

Obituary

Volker Mahnert (3 December 1943 – 23 November 2018)

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Photo P. Schwendinger

The late Dr Volker Mahnert, who passed away on the 23 November 2018, was the curator of the department of ichthyology and herpetology of the Natural History Museum of the City of Geneva from 1971 to 1989, and the director of the museum from 1989 to 2005. He became Professor of zoology and animal behaviour at the University of Geneva in 1990. As director, his impact on the museum was significant, notably with the organisation of some of the most successful temporary exhibitions the institution has ever staged (Dinamation, 1991, Volcanica 1993, etc.) and the establishment of a new museological policy for the permanent exhibitions. Under his direction, science outreach was rethought in line with up to date methods in museum communication. Volker Mahnert was a naturalist in a broad sense, with an interest in all aspects of zoology, the kind of a scientific career profile that can nowadays only be accomplished in a museum setting. His research on fish, amphibians and reptiles led him to publish more than 30 articles on these vertebrates, primarily on characiform fishes from

South America and Old World cypriniform fish. His knowledge also covered the field of parasitology, one of the competence centres in the natural history museum of Geneva. V. Mahnert started to deal with this topic during the doctoral thesis about ecto- and endoparasites of small mammals that he defended at the Innsbruck University in 1971.

The primary scientific interest of V. Mahnert was the systematics of pseudoscorpions, a group of relatively small arthropods superficially similar to the scorpions. V. Mahnert published 134 articles about these animals, including 35 papers in the *Revue suisse de Zoologie*, the sister journal of the *Revue de Paléobiologie* (both of which are published by the natural history museum of Geneva). He was editor-in-chief of the *Revue suisse de Zoologie* from 1989 to 2005.

The only field of research conducted in the natural history museum of Geneva that Volker Mahnert did not deal with was Earth Sciences. Dr Halil Sarp, curator of the department of mineralogy and petrography at the Geneva Museum, dedicated the new mineral Mahnertite to him in 1996, indicating in this way how vast the impact of Volker Mahnert was in all aspects of natural sciences.

For detailed biographies, consult Decrouez & Fisch-Muller (2019) and Schwendinger (2019, with a complete lists of publications, of taxa described by V.M. and of taxa dedicated to V.M.), and Fisch-Muller *et al.* (2019, with a focus on his works in ichthyology and herpetology).

References

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- Fisch-Muller S., Covain R. & Weber C. 2019. In Memoriam Dr Volker Mahnert (December 03, 1943 – November 23, 2018). *Cybium* 43(2): 119-120.
- Schwendinger V. 2019. Volker Mahnert, 3 December 1943 – 23 November 2018. *Revue suisse de Zoologie* (March 2019), 126(1): 1-16.