PER-OLOF LJUNGSTROM 1949-1973

Born in Stockholm, Sweden (9 February 1949), Per-Olof Ljungstrom became interested in the study of terrestrial earthworms at the early age of fourteen. His interest in Zoology was directed toward earthworms at the Naturhistoriska Riksmuseet in Stockholm when, as a boy, he visited this institution, asking for advice on how to preserve and identify various invertebrate species.

His first scientific paper was published in 1964 in *Faltbiologen* followed by a second in 1966. P.-O Ljungstrom presented his first paper titled "The origin of the Swedish earthworm fauna" at the Third International Congress for Soil Zoology in 1966 at Braunschweig (BDR) at the age of seventeen. By this time he had already travelled far from Sweden and had experienced interesting adventures in North Africa and the Middle East where he worked as a labourer on the roads and in the copper mines.

He came to the Republic of South Africa by invitation in 1967 where he studied earthworms at the Instituut vir Dierkundige Navorsing (Institute for Zoological Research) for almost two years. His visit to this country, where earthworm research had been greatly neglected since the work of Wilhelm Michaelsen and Grace Pickford, initiated a renewed interest in terrestrial oligochaetes. His vast knowledge, which was not restricted to the field of oligochaetology, was remarkable. His genius was further underlined by his ability to speak, work, write and conduct research in many foreign languages. Ljungstrom was a tireless and enthusiastic worker who devoted most of his energies to the pursuit of knowledge. Together we published three papers in 1969 on the Microchaetidae and Lumbricidae in South Africa. In the same year he published a paper on the genus *Udenia* and made a major contribution to our knowledge of this genus in South Africa with a further publication in 1972.

After various collecting trips in Natal, Transvaal and the Cape, and after completing preliminary work on earthworm material from Mauritius, he left South Africa in 1969 for a short visit to Malawi. On his return to Stockholm he completed "New species of aquatic earthworms from Malawi and South Africa" which was published in 1971. A proposed second paper dealing with the poorly known Microchaetidae was never completed. Instead, he published an extensive paper on the introduced earthworms of South Africa in 1972.

Ljungstrom was constantly aware of the lack of uniformity in taxonomical descriptions of earthworms. While assisting to teach (unofficially) earthworm taxonomy to students at Potchefstroom University, he recognized the need for a "guide book" for beginners. In 1968 we completed an introduction to the study of earthworms which the students used. A shortened version was published in Pedobiologia in 1970. This is a useful source of information for beginners and indicates important or potentially important taxonomical characters. As well it includes a history of earthworm taxonomy and many valuable references.

After participating in the Earthworm Colloquium in Nitra, Czechoslovakia in 1969, he left for Argentina and Brazil in 1970. His work on the O clerodrilidae and Glossoscolecidae of these countries resulted in the publication of these findings in 1972 together with the "Earthworms of Mauritius". Reprints of the latter papers (the last to be published before his death) were presented to me personally in Stockholm barely one week before his untimely death in a traffic accident on 11 September 1973.

His publications clearly revealed his wide field of interest. Apart from direct anatomical descriptions of earthworms, his work included discussions on man's role in their distribution, as well as historical facts related to the subject.

Ljungstrom worked at the Stockholm post office after his return to Sweden in 1972. During his spare time he conducted earthworm research at the Evertebratavdelningen of the Naturhistoriska Riksmuseet where ironically his career had begun some years before.

Ljungstrom never completed secondary school. In spite of this fact he made a major contribution to our knowledge of oligochaetes from various parts of the world. It is a great pity that the scientific world has lost such an exceptional person so young in life. His outstanding achievements will be remembered for many years to come.

**PUBLICATIONS**


1969 An ecological study of the earthworms from the banks of the Mooi River in Potchefstroom, South Africa. Pedobiologia 9 (1/2): (with A.J. Reinecke)


1971 Contribución al conocimiento de la ecología y distribución geográfica de las lombrices de tierra (Oligoquetos) de la Prov. de Santa Fe (Argentina). IDIA, Buenos Aires 284: 19-32. (with F. Emiliani)

1972 Taxonomical and ecological notes on the earthworm genus *Udeina* and a requiem for the South African acanthurelines. Pedobiologia 12: 100-110.


