

Obituaries

Paleontologist Prof. Alan Turner Passed Away, January 2012

from Mauricio Anton

We are sorry to announce that in January 2012 vertebrate paleontologist Professor Alan Turner passed away. He was a prominent expert on the evolution of carnivorous mammals, and he also contributed to the dissemination of vertebrate paleontology to wider audiences thanks to his popular and semipopular books, and he devoted many years to teaching at Liverpool John Moores University, UK.

Born in 1947, he received his PhD from the University of Sheffield in 1981. He was Senior Curator of Palaeontology and Palaeoanthropology at the Transvaal Museum of Pretoria, South Africa, between 1982 and 1987, and then an associate researcher and Research Fellow at the University of Liverpool between 1987 and 1995. He was appointed as Lecturer at Liverpool John Moores University in 1995 and rapidly progressed to Reader and then to Professor of Vertebrate Palaeontology in 2001.

Alan combined his deep knowledge of Pliocene and Pleistocene carnivores with data from other fields of study to get insights into the larger picture of large-mammal ecology, guild relationships, and migrations – a picture that included our own hominin relatives and showed them as part of a complex scenario of intercontinental faunal migrations. Such insights made his name an inescapable reference in the world of human evolution since the late 1980s.

His popular and semipopular books about different aspects of mammalian evolution are pioneering works that filled niches which were previously almost empty, and have made his subjects of study available to considerably wider audiences than before.

Beyond his achievements in science and education, Alan will be remembered by those who knew him as a great man and a true friend. Working in a highly competitive field where egos often clash, he remained modest and always put loyalty before any other considerations. He had a vast knowledge of culture and loved food, literature and music, and would occasionally delight us with his competent guitar playing.

Alan is survived by his son Adam, and our thoughts are with him in this sad time.

As he would say at the end of his letters to his many Spanish friends, we can now say "Hasta luego, amigo." Farewell, friend. We will always miss you.

