado Island, Panama Canal Zone (Eisenmann 1952; revised later: Willis & Eisenmann 1979) and The Species of Middle American Birds (Eisenmann 1955), his main contribution, I feel, remains in the unseen and unsung area of "help to other Neotropical ornithologists" and "help to Neotropical ornithology" (see also Howell 1985: 3). For example Ridgely's (1976) book on the birds of Panamá would certainly be different if Gene Eisenmann had not contributed to it in many ways. I was one of the many other lucky recipients of Gene's generosity with his time and his thoughts, and I try hard not to forget how much I owe him. It is much harder to try and emulate this unique spirit. A fitting memorial volume, *Neotropical Ornithology* (Buckley *et al.* 1985) was published by the AOU to commemorate Gene's accomplishments. It is "dedicated to the memory of Eugene Eisenmann in recognition of his contributions to neotropical ornithology."

At AMNH in the early sixties, Gene's desk would often be even more disorganized than usual, if that was possible. The reason was that he was working on the manuscript of Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee's book *The Species of Birds of South America and Their Distribution* (Meyer de Schauensee 1966). Few persons realize that this book would not have been as important as



FIG. 1. Eugene Eisenmann (1906–1981). Photograph courtesy AMNH archives.

it was, and still is, had it not been for Eisenmann's incredible and unselfish work on the manuscript. How many times did I (and others) tell Gene that he should be co-author, and how many times did he simply brush aside such a possibility with the remark, "But the idea for the book wasn't mine." I am only sorry that Rudy de Schauensee did not "force" Gene to be his co-author.

Always smiling and cracking jokes, Gene was also always ready to read your manuscripts critically. Someone once remarked that the famous British ornithologist Reginald Moreau was "a great devourer of manuscripts in progress." The same could be said of Eugene Eisenmann. A further parallel in the careers of these two men exists in the fact that whereas Moreau was a very respected editor of *The Ibis* for several years, Eisenmann just as skillfully edited *The Auk* for two years (1958–1959).

Gene always found time to interrupt whatever he was doing to listen to your ideas and

make constructive suggestions. And he always found time to interrupt whatever you were doing to describe with buoyant enthusiasm an exciting specimen he had just received for identification, or to ask your opinion about so-and-so's latest paper on the taxonomy of some Neotropical family or genus. Arguments pro and con a given classification scheme were then discussed avidly, often pursued later over a meal. Characteristically, Gene would present both sides of an argument in an equally favorable light and would draw you skillfully into taking a position, which he would then rebut. Your own thoughts on a given matter had better be crystal clear, otherwise Gene's sharp mind would quickly detect the flaws in your logic and expose them. Clearly, his training as a lawyer had prepared him to deal with biological ideas in a different, but provocative way. And when we would run short of ornithological arguments, conversation would turn to the arts, the theater, the cinema, the law, or politics.

I miss Gene very much. Often, after having finished a manuscript on some aspect of Neotropical ornithology, I read it once more, wondering: What would have Gene thought about it? What suggestions would he have made to improve it? What errors would he have detected, and gently pointed out to me, before they found their way into print. In a letter dated 6 January 1985 that I received from Helmut Sick, as part of an extended correspondence Helmut and I had about various taxonomic matters, Helmut exclaimed: "Hierbei sehe ich wieder, wie mir Gene Eisenmann fehlt, der mich über 30 Jahre lang in solchen Dingen [taxonomic matters] beriet. Die Klarheit seiner Auffassung war unübertrefflich." He too, missed Gene Eisenmann, and his last sentence says it all: "The clarity of his thinking was unsurpassed."

Maria Koepcke (1924–1971), (Fig. 2)

Niethammer (1974) wrote a thoughtful and detailed obituary of Maria Koepcke, including a publication list. This piece was later reprinted (Niethammer 1980) in a welcome Spanish translation by Manuel Plenge. Several other obituaries and notices have appeared, including Rea & Kostritsky (1973), Sarmiento (1973), and Gebhardt (1974: 46–47). Stephens & Taylor's (1983) *Ornithological Gazetteer of Peru* also contains a



FIG. 2. Maria Koepcke (1924–1971). Photograph courtesy John P. O'Neill.

list of publications by M. Koepcke. Maria von Mikulicz-Radecki, German-born and educated (Ph.D. 1949 in Kiel), moved to Perú in 1949 where she married Hans-Wilhelm Koepcke in 1950, and resided there until her accidental death on 24 December 1971. On that Christmas eve, Maria and her 17-year old daughter Julianne were flying from Lima to Pucallpa, on their way to Panguana, their field station on the Río Lullapichis, a tributary of the Rio Pachitea in Perú's Amazon basin, where Hans-Wilhelm was waiting for them. The plane crashed in the Andean foothills, and the only survivor of the 90 plus persons on board the aircraft was Julianne, who managed to crawl to safety, reappearing only about ten days later in an Indian settlement, able to make it thanks to her jungle experience. In 1974, at the International Ornithological Congress in Canberra, Australia, which Hans-Wilhelm and Julianne were attending, she calmly recounted the whole tragedy to me. Julianne later studied biology. She obtained her natural history diploma in 1980 at her mother's Alma Mater, Christian-Albrecht University, in Kiel, and her doctorate in biology in 1987 at the Ludwig-Maxi-



FIG. 3. Six stamps of Peruvian birds painted by Maria Koepcke, lent courtesy of Hans-Wilhelm Koepcke.

milian University in Münich. Her theses dealt with butterflies and bats, respectively, from the Panguana study area. (Panguana, by the way, is the name of *Crypturellus undulatus*, a common bird at the site, H.-W. Koepcke 1987: 6).

I didn't meet Maria Koepcke until 1965, during my first trip to Perú. On that occasion as on later ones, I stayed at Casa Humboldt in Miraflores, Lima's luminous suburb, where Maria and her husband Hans-Wilhelm, also a biologist, had managed to establish a biological station with the help of financial grants from their native Germany. Foreign scientists would lodge there for a modest fee, and be provided with a room in which to dump their field gear, a comfortable bed to sleep in, and innumerable opportunities to talk about tropical biology with the two Koepckes. For years, Casa Humboldt was the focal point for ornithologists doing field work in Perú. There they both started and ended their trips, met fellow workers, and gossiped with the Koepckes.

Ah, the intensity of these meetings at Casa Humboldt, over a cup of hot tea and munching German pastries! These were heated, passionate exchanges of observations, new distributional records, or critical reviews of the new species Maria had described, like *Zaratornis stresemanni* (Koepcke 1954a, 1955), *Asthenes cactorum* (Koepcke 1959), or *Synallaxis zimmeri* (Koepcke 1957). Our conversations were uttered in a quick-fire mixture of German and Spanish, plus the Latin names of birds and other creatures. As the evening went on, Maria's normally pale cheeks would become rosy and her eyes aglow with excitement. After an entire evening of such discussions, I staggered to bed, my head spinning with ideas, and crawled under the dank sheets in the cool and moist atmosphere of Lima's peculiar climate, exhausted but eager to go in the field as soon as possible. As Niethammer (1974: 92) perceptively put it, Maria Koepcke had a "burning interest in the animal world and pleasure in discussions of natural history problems."

The next morning, while Hans-Wilhelm would remain at Casa Humboldt to write, Maria and I would hop into a *colectivo* for the several blocks long ride along Avenida Arequipa, then walk to the "Javier Prado" Museum on Avenida Arenales. There we would examine her meticulously prepared specimens and detailed labels.

What a pity that her schedule during my visits to Perú never permitted us to go in the field together. She and I shared a profound interest in several bird groups, especially the Emberizidae (Koepcke 1963) and the Furnariidae, that quintessentially Neotropical family. Her paper on some furnariiid species of the western Peruvian deserts is a little gem (Koepcke 1965).

I wish that we could have watched and sketched some of these birds together. I would have loved to see her where she truly belonged, outdoors observing birds, collecting specimens, writing notes, and making those exquisite drawings of hers (Fig. 3). I often look with great pleasure at the art work with which she illustrated her *Las Aves del Departamento de Lima* (Koepcke 1964; later translated into English: *The birds of the Department of Lima, Peru*, Koepcke 1970), and the serial publication she coauthored with her husband, *Las Aves Silvestres de Importancia Económica del Perú* (Koepcke & Koepcke 1963–1971).

I used one of her papers so much that I had it bound before it fell apart. This is her marvelous but long-titled piece, *Corte Ecológico Transversal en los Andes del Perú Central con Especial Consideración de las Aves. Parte I: Costa, Vertientes Occidentales y Región Altoandina* (Koepcke 1954b). Part II was to have been the eastern transect, which she planned to complete only after she and her husband had spent more time in eastern Perú and gained field experience equivalent to the vast amount of data they had obtained west of the Andes (Koepcke 1958, 1961; Koepcke & Koepcke 1953). One paper dealing with adaptations in nest shape of tropical lowland birds, based on her work in Amazonian Perú, appeared after her death (Koepcke 1972). Hans-Wilhelm described the history of their Panguana study site in eastern Perú (H.-W. Koepcke 1987).

Fate decided otherwise about Part II. But even without the eastern transect, and other publications, Maria Koepcke's legacy is a solid one. Workers at the "Javier Prado" Museum in Lima in particular, Peruvian ornithologists in general, and all other Neotropical ornithologists as well, are in her debt, whether they ever met her or not. Maria Koepcke would be 71 years old in 1995, the grand old lady of Neotropical ornithology.



FIG. 4. Claës Christian Olrog (1912–1985). Photograph courtesy Gunilla B. de Olrog.

Claës Christian Olrog (1912–1985), (Fig. 4) The reader is referred to Manuel Nores's (1986) warm and affectionate obituary in *El Hornero*, unfortunately all too brief. A list of Olrog's publications can be found in Paynter's (1985) *Ornithological Gazetteer of Argentina*. Claës Olrog died at 18:30 on Friday, 29 November 1985, according to a note that his widow, Gunilla de Olrog, sent me some time later. On that day, I was doing field work on Navarino Island in the Tierra del Fuego Archipelago of southern Chile, an area that Olrog had visited many years earlier. The papers he had written to describe the birds he had seen and collected on those trips (Olrog 1948, 1950), my daily *vade-mecum* in the field, became so dog-eared that I had them rebound before they became unusable.

I met Olrog in person in 1965, although in a sense I had already "met" him in 1960, when a birding friend of mine in Switzerland had showed me the "funny little field guide to Argentine birds" (Olrog 1959) that his father had brought him back from a trip to that country.

Little did I know then that I would not only use this book in the field myself, but that I would develop a long-lasting friendship with its author!

Claës Olrog was born and educated in Sweden at Uppsala and Stockholm. He was a student of the well-known biogeographer Einar Lönnberg, and he obtained his doctorate in 1945. Olrog moved to Argentina in 1948, and eventually became almost more Argentine than the Argentines themselves. Unlike Koepcke, whose Spanish was German-accented, Olrog's was pure Argentine, with all the inflections that are peculiar to that country's modification of Castilian. Besides our meetings on his home turf in Argentina, we saw each other at professional gatherings, especially at International Ornithological Congresses, where we always got together for some good times, reminiscing about field work in Argentina and elsewhere in the *Cono Sur*. I last saw Claës Olrog at the second Congress of Neotropical Ornithology in Jalapa in 1983, where we exchanged Argentine jokes about Mafalda for old times' sake, and for the last time. (Readers who have spent some time in Argentina will know about Mafalda. Others will have to do some research.)

Like Eugene Eisenmann and Maria Koepcke, Claës Olrog was a generous man. He spent a lot of time helping me, a mere greenhorn in Neotropical ornithology in the sixties, patiently explaining all sorts of things pertaining to the distribution and systematics of Neotropical birds. Thanks to him the Instituto Miguel Lillo let me have not only a jeep but also a driver who was a keen botanist, and so I was able to travel far and wide in the Tucumán area in 1965, including Olrog's beloved Aconquija mountain (Olrog 1949), learning about birds and plants. On return trips to Tucumán, Olrog and I would socialize at his house, or else, sometimes with other distinguished guests, have a grand time at the house of Abraham Willink, who was curator of entomology at the Miguel Lillo. We talked about birds and beetles, of course, but also about Peronism and other more urgent matters, all in Spanish. But curiously, my correspondence with Olrog was entirely in English, and our conversations outside Argentina were always in English.

Olrog started banding birds in Argentina in 1961, and published several papers describing this work and listing returns (e.g., Olrog 1968a,

1973a, 1974, 1975). He must have been one of the pioneers of bird banding in South America. Olrog's curatorial work at the Miguel Lillo Institute allowed the broadest possible use and a substantial increase in that very important collection. Olrog also worked indefatigably on behalf of nature preservation in Argentina.

Olrog had an unequalled knowledge of avian field identification and geographical distribution in South America's *Cono Sur*, gained during many field trips throughout the region and a thorough study of available specimens. On the basis of this rich experience, he wrote and illustrated several pioneering field guides to Argentine and South American birds (Olrog 1959, 1968b, 1984, Olrog & Pescetti 1991, the last published posthumously). Drawing, however, was not his forte, and his art work in these books is inferior to that of Maria Koepcke's in her publications. Olrog's main strength, as I see it, was in summarizing the distribution of Argentine birds, in monographs that were published at the Miguel Lillo in 1963 and 1979 (Olrog 1963, 1979), and that have not been surpassed since. His 1979 list was inscribed to me "Con los mejores deseos y un cordial saludo," and his 1984 field guide to Argentine birds inscribed "Para François Vuilleumier, con un cordial saludo del amigo/autor. Claës Chr. Olrog. Noviembre 1984." One year later he was dead. One of my main regrets concerning Claës Olrog, and this is a very selfish one, is that we could not find time to go in the field together. Many ornithologists may not realize that Olrog was not only a fine ornithologist, but an excellent mammalogist as well, and that he published papers on Argentine mammals (for example Olrog 1958, 1973b), and wrote and illustrated a field guide to Argentine mammals (Olrog & Lucero 1981). Another one, *Los Mamíferos de Sudamérica Austral*, should be published in the future by F.V.S.A. (Fundación Vida Silvestre Argentina). On 25 March 1994 "the Plaza de los Pájaros Claës Christian Olrog" was inaugurated in the city of Mar del Plata with a commemorative plaque (Adolfo García Ruiz, *La Nación*, 24 March 1994, p. 9).

Rodulfo A. Philippi B. (1905–1969), (Fig. 5) Drouilly (1969) published a fine obituary and the list of publications of Rodulfo A. Philippi Bañados [see also list of publications in Paynter's

(1988) *Ornithological Gazetteer of Chile*. Philippi was the great-grandson of the famous naturalist R.A. Philippi, who ushered scientific ornithology into Chile. Hellmayr (1932: 9) wrote: "with the arrival of Ludwig Landbeck (1852) and R.A. Philippi (1853) Chilean ornithology entered into another phase, which we may aptly call the scientific period." The great-grandson himself wrote a piece describing the work of his famous ancestor (Philippi 1963). R.A. Philippi Bañados was a member of the great trio of Chilean ornithologists that included A.W. Johnson and J.D. Goodall, the three coauthors of *Las Aves de Chile, su Conocimiento y sus Costumbres* (Goodall et al. 1946, 1951, Suplemento 1957, Suplemento II 1964). As A.W. Johnson (1965: 11) wrote: "In the 1920's I was joined by J. D. Goodall and in 1935, after leaving the nitrate industry and settling in the austral zone, by Dr. R. A. Philippi. Several years of joint field work followed with pooling of knowledge, energies and resources until by 1946 we were finally ready to publish the first volume of 'Las Aves de Chile.' Five years later, after having traveled ever more widely within Chilean borders in search of the necessary additional information, the second volume was completed." A photo of the trio appears in Johnson (1965: 379, Philippi is in the center, wearing glasses) and another in Johnson (1967: 153, showing Johnson and Philippi, at right).

R. A. Philippi was born in Santiago, Chile, on 25 May 1905. He died in Santiago on 31 July 1969. He was a physician (pediatrician) by profession, an ornithologist by avocation. For many years, from 1938 to 1966, he was associated with the Museo Nacional de Historia Natural in Santiago, where he was curator of birds. In 1965, in the middle of a long period of field work in Chile, I spent some time at the Museo Nacional, measuring bird skins there under Philippi's watchful eye. After about a week of work in the Museum, I became frustrated by the small number of birds deposited there, and asked Philippi about the specimens that he had collected, and that were cited in *Las Aves de Chile*. Philippi then whispered: "Come to my house, and I'll show you the skins you want." That same evening, I packed my bags, left the small hotel where I had spent the last few days, and drove to Philippi's house, where I was given a small room.

Day after day, during the next week or two, Philippi and I would examine the birds he had collected all over Chile. Housed in shoe boxes piled on top of furniture, the skins were guarded in his home rather than at the Museum, where he feared for their fate. Much later, the greater part of the Philippi Collection (about 1500 specimens) was acquired by the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard University, where it is still lodged (R.A. Paynter, Jr., pers. comm.).

. Philippi later told me that he had checked me out while working at the Museo Nacional. Having ascertained that I was a *bona fide* student of Neotropical birds, he then decided, not only to reveal the whereabouts of his collection, but also to invite me to stay at his house, where I could study the birds. I will always cherish the memory of the days spent in Philippi's home, being treated by him, his wife, and his daughters as if I were a member of their warm family. My Spanish improved greatly in those two weeks! Studying Philippi's collection was not always easy, however. "Tell me what species you need," he'd say, "and I'll get the box for you." Which he did, of course, but that did not allow me to browse as I would have wished.

Philippi helped arrange field trips to the Andes near Santiago, including one with A. W. Johnson, who proudly showed me *Phegornis mitchellii*, one of the rare denizens of the high valleys. But Philippi himself did not join us in the field, claiming that his heart was too weak to sustain exertion at high elevations. Johnson scoffed at that notion, but didn't push Philippi. The two men could not have been more different. Whereas Johnson, a Quaker, was tall, thin, and ramrod straight, and never complained of any physical ailments, Philippi, short and a bit on the plump side, would use his heart condition as an excuse for no longer going into the field. "Mi corazón..." he would simply say. During their trips together in years past, Johnson had assiduously searched for nests and amassed a splendid egg collection, while Philippi collected bird skins.

Philippi had an outstanding knowledge of Chilean birds, having travelled from north to south in that long and narrow country. Besides his collaboration as taxonomist and biogeographer on the book *Las Aves de Chile*, he published a series of papers on the distribution



FIG. 5. Rodulfo A. Philippi B. (1905–1969). Photograph from Drouilly (1969).

of Chilean birds, some authored alone (e.g., Philippi 1936, 1937, 1939, 1942), and others with Johnson, Goodall, and Behn (e.g., Philippi *et al.* 1944, 1954a, 1954b). His most important work, other than his coauthorship of *Las Aves de Chile*, is without a doubt his "Catálogo de las aves chilenas con su distribución geográfica", published in 1964 as volume eleven of *Investigaciones Zoológicas Chilenas*. He generously gave me a copy with the inscription "Para François Vuilleumier, afectuosamente." Although now somewhat outdated, this check-list has not been superseded.

Philippi's main contribution to Chilean ornithology, which led to his coauthorship of *Las Aves de Chile* and authorship of the "Catálogo.", consists of his detailed documentation of the distribution of Chilean birds by means of well prepared and labeled specimens. This effort is largely responsible for the recent *Field Guide to Birds of Chile* by Araya *et al.* (1986, 1993), whose distributional information makes use of, but does not improve upon, Philippi's "Catálogo."

Somewhat shy and retired, Philippi was a warm person who generously shared his extensive knowledge with the neophyte I was back in the sixties. I owe to him much of what I know about the distribution and geographical variation of Chilean birds. I feel lucky to have visited Chile when he was still alive.

Helmut Sick (1910–1991), (Fig. 6)

Haffer & König (1991, 1992) published detailed and perceptive obituaries of Helmut Sick, in which they described the trajectory of his career and his life. The reader is referred to these fine pieces for many details. A list of Sick's publications can be found in Paynter & Traylor's (1991) *Ornithological Gazetteer of Brazil*. Sick was German-born and educated, and received his doctorate under the great ornithologist Erwin Stresemann. In 1939 Sick went to Brazil to take part in an ornithological expedition there. The Second World War started shortly after the expedition had arrived in Brazil. Sick remained. Between 1942 and 1945 Sick, being a German citizen, was interned as a political prisoner in Brazil. Later, however, he became a Brazilian citizen and remained faithful to his adopted country, although he returned to Germany many times to keep up with friends and colleagues in his native land. Sick was curator of birds at the Museu Nacional in Rio de Janeiro, worked at the Brazilian Academy of Sciences, and taught at the Federal University in Rio de Janeiro. One of Sick's great non-ornithological pleasures was to have been elected an Honorary Citizen of Rio de Janeiro. But he also once complained to me that even though he had lived in Brazil for decades, was a Brazilian citizen, spoke Portuguese and published in that language, many Brazilians still kept calling him "el Aleman."

I met Helmut Sick in Rio de Janeiro in 1965, at the beginning of a six-month long field trip in South America. My arrival in Rio was only days away from that city's annual madness, Carnival! Foolishly I had made no hotel reservation and found myself stranded with no place to stay. Helmut took pity and he and his wife kindly invited me to stay at their wonderful apartment, an eagle's nest perched high on a hilltop at 210 Rua das Laranjeiras. The Sicks apologized profusely for what they called their modest accom-

modation. I was in seventh heaven. Ground doves displayed right on their balcony. At night, after dinner, sitting under the tropical stars, we would sip some brandy while listening to whistling-ducks flying over the city and we would passionately argue about the origins of the avifaunas of South America's open spaces, such as the cerrado (Sick 1965a), or about the diversification of the Rhinocryptidae (Sick 1960), problems that fascinated us both. He inscribed his rhinocryptid paper "Herrn F. Vuilleumier, In Erinnerung aus Rio de Janeiro. 3.II.65." What a souvenir! And after the Sicks had retired for the night, I read *Tucani*, the fascinating book describing his experiences in central Brazil (Sick 1961), until the early hours of the morning.

Helmut and I immediately took to each other, and that trip saw the beginning of a friendship that continued through correspondence, and an occasional visit, either at the AMNH in New York, where he came from time to time, or in Brazil, where I went all too rarely. Although he spoke English quite fluently, Helmut made it clear that he much preferred to talk in German. "You are Swiss," he said, "and so we'll speak German when we are together." And so we did. Our correspondence, however, was bilingual, he writing in German and I in English. I last saw Helmut in Bonn in 1988 at the International Centennial Meeting of the Deutsche Ornithologen-Gesellschaft. I remember especially a youthful, exuberant Helmut Sick in a cozy Greek restaurant, eagerly discussing some of the discoveries of new species in the Neotropics (including his own *Cinclodes pabsti*, Sick 1969a, 1973) over stuffed grape leaves and retsinato.

Like Eisenmann, Koepcke, Olrog, and Philippi, Sick was a generous person. Instead of treating me like the young upstart that I was back in 1965, he considered me a real Neotropical ornithologist, even though my experience of that region's birds was then minimal, whereas his was encyclopedic. In early March 1968 I was extremely fortunate to spend several days in the field with Helmut and his wife. I was keen to study the endemic *Oreophylax* (or *Schizoeaca*) *moreirae*, which is found only on some mountaintops of southeastern Brazil. We went to the Itatiaia National Park, saw and heard the small furnariid, but failed to find its nest that year.

Helmut did find it a year later (Sick 1970a). For me the most vivid memory of that trip was that of the long, quiet hours spent with Helmut in the forests of that magnificent mountain. Helmut's extraordinary ear would pick out calls of the shy denizens of the undergrowth or of the treetops, one after another. He would then explain what each of these sounds meant, what the invisible birds were doing, and many other things.

Helmut thrived on Neotropical ornithology. His letters to me contain much information about birds that he had seen or collected. His tone was always full of wonder, and fresh with ideas and questions. His congratulations on my having published this or that paper were always

modulated by penetrating questions. For example, on 11 March 1979, after reading my Venezuelan páramo paper (Vuilleumier & Ewert 1978) he wrote: "Ich habe Schwierigkeiten, Ihre Tab. 6 (Páramos 1978: 86) zu verstehen. Warum zögern Sie, für *Cinclus*, *Spinus* und *Zonotrichia* Nordamerika als origin anzugeben? Wohl deswegen, weil Sie von bestimmten Arten (*C. leucocephalus* etc.) sprechen?" And then Helmut added, so characteristically: "Sie sehen, man muß mit wahnsinnig dummen Lesern rechnen." (I have difficulties understanding your Tab. 6. Why do you hesitate to give a North American origin for *Cinclus*, *Spinus*, and *Zonotrichia*? . . . You see, one must reckon with demented and stupid readers.)



FIG. 6. Helmut Sick (1910–1991). Photograph courtesy Rob Bierregaard.

Helmut's kindness shows through in other letters. On 16 August 1975, after I had failed to keep up our correspondence for a while, he wrote: "Es ist wirklich an der Zeit, daß wir mal wieder Verbindung aufnehmen. Schon länger habe ich kein direktes Lebenszeichen mehr von Ihnen." (It is really about time that we connect once again. I have not had a direct sign of life from you for a long time now.) In 1980, while he was working on *Anodorhynchus* macaws, he needed measurements of some specimens that we have at AMNH, and time and again asked me to please measure this or that bird, which, of course, I did. After one of his requests, he added "Bitte seien Sie mir nich böse!" (Please don't be angry at me!) And after I had sent him a series of critical measurements he replied "Ihre Angaben über die Aras sind fabelhaft genau, sehr herzlichen Dank für diese zeitraubenden Arbeit." (Your indications about the macaws are fabulously precise, most heartfelt thanks for this time consuming work.)

Sick was especially interested in families like the Cuculidae (Sick 1953), the Apodidae (Sick 1991), the Cracidae (Sick 1965b, 1970b), and the Pipridae (Sick 1967), and in taxonomically difficult genera like *Sporophila* (Sick 1963). Very concerned about the degradation of habitats in Brazil, and its disastrous consequences on the extinction of bird populations and species, Helmut wrote several important papers on their conservation (e.g., Sick 1969b).

Helmut Sick's magnum opus, his *Ornitologia Brasileira* (Sick 1985), had a very long gestation period. In letter after letter, he remarked how slowly publication was progressing, even though the manuscript was complete, how difficult it was to obtain funding, yet that he hoped the work would soon be in press. I am truly delighted that William Belton was able to translate this great book into English (Sick 1993), thus ensuring the widest possible readership for it, something crucial since Helmut often published his papers in Portuguese in Brazilian journals that are not always easy to obtain outside that country. Within Brazil, Helmut was widely known and respected, and many younger Brazilian ornithologists, whom he called his pupils ("meine Schüler"), are in his debt for his inspiration or direct encouragement. So, in fact, are we all.

In conclusion

I am fortunate to have known these five great Neotropical ornithologists. Although they were different from each other in many ways, and interested in different aspects of Neotropical ornithology, I hope that this piece has made it clear to readers that all five had some wonderful qualities in common, including unselfishness, generosity of time and spirit, unflagging enthusiasm, a rare ability to treat a tyro as if he were an expert, and a mind always ready to absorb novel facts and ideas concerning their beloved Neotropical birds. We should all emulate these traits.

On a more general note, I want to emphasize the fact that the five ornithologists I wrote about in this piece worked mostly on taxonomy, distribution, faunistics, and general biology of species. This research was an indispensable step toward more "modern," evolutionary, ecological, or ethological studies. We should not forget that without their labors, we would today know much less about Neotropical birds than we do.

I hope that someone will one day write a history of the development of Neotropical ornithology. Most of the materials for such a treatment are, in fact, already in place, including a number of important obituaries, essays on early collectors and naturalist-travelers and bibliographic lists. Such a history can be approached from several points of view, such as the development of ideas, the evolution of ornithology in each country or region of the Neotropics, or the highlights of the careers of the most important or influential figures. Qualifications for writing such histories would include knowledge of birds, men, and ideas, and a sense of history. Perhaps I will undertake this task myself. After all, I have been involved in Neotropical ornithology for over thirty years, have traveled throughout the region, have met several of the main recent actors in the play, and am interested in the history of science. In the meantime, the present essay will perhaps incite some readers to reflect on the evolution of their field by comparing their own experiences with mine.

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