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ERIC ARTHUR GERALD DUFFEY 1922–2019

On the 10th February 2019, the world arachnological community received the sad news that the eminent British arachnologist, ecologist and conservationist Dr Eric Duffey passed away peacefully in his sleep at the age of 97. Indeed, he was one of the most elderly living British arachnologists, standing in a line of such long-lived naturalists and arachnologists as Jean-Henri Fabre (92, 1823–1915), Pierre Bonnet (93, 1897–1990), and Alfred Frank Millidge (98, 1924–2012).

Eric Duffey was born in Leicester on the 2nd January 1922, from a Swiss father and a Belgian mother. Eric's father, Leon Marius Felicien Duffey (1886–1966), was from a farming family, living in the Vaud mountains, Switzerland. He entered commerce when he came to England in search of work in 1911, but loved the countryside and encouraged Eric in his interest in natural history. Eric's mother, Marcelle Alphonsina Julia van den Bosch (1892–1972), was a refugee from Antwerp during the First World War. Eric had two brothers and three sisters, and was the second born. Only his youngest brother, Fred, survives him.

Eric's interest in natural history began on family excursions into the Leicestershire countryside, particularly Charnwood Forest, where his father passed on to him a great love of trees. As a young teenager, he developed a passion for birds, and was also fascinated by the diversity of aquatic life. His first job on leaving school at 16 was in the Leicester City Museum where he became adept at mounting birds and helping in the construction of displays. Realizing that this was a fairly dead-end job, he joined a team of foresters for a year, but tree felling in Charnwood Forest was an activity which he would later deeply regret, when he saw how many of the fine Leicestershire oak woods had been destroyed and replaced with conifer plantations. Later, to his credit, using this unfortunate episode as a starting point, young Eric undertook a thorough field study and published his first scientific paper devoted to the 11-year succession of bird populations during the growth of a conifer plantation (Duffey 1947). While still at the City Museum (1938–1940), he made enquiries about the formation of a birdwatching group and, in 1941, became a founder member of the Leicestershire and Rutland Ornithological Society, still in existence today with about 600 members.

During World War II, Eric volunteered for the Fleet Air Arm (FAA) in June 1941 to train as a pilot on aircraft carriers protecting the North Atlantic fleets, and obtained the rank of Lieutenant in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. He made good ornithological use of his four-year war service, recording birds observed while flying, occasionally disappearing from the radar screens much to the annoyance of the air controllers. His diaries written at that time concentrated on the birds seen rather than the tactics of flying. He made contact with an ornithologically minded naval doctor, Surg. Lt. Neal Rankin, who served on a destroyer protecting the Arctic convoys. As Bourne (1996: 17) nicely put it, these “naturalists normally observed their birds over the sights of a gun”. After the war, he and Rankin compiled a detailed paper on their joint bird records (Rankin & Duffey 1948). Eric was discharged from the FAA in July 1945; the ship's



Eric Duffey in his home in King's Lynn, Norfolk; September 2012. © Dmitri Logunov.

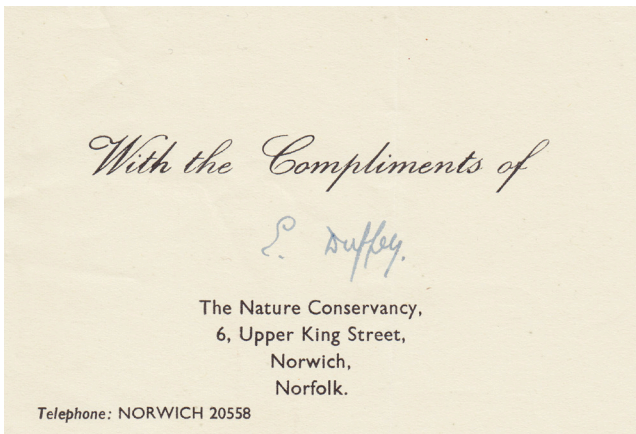
captain certified that he had served appropriately on HMS *Shrike* from 1 September 1944 to 30 July 1945, and had conducted himself to his entire satisfaction “as a keen and capable officer”. In 1946, Duffey and Rankin helped to organize the Royal Naval Birdwatching Society, with its own journal *Sea Swallow* which started in December 1947 (Bourne 1996). In the following years, Eric published six papers based on his field observations on British birds (Duffey 1950, 1951; Duffey & Creasey 1950, etc.). They came to the notice of Max Nicholson (1904–2003), the Director General of the newly formed Nature Conservancy (now Natural England), a pioneering environmentalist and keen ornithologist himself, and were perhaps partly instrumental in Eric's appointment in 1952 as its first Regional Officer.

In 1947–1950, he read zoology with botany at Leicester University College. In 1948, one of his student activities was to lead an expedition to Bear Island in the Barents Sea to study birds, terrestrial and marine life (Duffey & Sergeant 1950). During this Arctic field work, a total of 54 skins of 15 different bird species was collected and deposited in the Leicester City Museum. After obtaining his B.Sc., Eric went to Oxford University to study for a Ph.D. at the Bureau of Animal Population under the direction of Charles Elton (1900–1991), a prominent zoologist and one of the founders of animal ecology in Britain, who had the greatest influence on his ideas and future research (Sheail 1998). It was Elton who first pointed him in the direction of spiders, suggesting that he went out into the field to see what might interest him for his Ph.D. studies (Duffey 1956). Eric was at Oxford in 1950–1952, and continued actively to publish on birds (see above).



Rita and Eric Duffey at the 7th International Congress of Arachnology in Exeter in 1977. © Torbjörn Kronestedt.

In his early career, Eric also had a research connection with the South Atlantic. In 1957, the British Ornithologists' Union wished to celebrate their 100th anniversary with a major expedition, and invited members to put forward suggestions. Eric's proposal to choose Ascension Island was accepted and he was able to join the 19-month expedition for three months to study the terrestrial ecology of the island, while other expedition members concentrated on the bird life. As a result of this field work, Eric published a substantial paper (Duffey 1964a), which provided the first comprehensive account on the entire island biota, its history, and ecology, including checklists of all plant and animal species recorded from the island to that date (see Ashmole & Ashmole 1997 for further details). Based on his extensive invertebrate collections, many new species and genera were described from Ascension Island (Beier 1960; Cooke 1964; Ferrara & Taiti 1981; Davis & Mendel 2013, etc.), some of which were dedicated to Eric: e.g., the ground spider *Prodidomus duffeyi* Cooke, 1964 (Gnaphosidae), the pseudoscorpion *Stenowitzius duffeyi* Beier, 1960 (Withiidae), and the terrestrial isopod *Niambia duffeyi* Ferrara & Taiti, 1981 (Platyarthridae).



A compliments slip with his signature that Eric Duffey attached to books or reprints that were sent out to colleagues. © The Manchester Museum.



Eric Duffey at Homer Tunnel, New Zealand; 2004. © Rita Duffey.

As an arachnologist, Eric published 99 scientific papers on spiders, of which over 20 were devoted to faunistics and taxonomy of British and European spiders, and particularly the spider/invertebrate faunas of Norfolk and Suffolk (Duffey, Locket & Millidge 1957; Duffey 1959; Duffey & Morris 1966, etc.), the main areas where his conservation studies took place. He also published a few papers on spiders of Spain: e.g., a report on the spider fauna of the Jaca region (Duffey & Brignoli 1981; Duffey 1983), collected in 1972–1973. A distinctive feature of his faunistic and taxonomic papers is that he always provided detailed data on habitat preferences of the recorded species, searching for possible causative factors (moisture, vegetation structure, and/or microhabitat types, etc.) that could explain their presence and distribution. From the 1950s to the 1970s, Eric found and recorded seven spider species that were new to the British list (Duffey 1953, 1963, 1967; Parker & Duffey 1963, etc.). Even more importantly, he collected and described two species new to science: *Karita paludosa* (Duffey, 1971) (Linyphiidae) from Ireland (Duffey 1971a: sub. *Carorita p.*), and *Iberina microphthalma* (Snazell & Duffey, 1980) (Hahniidae) found in chalk grasslands in Dorset (Snazell & Duffey 1980: sub. *Hahnia m.*).

A series of Eric's papers was devoted to aerial dispersal in spiders, starting from detailed regional observations of this phenomenon in Berkshire (Duffey 1956) to the factors influencing this behaviour (Duffey 1998). He showed that aerial dispersal seems to be stimulated by overcrowding and food shortage, but also by physiological factors, among which thermal conditions during spider development could be important (see also Bonte 2012).

The discovery of *Dolomedes plantarius* (Clerck, 1757), one of Britain's largest spider species, at Redgrave and Lopham Fen in 1956 (Duffey 1958, 1960a) was particularly important. By the 1980s, artesian abstraction had desiccated the Fen and brought the *D. plantarius* population to the brink of extinction. Eric's campaign for funding for systematic census work kept the conservation spotlight on this species, and its adoption by English Nature's (now Natural England) new Species Recovery Programme in 1991 was the first step on a long road to recovery. This combination of rigorous census methodology and associated research by various authors (e.g. Smith 2000; Vugdelic *et al.* 2003; Duffey 2012) on the autecology and conservation management of *D. plantarius*, showed how vital a key species could be in raising awareness of the importance of "sustained management of the right kind", based on scientific criteria (Sheail 2000: 125), for which Eric always appealed in his conservation programmes and initiatives (e.g. Duffey 1960b, 1971b).

Despite a significant output on spider faunistics and taxonomy, Eric's main interest in spiders over 60 years concentrated on their habitats and population ecology, a field that attracts very few arachnologists. He published over 30 papers on this topic, starting from population studies of spiders in limestone grassland (Duffey 1962a,b) at Wytham Woods near Oxford. Methodologically, Eric's population studies of spiders always included a detailed description of the vegetation structure and its microclimate, because both parameters influence the composition of the spider fauna. In his early works, he followed the habitat classification proposed by his former supervisor, Charles Elton (Elton & Miller 1954), but later developed his own classification based "on ecologically significant features relevant to spiders" (Duffey 2010: 2), specially for the British fauna. In his ecological work on spiders, he paid special attention to historical factors, particularly in the context of man-modified or artificial environments such as sewage treatment works (Duffey 1975a, 1993, 1997, etc.). Research on the history of land use is crucial for selecting suitable strategies for conservation of a chosen site, because changes in management may have contributed to its uniqueness. Examples include the Norfolk Broads (Duffey 1964a) or heathlands whose distinctive wildlife cannot be conserved without appropriate management (Sheail 2000). In order to draw other arachnologists' attention to ecological studies, Eric published a series of papers describing standardized sampling and recording methods (e.g. Duffey 1972) and even organized a general discussion on the methodology of ecological spider research during the Tenth International Arachnological Congress in Spain (Duffey 1986), in which 16 colleagues from eight countries participated. Some of the sampling methods advocated by Eric were quite novel for that time; for instance, vacuum sampling of grassland spiders (Duffey 1974a, 1980). Eric's advocacy of the critical importance of quantitative sampling in arachnology was pioneering—and something that we still struggle to achieve! In a final effort to encourage others to take up the field of spider ecology, in 2016 he submitted a number of his published papers to the University of Leicester, and was awarded a D.Sc.

In recognition of Eric's impressive contribution to spider taxonomy and especially ecology, two new species were



Eric Duffey working at Redgrave and Lopham Fen, Norfolk, in the 1970s. © David Orr.

named in his honour: *Prodidomus duffeyi* from Ascension Island (see above) and *Praestigia duffeyi* Millidge, 1954 (Linyphiidae), collected from Havergate Island, Suffolk (Millidge 1954).

Being interested in wildlife and its conservation, Eric felt that the new Nature Conservancy would be an excellent job choice and, in 1952, he began working as Regional Officer for East Anglia. Arachnology had to take a back seat while the difficult task of creating and managing National Nature Reserves and the scheduling of Sites of Special Scientific Interest was under way. Eric was awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for these services in 1962, when he moved to the Nature Conservancy's new Monks Wood Experimental Station, where his reputation as a pioneering conservation research scientist was established. As head of the Conservation Research Section he led a team of zoologists and botanists working on the conservation ecology of grasslands and grass heaths (e.g. Duffey *et al.* 1974). In addition to work on grasslands, applied ecological research carried out by his team included a survey of Scottish sand dunes prior to drilling investigations (Duffey 1968), and a study of Birmingham Sewage Works, where employees were being bitten by spiders when there were mass spider migrations (Duffey 1975b). From an early age, Eric had realized the importance of historical land use, particularly after attending lectures on the history of the English landscape by William Hoskins (1908–1992), and talks with Charles



Eric Duffey with colleagues from the British Arachnological Society at the AGM, a trip to Orford Ness in Suffolk, June 1994. From left to right: Jonathan Daws, John Stanney, Rita Duffey, Eric Duffey, Paul Lee, Chris Spilling, Rod Allison, Deborah Procter, Rowley Snazell, Doug Marriott, and David Nellist. © David Nellist.

Elton at Oxford. He felt this to be vital to understanding nature reserve management, and was the first to appoint a historical geographer to his team. Another concept he developed was that of recreational ecology: the effect of human leisure activities on the natural environment. The impact of human activity was paramount in the fens and marshes of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads (Duffey 1964b). During Eric's time as Regional Officer for East Anglia, the Broads were discovered by Joyce Lambert (1916–2005) to have been man-made peat cuttings (Lambert & Smith 1960), now in danger after some 600 years of natural infilling. In addition to consultations with water authorities and commercial interests to devise suitable management, Eric organized an in-depth study of these wetlands with a group of arachnologists in the 1970s (Duffey & Feest 2009).

In 1974, Eric was invited to become the editor of *Biological Conservation*, a journal that was started by Nicholas Vladimir Polunin (1909–1997) in 1967. He willingly took on the task and edited the journal single-handed with the professional assistance of his wife Rita for 15 years. This was a labour of love for both of them. Under Eric's editorship, the journal grew considerably (from four to 12 issues per year) and allowed him to appoint an Associate Editor for American papers in 1989. Running the journal was a wonderful chance for Eric to promote conservation-oriented research both in the UK and throughout the world, making the journal a truly international medium for conservation

science (Sheail 2000). Eric undertook two tours of European national parks and nature reserves in thirteen countries (in the late 1960s and 1970s) and a trip to Australia (in 1989) to study different practices in conservation research and their implementation (Duffey 1982). This gave him a wide range of contacts which he used for developing a broad international outlook for the journal. In 1992, he took on the role of Editor-in-Chief, finally handing over the reins in 1997 to the English editor, Brian Davis. He also wrote a number of books and articles on wildlife ecology (e.g. Duffey 1974b).

In 1997, Eric and his wife Rita decided to move to the Limousin in France, attracted by the more abundant wildlife and the temptation of fly-fishing (one of his great loves) in his own lake. He thoroughly surveyed the spider fauna of the 8 ha of his land and was one of the main contributors of new faunistic records to the recently published book on spiders of the French Limousin region (see Cruveillier 2014: 15). Eric also met Marcel Cruveillier, the author of that book, to discuss the foundation of a French arachnological society. This came to fruition in 2006 as the Association Française d'Arachnologie (AsFrA), with 28 founding members, which now numbers 102, with an active website forum. In 2016, AsFrA made Eric its first honorary member. He was also an honorary member of the British Arachnological Society and the International Society of Arachnology and, in 1993, was elected as an active member of the American Academy of Sciences. Eric was a past President of the

Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society (1957–1958), the British Arachnological Society (1971–1972), the International Society of Arachnology (1971–1974), and the British Ecological Society and Secretary of its Council (1964–1974).

Throughout all his professional life, Eric collected spiders and undertook many arachnological field trips, both within the UK and abroad. He assembled a large spider collection, which is now deposited in the Manchester Museum, as is his archive (223 items, mostly correspondence). When first donated to the Museum in 2011, the spider collection contained 138 jars with about 5700 sample tubes, representing some 560 British and 110 overseas species (Logunov 2011), together with over 70 jars (some 300 samples) with unsorted and undetermined material from the Balkans, France, and Spain (Breitling 2018). The collection was in perfect order, thanks to meticulous curatorial work by Eric's wife and trusted companion, Rita. All samples in this collection are clearly labelled and rich in data, including detailed habitat information; and all identified samples are also documented in an electronic database. To date, the identified part of Eric's collection has been fully re-curated and amalgamated with the Museum's main spider collection. The undetermined material is still under re-curation and review, with several scientific papers based upon it already published (Breitling & Bauer 2015; Breitling 2018) while others are in preparation. There are also some 20 jars of unsorted and undetermined British spider material (from Royston, Hertfordshire: 1973–1975, and later years).

Eric is survived by Rita, his wife of 50 years, his son Malcolm, daughter Christine, and grandchildren William, Sophie and James. For fellow arachnologists and a wider scientific community, Eric Duffey will always be remembered as a pioneer innovator who established a golden standard on how to approach, scrutinize and resolve scientific and administrative challenges, whether related to spider taxonomy, conservation science, or both.

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank sincerely Eric's widow, Rita Duffey, for sharing the biographic information on Eric with me, for answering lots of my questions about him and his life and for her massive help with the transfer of Eric's spider collection and archive to the Manchester Museum. I am also grateful to John Sheail, Anthony Russell-Smith and Helen Smith for their comments, helpful suggestions and linguistic help during the preparation of this obituary.

Dmitri V. Logunov

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