

## OBITUARIO - OBITUARY

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### PHILIP HERSHKOVITZ, 1909-1997

At the age of 87, Philip Hershkovitz died on 15 February, 1997, in Northwestern Memorial Hospital, Chicago. Hershkovitz spent most of his professional career at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, where he had begun his 50th year of service. Ever active and productive, Phil continued to edit and revise manuscripts until his final weeks. At the time of his death, he had four monographic articles in press and one in progress.

Hershkovitz received his formal education at the University of Pittsburgh and the University of Michigan, where he earned Bachelor's and Master's degrees in 1938 and 1940, respectively. His mentors at Ann Arbor were Lee R. Dice and William H. Hurt. But independence was a hallmark of Phil's career, and most of his research was self-motivated and directed. In a scientific bibliography numbering about 165 titles, many of them monographs, only three of Hershkovitz's articles are co-authored (see below).

Hershkovitz is renowned for his ambitious research programs on the systematics, biogeography, and natural history of South American mammals. During the course of his career, he published on each of the dozen orders that inhabit that continent. In the course of numerous revisionary studies, he described 67 new species and subspecies in seven orders, most of them rodents (34 taxa) or primates (22), and revised the status of literally hundreds of names proposed by others. During his career, he named eleven new genera, all but two of them sigmodontine rodents: *Micronectomys* (1948; validated in #164 below), and *Macruroryzomys* (1948; validated in #164), *Wiedomys* (1959), *Pseudoryzomys* (1962), *Kunsia* (1966), *Tremacebus* [an Oligocene monkey] (1974), *Microakodontomys* (1993), *Adinodon* [a Cretaceous opossum] (1955), and three still in press (described in #160 and #164).

Phil's publications routinely infused systematics with natural history, a product of his intimate field associations with his subject. In all, Phil spent about 15 years in South America, as follows: Ecuador (1933-1937), Colombia (1941-1943; 1948-1952), Surinam (1960-1961), Bolivia (1965-1966), Peru (1980-1981), and Brazil (Amazon, 1984; Cerrado, 1986; Atlantic Forest, 1987-1989, 1992). His zeal

for fieldwork was unabated with advancing years, and he spoke regularly about "recharging his batteries" on expeditions. He was an avid and consummate naturalist, and routinely assembled collections remarkable for their size, scope, and novelty. Those he made in southwestern Brazil mainly as an octogenarian included 17 new species and four new genera! To date, 38 new species of Neotropical mammals have been based on his collections, and other researchers continue to describe new taxa from them (e.g., Bublitz on shrew-opossums, Woodman and Timm on short-eared shrews).

Substantial grant support for more than two decades from the National Science Foundation and National Institutes of Health focused Hershkovitz's attention on Neotropical primates. In course, he produced (in the words of Ronald Pine) "the most heroically monumental revisionary monograph ever devoted to a Neotropical group", an 1100-page treatise on the biology of marmosets, tamartins and callimicos published in 1977 as the first of a proposed multi-volume series, *Living New World Monkeys* (Platyrrhini), Vol. 1. Support sufficed for Hershkovitz to complete and publish "preliminary taxonomic revisions" of the non-prehensile-tailed cebids, and he had assembled copious notes and extensive bibliographies to hang on this systematic framework. Nevertheless, Phil met the eventual cessation of grant support with relief at being emancipated from this enormous and time-consuming production. He spent the final decade of his career studying those animals that most intrigued and animated him, Neotropical rodents and marsupials. Nearing the end of his career, Hershkovitz once summarized the totality of his work as steps towards a comprehensive treatment of the mammals of Colombia. Few scientists in history have shared the ambition and energy needed to conceive and execute projects on such a grand scale.

Among various awards and honorary appointments, Hershkovitz became Research Curator of the Field Museum of Natural History (1961), Corresponding Member of the Explorer's Club (1977), Honorary President of the XIIth Congress of the International Primatological Society (1988), the Distinguished Primatologist Award from the American Society of Primatologists (1991), and Honor-

ary Member of the American Society of Mammalogists (1991). Colleagues named five animals in his honor: the nycteribiid batfly *Herskovitzia Guimaraes* and D'Andretta, 1956; the spiny mouse *Heteromys anomalus herskovitzi* Hernández-Camacho, 1956; the Colombian weasel *Mustela felipei* Izor and de la Torre, 1978; the night monkey *Aotus herskovitzi* Ramírez-Cerqueira, 1983; and the field mouse *Akodon herskovitzi* Patterson et al., 1984. In 1987, a festschrift in his honor appeared with contributions from 42 scientists from six different countries (published as *Fieldiana: Zoology*, new ser. No. 39).

The tremendous energy that Herskovitz brought to research and his strident advocacy of his own scientific positions discouraged some and filled others with trepidation. But those who, by dint of

perseverance or circumstance, forded those fight-or-flight impressions and engaged Phil in discourse, routinely encountered a different man, sympathetic, thoughtful, and generous with his time, resources, and ideas. His continual encouragement, enthusiasm, and insights played a pivotal role in nurturing and expanding my own Neotropical interests, and I witnessed similar effects on others. To know him was a privilege, to be called colleague a high honor. Even though his standards of scholarship and productivity remain, his tireless example, vast wisdom, and incisive wit will be missed.

A fuller biographical sketch of Herskovitz appeared in pages 1-10 of *Studies in Neotropical Mammalogy: essays in honor of Philip Herskovitz* (B.D. Patterson and R.M. Timm, eds.). *Fieldiana: Zoology*, new series N° 39, 1987).

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