In memoriam: Pierce BRODKORB

William Pierce Brodkorb died on 18 July at Gainesville, Florida. He was born in Chicago on 29 September 1908. His father died when he was still very young, and he accomplished all his university studies without much family support.

He had always been fascinated by birds, since his childhood and, when he was 16 years old, he contacted Colin Campbell Sanborn who taught him how to prepare bird skins. Then he was introduced to Ornithology at the Field Museum where he was given summer employment as a staff technician.

He completed his studies at the University of Michigan where he obtained his Ph.D. degree in 1936. He worked as Assistant Curator of Birds at the Museum of Zoology in Michigan until 1946. During this time, he published numerous papers on Recent birds, but he had always been interested in fossil birds.

After the war, in 1946, he accepted a position as Assistant Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences, at the University of Florida, in Gainesville, where he remained until his retirement in December 1989. From the 1950s, he began collecting fossil birds in the Miocene, the Pliocene, and the Pleistocene of Florida, and on the island of Bermuda. At the same time he began to build a huge collection of bird skeletons. When this collection was presented to the Florida Museum of Natural History, at the University of Florida, it included 12500 skeletons, from 129 families, that had been almost entirely prepared by Professor Brodkorb alone.

He published a very large number of papers on fossil birds, but his most famous and most important work in Palaeornithology is for sure his Catalogue of Fossil Birds.

He had a strong personality, he hated people who think they are important, and called them "stuffed-shirts", and most of those who knew him remember him as "a wonderful person". He always did as much as he could to help students, and foreign research workers, and to give them as many facilities as possible to accomplish their researches on fossil birds. He helped them by allowing them to use his collections, fossil or Recent, his library, by loaning skeletons, sending xerocopies, discussing their problems with them, and giving them advice, regardless of the time he spent:

It was he who proposed the creation of a Society grouping the scientists interested in Fossil birds and Avian evolution, during the meeting of the "Table Ronde sur l'Evolution des Oiseaux d'après le Témoignage des Fossiles", in Lyon-Villeurbanne, in September 1985. This informal society was later called Society for Avian Paleontology and Evolution (S.A.P.E.) and it was only after the International Ornithological Congress, in Ottawa, in 1986, that it was decided to send a letter of information every year.

The second meeting of the S.A.P.E. was organized in Los Angeles, by Kenneth Campbell, so that the dates coincided with his eightieth birthday. He did suspect something was afoot, but he was not quite sure and, after the symposium he was very proud of it: "All that stuff was done for me" he said to his family.

A detailed biographical account has been written by Kenneth Campbell, who was a student of his, in Papers in Avian Paleontology honoring Pierce Brodkorb (1992: XIII-XIX).

As Storrs Olson wrote me after his death: "It marks the end of an era, and we shall truly never see the likes of Pierce Brodkorb again".

Cécile Mourer-Chauviré
BRAZIL

After the SAPE meeting in Frankfurt, Herculano ALVARENGA spent some days in the British Museum, with Cyril WALKER, and also in the Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle, in Paris. The principal goal of this trip was to study the Phorusrhacidae in these museums. After this, Herculano intends to study the Phorusrhacidae in the collections of Argentina, Brazil, the United States, and in other European museums, and to make a revision of this family.

An interesting discovery was the remains of a bird in the shales of the Taubaté Basin, in southeastern Brazil (Upper Oligocene or Lower Miocene), including the coracoid, the carpometacarpus, and the impression of the humerus. This bird must be a Galliform and is probably close to the family Quercymegapodiidae, from the Phosphorites du Quercy, in France.

Herculano has the deep sorrow of announcing that Helmut SICK (1910-1991) died on 5 March 1991. He was born in Germany, then he was naturalized Brazilian and lived for 52 years in Brazil. He wrote hundreds of papers on ornithology, including the two volumes "Ornithologia Brasileira", certainly the best book on Brazilian birds.

BULGARIA

Zlatozar BOEV continues to collect fossil birds from the Lower Villafranchian site, near the town of Varshets, where he collected 210 new bird elements, 155 of them identifiable. The total number of bird remains now reaches over 617, belonging to at least 30 species. The comparative skeleton collection of Recent birds reaches 280 species, represented by 1250 specimens.

CHINA

In May 1992 HOU LIANHAI and ZHOU ZHONGHE conducted a new excavation in the newly found Lower Cretaceous bird locality in Chaoyang, Liaoning province, in North East China. Several more individuals were recovered.

From July to September, Hou participated in the Silkroad Dinosaur Exploration in Inner Mongolia. Unfortunately no bird fossil was found there by him in the Cretaceous strata.

In August, Hou and Zhou submitted a paper on the Lower Cretaceous bird discovery in China to the Second Conference of Vertebrate Paleontology of China, held in Dalian, Liaoning province. Zhou also gave a plenary report on behalf of Hou and himself.

The new discoveries of fossil birds include a complete skull of a Quaternary Penguin, collected by a Chinese geologist from the Antarctic, which is now under study by Hou, a complete feather found by a paleoentomologist in the Lower Cretaceous of Shandong, in Eastern China, and a new Paleocene bird locality recently found in Anhui, also in Eastern China. This locality has provided some forelimb and hindlimb elements, studied by Hou, and which resemble Rallidae.

In October 1992 Hou and Zhou are planning to go to Shandong, where the fossil feather was found, in the hope that more Early Cretaceous bird fossils could be recovered. After that, Hou will be busy studying Early Cretaceous Hesperomithiformes from the Antarctic, the Quaternary Penguin from the Antarctic and the Paleocene bird from Anhui previously recorded, and the Early Cretaceous feather from Shandong. Moreover he plans to finish the preliminary report on a new advanced type of bird from the type locality of Cathayornis by the end of this year. Zhou will continue to work on the abundant Lower Cretaceous birds, including Cathayornis, which was first found by himself in 1990.

FRANCE

Jacques CHENEVAL presented, during the Table Ronde européenne sur la Paléontologie de l'Amérique latine, in Lyon, in July 1992, a preliminary description of the Mio-pliocene avifauna of the Pisco Formation, in Peru. The localities of this formation are mainly known for their abundance in remains of sea-mammals (Cetaceans, Otariidae, Phocidae). Although it had never been described, the avifauna is far from being negligible. The most abundant forms are a penguin, close to the genus Spheniscus, and several species of Sula. Less common forms are a shearwater, close to Fulmarus glacialoides, a cormorant of the same size as Phalacrocorax olivaceus, and a small wader similar in size to Tringa totanus. Two large fragments give the first indication of the presence of Pelagornithidae in South America.

Jacques is still working on the revision of the avifauna from Sansan (Middle Miocene, Southwestern France), which will be published in a monography.

Christine LEFEVRE has worked on the bird remains collected during the archaeological survey in the Cape