

Papers in Honour of Ken Aplin

edited by

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The Lives of Creatures Obscure, Misunderstood, and Wonderful: A Volume in Honour of Ken Aplin 1958–2019

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He was always a modest man, but Ken was a genius and the toughest man we knew. He was also extraordinarily generous of spirit. The way he gave of himself, his time, and his hard-won stores of knowledge, was legendary amongst his friends and colleagues. We admired him and we loved him. Ken was a world-renowned comparative anatomist, vertebrate systematist, palaeontologist, and zooarchaeologist. He was a problem solver like few we've ever met, and a fieldworker and world traveller par excellence. Ken's personal and professional outlook embraced the whole world, in all its true facets and flavours, its complexities and eccentricities—he took the world, and all of us in it, as we came. His intellectual reputation extended well beyond Australia and was known to thousands of colleagues who may never have had the chance to meet him.

Ken was funny. It was a sense of humour that helped guide him in all situations, borne in part of never taking himself, or anything else whatsoever, too seriously. Ken belonged to that rare breed of truly grounded people. To say he didn't tend to stand on ceremony is to say the least. He preferred things practical and simple. He had little or no tolerance of honours. He took things as they were, not as they purported or professed or pretended to be. His refusal to kowtow to trend could come off as rather contrarian: he scoffed at anti-malarials and smart phones, even if most of the rest of us decided they were actually pretty useful! As a scientist, a common pattern for Ken would be to produce work of

the most extraordinary calibre, and then publish it in the most obscure possible places. He took a personal pride and pleasure in such things. We admired him for it, though it had the effect that his work often wasn't recognized as widely for its brilliance as it should have been. But Ken sought no glory, period. In proper Aussie style, he was a true champion of the battlers and the underdogs, wherever he found them. Even when it came to his study animals, the more despised they might be in the public eye, the more he loved them. Snakes? Good. Rats? Even better. And the bigger the better.

Ken received many accolades across a varied and deeply respected academic and professional career, which included serving as Curator of Herpetology at the Western Australian Museum and as a Research Scientist at the CSIRO. Among his honours were his appointments as Research Associate at the American Museum of Natural History in New York and the Smithsonian in Washington DC, as well as receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award of the Australian Museum, an award very rarely bestowed. Especially important were Ken's lasting contributions to the conservation of wild landscapes and wild creatures, especially in Southeast Asia and New Guinea—he understood acutely that the world was a grander place than any of us can realize in our short time here. Despite his humility, we in the scientific community could see Ken's greatness, we recognized it, and hope to honour it in a small way with this volume. We have tried to capture the truly dizzying breadth and depth of Ken's knowledge and interests with the contributions presented

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Figure 1. Ken Aplin in his element in 2016, digging a late Holocene faunal deposit in southeastern NSW. Photo courtesy of Brad Pillans.

in these pages. They describe new species of rodents, frogs, and bats, fossil and archaeological sites, and advances in rodent genetics and reproductive biology, amongst others. No topic was off bounds for Ken's piercing intellect, and even the smallest piece of scrappy bone or the tiniest crevice in a rock that harboured some animal remains was like finding treasure (Fig. 1).

Ken was a tough character. He chalked up most of the tropical diseases in the tropical disease textbook. Not the introductory textbook, but that massive reference book few physicians ever have to check out of the library. Malaria and typhus were long time traveling companions, and they came to know him as an opponent who gave as good as he got. A venomous snake bite and a broken back would not keep him down long, and were not to keep him from resuming the extraordinarily strenuous life of a New Guinea field biologist, a role he honed to perfection across four full decades of being ensconced in the natural and cultural worlds of that amazing island. So, literally backbreaking challenges could not tame him. When death stepped forward to introduce itself in his last phase of life, it did not at first realize the strength reflected straight back. Ken endured his final disease with the daunting Aplinian stoicism that all of us so admired. And that deep well of strength was to be seen not just in Ken, but in those around him who cared for him

and loved him, most of all of course Ken's wife Angela and his children. It was painful for all of us to watch his fight, and his pain, but we came to be grateful for the miracle of more time than we might have had any right to expect from the man once sickness set in. We'll remember these final years with sadness but will also remember the many years when Ken was such a whirlwind of strength and verve that to be anywhere near him was to be pulled in close to a world as exciting as any that could be dreamed.

Ken left a mark that resonates deeply on so many, and in so many places around the world. In tropical forests all across the great Indonesian island of Sulawesi, there flies a fruit bat called *Nyctimene cephalotes aplini*. A small fruit bat, with camouflage spotted green and khaki wings, this beautiful little bat has scattered forest seeds throughout its rainforest home for millions of years. We remember too the world's smallest bandicoot, *Microperoyctes aplini*, an exquisite gem of an animal with dark chocolate brown stripes ornamenting soft, fluffy brown fur. This little beast haunts the edges of lakes that dot the mountain vistas of north-western New Guinea: Ken's kind of place. Other creatures, too, were named in Ken's honour, one of the highest forms of recognition in the world of natural history. When we remember Ken, we also remember these beautiful and rare creatures, and be reminded of what a rare and beautiful soul the man was.

Ken Aplin's Eponyms

† extinct taxa

- Nyctimene cephalotes aplini* Kitchener, Packer, and Suyanto, 1995 (Chiroptera: Pteropodidae)
Microperoyctes aplini Helgen and Flannery, 2004 (Peramelemorphia: Peramelidae)
 †*Alormys aplini* Louys, O'Connor, Mahirta, Higgins, Hawkins, and Maloney, 2018 (Rodentia: Muridae)
 †*Uromys aplini* Cramb, Hocknull, and Price, 2020 (Rodentia: Muridae)
Litoria aplini Richards and Donnellan, 2020 (Anura: Pelodyadidae)

Taxa Described by Ken Aplin

† extinct taxa

Ordinal group names

- Suborder Agreodontia Beck, Travouillon, Aplin, Godthelp, and Archer, 2013
 Infraorder Phascolarctomorpha Aplin and Archer, 1987
 Infraorder Vombatomorpha Aplin and Archer, 1987

Family group names

- †Family Holoclemensiidae Aplin and Archer, 1987
 Family Acrobatidae Aplin, 1987
 Tribe Apodemini Lecompte, Aplin, Denys, Catzeffis, Chades, and Chevret, 2008
 Tribe Arvicanthini Lecompte, Aplin, Denys, Catzeffis, Chades, and Chevret, 2008
 Tribe Millardini Lecompte, Aplin, Denys, Catzeffis, Chades, and Chevret, 2008
 Tribe Malacomysini Lecompte, Aplin, Denys, Catzeffis, Chades, and Chevret, 2008
 Tribe Praomyini Lecompte, Aplin, Denys, Catzeffis, Chades, and Chevret, 2008

Genus group names

- †*Watutia* Flannery, Hoch, and Aplin, 1989
Lemdubuoryctes Kear, Aplin, and Westerman, 2016 (junior synonym of *Peroryctes*)

Species group names

- †*Dendrolagus noibano* Flannery, Mountain, and Aplin, 1982
 †*Protemnodon tumbuna* Flannery, Mountain, and Aplin, 1982
 †*Protemnodon nombe* Flannery, Mountain, and Aplin, 1982
Litoria exophthalmia Tyler, Davies, and Aplin, 1986
Mallomys istapantap Flannery, Aplin, Groves, and Adams, 1989
Mallomys gunung Flannery, Aplin, Groves, and Adams, 1989
 †*Watutia novaeguineae* Flannery, Hoch, and Aplin, 1989
Rattus timorensis Kitchener, Aplin, and Boeadi, 1991
Glaphyromorphus butlerorum Aplin, How, and Boeadi, 1993
Ramphotyphlops pilbarensis Aplin and Donnellan, 1993
Ramphotyphlops splendidus Aplin, 1998
Ramphotyphlops longissimus Aplin, 1998
Ramphotyphlops ganei Aplin, 1998
Diplodactylus klugei Aplin and Adams, 1998
Ctenopus maryani Aplin and Adams, 1998
Menetia surda cresswelli Aplin and Adams, 1998
 †*Petauroides ayamaruensis* Aplin, 1999
Dactylopsila kambuayai Aplin, 1999
Pseudantechinus roryi Cooper, Aplin, and Adams, 2000
Varanus bushi Aplin, Fitch, and King, 2007
Delma tealei Maryan, Aplin, and Adams, 2007
Delma desmosa Maryan, Aplin, and Adams, 2007
 †*Coryphomys musseri* Aplin and Helgen, 2010
Microhydromys argenteus Helgen, Leary, and Aplin, 2010
Phascogale tapoatafa wambenger Rhind and Aplin, 2015
Phascogale tapoatafa kimberleyensis Aplin and Rhind, 2015
Aprasia wicherina Maryan, Adams, and Aplin, 2015
Delma hebesa Maryan, Brennan, Adams, and Aplin, 2015
Rattus detentus Timm, Weijola, Aplin, Flannery, and Pine, 2016
 †*Peroryctes aruensis* (Kear, Aplin, and Westerman, 2016)
Halmaheramys wallacei Fabre, Reeve, Fitriana, Aplin, and Helgen, 2017
 †*Macroderma handae* Aplin and Armstrong, 2020

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