

OBITUARIES

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Tribute to Wulf Dietrich Haacke (1936–2021), a legend of southern African herpetology

Wulf Dietrich Haacke (Figs. 1–5), former Curator of the Department of Herpetology at the Transvaal Museum (later renamed Ditsong National Museum of Natural History) in Pretoria, South Africa, passed away in the same city on 30 June 2021, aged 84. He was a legend in southern African herpetological circles for his extensive collecting expeditions, research papers, long service at the museum, and excellent photographs. Wulf was born in Windhoek, capital of Namibia, on 15 December 1936. His parents were from Germany and in 1929 and 1930 immigrated to the former South West Africa, where they were married. The first 20 years of his life were spent in Namibia, at which time he developed a particular fondness for the country's reptile fauna, as suggested by his many expeditions to that country over the next few decades.

Wulf's first job was in 1955, when he was employed as an assistant to the mineralogist at Tsumeb Mine in Namibia. He moved to South Africa in 1957 where he studied for a B.Sc. degree at the University of Pretoria. A few years later, in February 1960, he took up a post in the Section of Locust Control and Research at the Department of Agriculture in South Africa, but soon afterwards, in June 1961, was appointed as head of the Department of Lower Vertebrates and Invertebrates (later renamed Department of Herpetology) at the Transvaal Museum in Pretoria. He remained in this position for over 40 years, from 1961 until his retirement in 2002. During his time there, the herpetological collection increased from 26,000 to 85,000 specimens.

In addition to curating the herpetology collection at Transvaal Museum, Wulf was appointed as Assistant Director in June 1988, Deputy Director from August 1991 to June 1992, and coordinator of vertebrate studies from December 2000 until his retirement

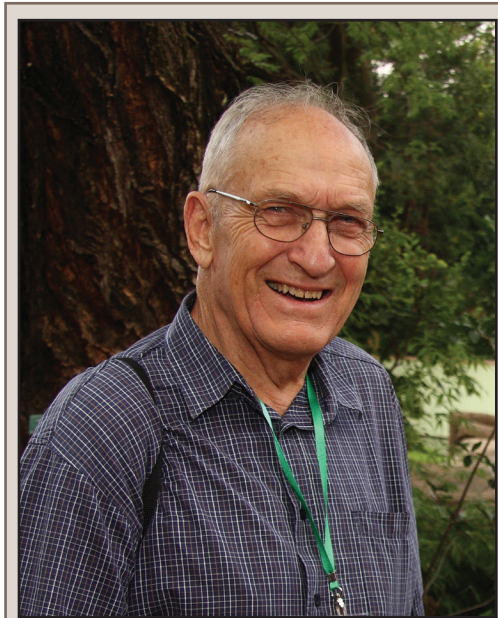


FIG. 1. Wulf D. Haacke at the 11th conference of the Herpetological Association of Africa in Pretoria in 2013.

main study subject", and was "a very dignified and approachable man, who I admired and respected".

Wulf completed his M.Sc. degree in 1968 while at the Museum. His subject was the taxonomy and ecology of the burrowing geckos of southern Africa. Most of his field work was conducted in Namibia and Botswana. Additional material accumulated in the years that followed the finalization of his thesis, and data from these specimens were also analyzed, resulting in a five-part series of journal articles (Haacke 1975, 1976a–d) published in the *Annals of the Transvaal Museum*. These publications established Wulf as an expert on geckos, a group of reptiles he had a particular interest in.

He was one of the longest serving members of the Herpetological Association of Africa. He was its journal editor from 1980 to 1982, and later served on the journal's editorial committee. Wulf was an Honorary Life Member of the Transvaal Herpetological Association (past Chairman and founder member), East Rand Herpetological Association and the Herpetological Association of Africa. He was also the South African representative on the Council of the World Congress of Herpetology from 1994 to 1998.

Wulf published at least 73 herpetology-related texts, including scientific papers and notes, popular articles, obituaries, and editorials (Bates et al. 2022). Although this number is not exceptional considering his many years in herpetology, several of his papers were based on detailed taxonomic or zoogeographical studies, and he worked in an era when multi-authored contributions among

in January 2002. He was appointed Honorary Curator of Herpetology at the Museum in February 2004.

Wulf spoke fondly and sometimes emotionally about his association with Dr Vivian FitzSimons who was the Transvaal Museum's director until 1966. At that time the sight in FitzSimons's one functional eye was fading and he was virtually blind. He still insisted on publishing two editions of his *Field Guide to the Snakes of Southern Africa*, as well as an Afrikaans language version of the book. Wulf assisted by editing the first version of the book, reading each and every amendment to FitzSimons, and co-operated with the artist, Barry Barratt, by supplying him with specimens and assessing his illustrations. Later on, Wulf updated the second edition of the *Field Guide*, and again had to read all the changes to FitzSimons. Wulf considered FitzSimons to be a "great man" who "never lost interest in his

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FIG. 2. Wulf D. Haacke (right) on an expedition to the Skeleton Coast in 1989. His companions on this trip were Jan Grobler (top left), and from the left in the front, Graham Alexander, Hannes Klynhans (middle) and Hans Kubierske (bottom right).

museum scientists were rare. He was fluent in English, German and Afrikaans and presented papers in all three languages at 22 national and international symposia and conferences. Wulf's first publication, in the *IUCN Bulletin*, was in 1963. It was not of a herpetological nature but detailed the discovery of the first live specimen of the Namib Golden Mole (*Eremitalpa granti namibensis*).

The following reptile taxa were described by Wulf as sole author: *Ptenopus kochi* and *Typhlosaurus braini* in 1964, *Afroedura africana tirasensis* and *Rhoptropus bradfieldi diporus* in 1965, *Pachydactylus tsodiloensis* in 1966, *Bitis xeropaga* in 1975, *Chondrodactylus angulifer namibensis* and *Colopus wahlbergii furcifer* [now *Pachydactylus wahlbergii furcifer*] in 1976, *Typhlosaurus lomiae* in 1986, *Afrogecko swartbergensis* [now *Ramigekko swartbergensis*] in 1996, *Typhlacontias rudebecki* in 1997, *Afrogecko plumicaudus* [now *Kolekanos plumicaudatus*] in 2008, and *Telescopus finkeldeyi* in 2013 (Haacke 1964, 1965, 1966, 1975, 1976c, 1986, 1996, 1997, 2008, 2013). He also co-authored the descriptions of *Kaokogecko vanzyl* (now *Pachydactylus vanzyl*), and *Lygosoma miopus*. The latter species was later assigned to the genus *Haackgreerius* in honor of Wulf and Allen Greer. *Chondrodactylus a. namibensis* is now considered a junior synonym of *C. angulifer* (see Heinz et al. 2021), while two of Wulf's other subspecies have been raised to full species: *Rhoptropus diporus* (see Bauer and Lamb 2001) and *Afroedura tirasensis* (see Jacobsen et al. 2014).

Geographically, Wulf's main area of interest was the arid southwest of southern Africa (especially Namibia). Apart from the burrowing gecko studies mentioned above, he also wrote accounts of the herpetofauna of the southern Kalahari (Haacke 1984), and of the Kamanjab and Damaraland regions (Bauer et al. 1993). However, he did not limit himself to this arid area, as attested by his zoogeographical account of the reptiles of Maputaland (Bruton and Haacke 1980), and a systematic and biogeographical analysis of the genus *Typhlacontias* (Haacke 1997) which extends into savannah areas. Wulf worked mainly on lizards and snakes, but did publish a few papers on frogs, including an account of the frogs of southwestern Angola based on herpetological collecting trips he conducted there in 1971 and 1974 (discussed below)—with the description of *Bufo grandisonae* [now *Poyntonophrynus grandisonae*] (Poynton and Haacke 1993). Wulf also coauthored an account of the frogs of



FIG. 3. Wulf D. Haacke at the banquet of the 10th conference of the Herpetological Association of Africa in Cape Town in 2011, delivering his acceptance speech after receiving the *Exceptional Contribution to African Herpetology* award.

Lesotho (Bates and Haacke 2003).

Wulf is a co-author of the books *Harmless Snakes of the Transvaal* (1980) with Niels Jacobsen and *Reptiles of the Kruger National Park* (1983) with Pienaar and Jacobsen, and first author of a small book titled *Frogs* (1987). He also contributed a few species accounts for the 1988 *South African Red Data Book – Reptiles and Amphibians*. Wulf was an active member of the Expert Panel of the Southern African Reptile Conservation Assessment (SARCA) during the 2000s and early 2010s, identifying photographic images of reptiles, and he later reviewed sections of the resulting manuscript *Atlas and Red List of the Reptiles of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland* (Bates et al. 2014).

Apart from his publications, Wulf inspired and counseled several young herpetologists and wildlife enthusiasts. He also reviewed manuscripts for several journals and assessed university dissertations. Wulf always found the time to welcome visitors to his office at the Museum, or to his home in Pretoria, and readily shared his wealth of knowledge. The collections of reptiles and amphibians he made on various expeditions to southern African countries, now housed in the collection of Ditsong National Museum of Natural History in Pretoria, are a very significant part of his legacy. Two examples demonstrate the significance of his expeditions. For his study on the burrowing



FIG. 4. Bill Branch, Wulf D. Haacke, Johan Marais, Don Broadley and Aaron Bauer (L-R) at the 11th conference of the Herpetological Association of Africa in Pretoria in 2013.



FIG. 5. Wulf D. Haacke on the right, with (from left) Stu Nielsen, Michael Bates, Johan Marais and Michael Cunningham, at a coffee shop in Pretoria in 2015.

geckos of southern Africa, he collected over 1000 specimens (Haacke 1975, 1976a–c), while two trips to Angola (March–April 1971 and April–June 1974) resulted in the collection of over 2000 reptiles and amphibians, more than any other researcher had ever achieved in that country (Branch et al. 2019).

Several taxonomic revisions (e.g., those of the late Don Broadley) benefited substantially from Wulf's collections. Most of his expeditions were conducted using a Land Rover he rebuilt from scratch and maintained himself, after becoming an expert vehicle mechanic. His contribution to southern African herpetology is recognised in the names of five lizard taxa. Apart from the genus *Haackgreerius* mentioned above, four lizard species are named after him: *Afroedura pondolia haackei* (now *A. haackei*; Onderstall 1984); *Pachydactylus haackei* (Branch et al. 1996), *Pedioplanis haackei* (Conradie et al. 2012), and *Afroedura wulfhaackei* (Branch et al. 2021). In his early years at the museum, when his department included invertebrates, he collected a lot more than just reptiles and frogs. Consequently, his colleagues also named a grasshopper, tenebrionid beetle, solifugid, scorpion and snail after him (Bates 2011).

His excellent photographic collection, primarily slides, deserves special mention. Many of his masterpieces have been

used by colleagues in field guides and other publications. Furthermore, Wulf was ahead of his time. He frequently photographed reptiles against a uniform cardboard background to make the details of their color patterns stand out. This preceded, by about two decades, the use of white backgrounds (e.g., Arteaga et al. 2013, 2019; and National Geographic photographer Joel Sartore's photo ark: www.joelsartore.com/photo-ark). Wulf especially enjoyed talking to local societies and presented countless slide shows, mostly about reptiles and his various expeditions. His expert advice was often sought for radio and television shows.

Wulf had a special interest in the pre-colonial and colonial history of Namibia, Botswana and Namaqualand. He conducted five expeditions to Botswana in the 1990s in search of the 'Lost Battlefield' in the Kalahari Desert, dating back to skirmishes between German colonial troops and indigenous people who had fled across the border from South West Africa (now Namibia) in 1908. His search was unsuccessful, but his article in the *Journal of the Namibia Scientific Society* is considered the standard reference on the subject (Marais 2019).

After retiring in 2002, Wulf was active as a freelance environmental consultant, preparing over 400 environmental impact assessment reports. He continued with a few research projects, describing the remarkable feathery-tailed gecko *Afrogecko plumicaudus* from Angola in 2008, and finally a 'cryptic' tiger snake *Telescopus finkeldeyi* from Namibia and Angola in 2013.

In 2011, at a conference in Cape Town, Wulf was presented with the Herpetological Association of Africa's highest honor, the *Exceptional Contribution to African Herpetology* award (Fig. 3; Bates 2011). He was so overwhelmed with emotion that he left the podium halfway through his acceptance speech and had to return later to complete it. Clearly the award meant a lot to him and he then spent the next few hours on the dance floor celebrating!

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS

THE FIRST TIME I MET WULF WAS IN ABOUT 1984 AT THE TRANSVAAL MUSEUM WHEN I SOUGHT ADVICE ABOUT THE IDENTITY OF SOME *PACHYDACTYLUS* GECKOS. WULF AND NIELS JACOBSEN, WHO JUST HAPPENED TO BE THERE AT THE SAME TIME, WERE AMONG VERY FEW INDIVIDUALS CAPABLE OF IDENTIFYING THEM. I SUBSEQUENTLY VISITED WULF AT THE MUSEUM ON SEVERAL MORE OCCASIONS. TOGETHER WITH DON BROADLEY AND BILL BRANCH, I CONSIDERED HIM AMONG THE MOST SIGNIFICANT HERPETOLOGISTS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. AT ONE OF OUR EARLIEST MEETINGS, HE SHOWED ME HIS COLLECTION OF LIVE REPTILES AT THE MUSEUM AND TESTED MY KNOWLEDGE TO SEE IF I COULD IDENTIFY THEM. THIS WAS QUITE A DAUNTING CHALLENGE FOR A YOUNG HERPETOLOGIST, BUT I SOMEHOW MANAGED TO GET MOST OF THE IDENTIFICATIONS CORRECT! AFTER HE RETIRED FROM THE MUSEUM IN 2002, I VISITED HIM AT HOME IN THE EAST OF PRETORIA WHENEVER I WAS IN THE CITY, AND ALWAYS ENJOYED HIS COFFEE, HOSPITALITY AND KNOWLEDGE. IT WAS A GREAT HONOR FOR ME IN 2011, AT THE 10TH CONFERENCE OF THE HERPETOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF AFRICA, TO READ OUT A SPEECH ABOUT WULF'S MANY ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS, AND THEN TO PRESENT HIM WITH THE *EXCEPTIONAL CONTRIBUTION TO AFRICAN HERPETOLOGY* AWARD (FIG. 3; BATES 2011). PRIOR TO HIS LAST HOUSE MOVE, TO A RETIREMENT COMPLEX, HE ASKED IF HE COULD DONATE HIS COLLECTION OF OVER 2000 MAINLY HERPETOLOGICAL REPRINTS TO THE INSTITUTION WHERE I WORKED, THE NATIONAL MUSEUM (BLOEMFONTEIN), AS THEY WERE TAKING UP TOO MUCH SPACE. I AGREED, BUT DID SO WITH A HEAVY HEART, AS IT FELT WRONG TO

BE TAKING AWAY SOMETHING THAT HAD BEEN SO IMPORTANT TO HIM FOR SO LONG. I MET UP WITH HIM A FEW MORE TIMES, USUALLY WITH JOHAN MARAIS, WHEN I WAS IN PRETORIA, BUT UNFORTUNATELY THESE VISITS WERE TOO FEW AND FAR BETWEEN.

—MICHAEL BATES, DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL AND PLANT SYSTEMATICS, NATIONAL MUSEUM, SOUTH AFRICA

I FIRST MET WULF AS A HIGH SCHOOLER IN THE 1980S WHEN I WAS LUCKY ENOUGH TO SPEND MY VACATION WORKING IN THE ORNITHOLOGY DEPARTMENT AT THE TRANSVAAL MUSEUM. I WAS INTRODUCED TO WULF AND GOT TO SEE THE HERPETOLOGICAL COLLECTION. THE WHOLE EXPERIENCE WAS VERY INSPIRING FOR A TEENAGER KEEN ON NATURAL HISTORY. ALMOST 10 YEARS LATER, I WAS FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO JOIN THE HERPETOLOGY DEPARTMENT IN A FORMAL CAPACITY WHILE REGISTERED AS A PH.D. STUDENT. AS A BOSS, WULF WAS AMAZINGLY SUPPORTIVE AND ASKED VERY LITTLE OF ME. HOWEVER, AS A FIRST TASK, HE SUGGESTED THAT I POLISH ALL THE COLLECTION BOTTLES, WHICH WAS MEANT SINCERELY AS A HANDS-ON EXERCISE TO FAMILIARIZE MYSELF WITH THE COLLECTION! ALTHOUGH MANY PEOPLE FOUND HIM A LITTLE IMPOSING, WULF HAD A SHARP SENSE OF HUMOR AND WOULD QUICKLY PUT YOU AT EASE. HE WAS ALSO HIGHLY GREGARIOUS AND LOVED A GOOD CHAT. HIS OFFICE WAS LARGE ENOUGH FOR A COFFEE TABLE AND SOME COMFY CHAIRS WHICH WERE GRACED BY AN UNTOLD NUMBER OF VISITORS OVER THE YEARS. IT DID NOT MATTER IF YOU WERE A SCHOOL KID ACCOMPANIED BY A PARENT OR A WORLD-LEADING SCIENTIST. IN THOSE DAYS, MORNING TEA AT THE TRANSVAAL MUSEUM WAS A RITUAL AND WULF FLITTED AMONG THE OFFICES OF HIS FAVORITE CO-WORKERS, MANY OF WHOM WORKED IN THE ADMINISTRATION SECTION OR AS TECHNICAL STAFF. WULF WAS ESPECIALLY WELL-KNOWN AMONG GERMAN HERPETOLOGISTS AND, IN ADDITION TO BEING INVITED TO GERMANY AS A SPEAKER, HE WAS THE GO-TO PERSON FOR VISITING SCIENTISTS. HE ALSO PROVIDED MUCH NEEDED SUPPORT TO NORTH AMERICAN SCIENTISTS INCLUDING SUCH NOTABLES AS ERIC PIANKA AND RAY HUEY. TO THIS END, HE WAS INCREDIBLY SUPPORTIVE AND GENEROUS WITH HIS TIME. I VIEW MY TIME AT THE TRANSVAAL MUSEUM WITH GREAT FONDNESS AND WULF WAS A BIG PART OF IT.

—MARTIN WHITING, SCHOOL OF NATURAL SCIENCES, MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY, AUSTRALIA

I MET WULF EARLY IN 1980, SOON AFTER JOINING TRANSVAAL SNAKE PARK. HE SAT BEHIND A LARGE, CLUTTERED DESK AND HAD A FEW GLASS ENCLOSURES WITH DWARF ADDERS AND GECKOS ON THE SIDE. HE WAS A FORMIDABLE MAN AND LOOKED AT ME OVER HIS GLASSES. I WAS IN MY EARLY TWENTIES AND IT FELT LIKE A VISIT TO THE SCHOOL PRINCIPLE! DURING MY THREE YEARS AT THE SNAKE PARK I VISITED WULF ON MANY OCCASIONS AND HE WAS ALWAYS KIND AND HAPPY TO SHARE INFORMATION. IN ADDITION TO HIS HERPETOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE, HE WAS ALSO AN AVID PHOTOGRAPHER AND WON THE AGFA WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR AWARD MORE THAN ONCE. AFTER WULF RETIRED, I OFTEN VISITED HIM AT HOME FOR COFFEE AND A CHAT. HIS LATER YEARS IN A RETIREMENT COMPLEX WERE, ALL-IN-ALL, NOT A GOOD TIME FOR HIM AND HE SAID TO ME THAT HIS LIFE WAS OVER. NEVERTHELESS, AFTER HIS MOVE THERE I REGULARLY WENT TO FETCH HIM AND TAKE HIM OUT FOR COFFEE, AND HE REALLY ENJOYED THESE VISITS. WHEN OTHER HERPETOLOGISTS WERE IN TOWN I WOULD INVITE THEM ALONG, INCLUDING AARON BAUER, WHO MANAGED TO JOIN US ON A FEW OCCASIONS. AS WULF'S HEALTH DETERIORATED IT BECAME MORE AND MORE DIFFICULT TO TAKE HIM OUT FOR CHATS. I HAD TO FIND VENUES WHERE HE DID NOT HAVE TO WALK VERY FAR. BUT HE TRULY ENJOYED THESE VISITS, LAUGHED A GREAT DEAL AND ALWAYS HAD A SPARKLE IN HIS EYES. I ALSO OFTEN EMAILED HIM COPIES OF ANY NEW HERPETOLOGICAL RESEARCH PAPERS THAT I THOUGHT MIGHT BE OF INTEREST. SADLY, HE PASSED AWAY A WEEK BEFORE OUR NEXT SCHEDULED COFFEE DATE.

—JOHAN MARAIS, AFRICAN SNAKEBITE INSTITUTE, SOUTH AFRICA

Wulf suffered two strokes while still working at the museum, one of which affected his leg and impacted his mobility, especially as he got older. Nevertheless, he still greatly enjoyed visits from friends and colleagues and continued to offer helpful advice to the next generation of herpetologists. After suffering yet another stroke, he passed away on 30 June 2021. Southern Africa had, following the recent deaths of Don Broadley in 2016 and Bill Branch in 2018, lost another legend in the field of herpetology. Wulf Haacke will be sorely missed but never forgotten. He is survived by his wife, Maureen, their son and daughter, Karl and Ingrid, and two grandsons.

Acknowledgements.—Some of the personal information about Wulf Haacke was gleaned from an abbreviated CV published online (galagoenvironmental.co.za/cv/wulf.pdf). We thank Warren Schmidt for Figure 1.

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Sam Rountree Telford Jr. (1932–2021): Herpetologist, Reptilian Parasitologist, and a Fourth-Generation Floridian

I first met Sam R. Telford Jr. (Fig. 1) in what was then called the Florida State Museum (renamed the Florida Museum of Natural History in 1988) on the University of Florida campus in September 1970. Sam had become the interim Curator of Herpetology, while the resident herpetologist, Walter Auffenberg, was on professional leave to study Komodo Dragons on the islands of Komodo and Flores in Indonesia. Sam and the collections manager, Ruby Kirkendall, had the onerous task of organizing the museum's vast reptile and amphibian collection as it was moved from other campus sites into its new home at this newly constructed museum building (later named Dickinson Hall in honor of the former museum director, J. C. Dickinson). They needed help!

RICHARD FRANZ

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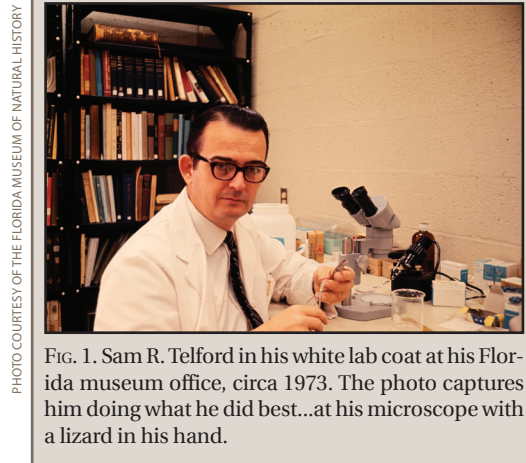


FIG. 1. Sam R. Telford in his white lab coat at his Florida museum office, circa 1973. The photo captures him doing what he did best...at his microscope with a lizard in his hand.

As a new graduate student with a keen interest in herpetology, I had time between my classes to assist Sam and Ruby with their labors. A little later, a second graduate student volunteer (Sylvia Scudder) appeared on the scene and joined us. As a group of four, we unpacked hundreds of jars from their Mayflower cartons, dusted each jar, replenished those that needed more 70% isopropyl alcohol, and organized the specimens on the metal shelving units. The jars were arranged on the units, according to Sam Telford's phylogenetic prescription. This group soon became daily fixtures in the museum's new herp range. Sam

was our leader, mentor, and guiding spirit.

I knew the Telford name from my reading of his papers that described aspects of the natural history of the Coral Snake (*Micrurus fulvius*), Red-bellied Mudsucker (*Farancia abacura*), Florida Worm Lizard (*Rhineura floridana*), Sand Skink (*Plestiodon reynoldsi*; Hellman and Telford 1956; Telford 1955, 1959, 1962) and the taxonomic descriptions of the unique Florida crown snakes (*Tantilla relicta* and *T. oolitica*; Telford 1966). Based on