

## **Nomination of Richard Alan Bierhoff Leschen for Fellow of the Entomological Society of New Zealand.**

Richard Alan Bierhoff Leschen, known to friends and colleagues as 'Rich' was born and spent his early years in Newport, Arkansas (USA), where his family ran a hardware store. Son of Jack Leschen and Vicky Bierhoff, the family moved to St. Louis, where he grew up. He developed a keen, broad interest in natural history that eventually focused on reptiles and amphibians. Turns out many systematic entomologists initially intend to be herpetologists, but find the field too limited and sometimes dangerous, and switch to become entomologists as "reformed herpers."

Rich completed his undergraduate studies at Southwest Missouri State University, graduating with a Bachelor of Science (Biology) in 1984. Rich then moved to the University of Arkansas, studying under the brilliant, but sometimes difficult and mercurial Dr. Robert T. (Tommy) Allen. Rich forged deep friendships during this time with close collegial relationship based on shared passions for beetles, the biogeography of the Interior Highlands, and a residual interest in herps, and various other aspects of nature. He graduated from Arkansas with a MSc Entomology in 1988. Rich's life-long fondness for the cucujoid's was cemented in his PhD, undertaken at the University of Kansas under the supervision of J. (Steve) Ashe. This comprehensive study, entitled *The Phylogeny and Revision of the Genera of Cryptophagidae (Coleoptera: Cucujoidea)* was published in the *Kansas University Science Bulletin* in 1996.

The vast portion of Rich's career has been as a systematist specializing in beetles at the New Zealand Arthropod Museum (NZAC), Manaaki Whenua - Landcare Research in Auckland. He started at NZAC in 1997 and his accomplishments there speak for themselves. Rich's infectious enthusiasm for, and his vast knowledge of the New Zealand beetle fauna, has served as a central focus for supporting graduate students both in New Zealand and abroad. Rich has proven himself as a phenomenally productive scientist, mentor, and graduate advisor within New Zealand. He has taken a lead role in training no fewer than 19 graduate students (two currently). Work by Ph.D. students has been diverse with some focusing on the New Zealand staphylinid beetle fauna resulting in substantial monographic contributions about previously poorly known taxa, and over 200 new species descriptions. Rich, his students, and in collaboration with colleagues, have explored the impacts of ice ages, mountain building and offshore islands on beetle diversity and biogeography.

Another significant aspect of Rich's career is his dedication to training. Rich has served as principle instructor for intensive short beetle courses to graduate and early career scientists in China, Japan, the Czech Republic, the United States, Costa Rica, and elsewhere. Courses range from one to three weeks and are an outgrowth of curricula originally developed by John Lawrence and initially taught with Rich, who now presents the material solo as lead lecturer. Rich's commitment to graduate training and mentoring, and his outstanding short courses are exemplary of his explicitly stated mission to not only conduct top quality research during a single lifetime, but to leave a broad legacy of training across multiple generations of

scientists across the globe.

Rich's contributions to the knowledge of New Zealand (and global) Coleoptera have been astonishing! Rich's CV speaks for itself in terms of the number of outstanding and high impact publications (see publication list), editorships, and successful grant applications. Arguably Rich's greatest single publishing accomplishment was his role in preparing, as co-editor, the multiple Coleoptera volumes of the "Handbook of Zoology". His contributions went far, far, beyond the normal editorial tasks of multi-authored tomes of this sort. Many within our global community of systematists have typical human shortcomings when it comes to getting things done on schedule, or had their own ideas about how chapters should be structured, often counter to the prescribed guidelines of the publishers. Both Rich and Rolf Beutel, the other co-editor, fought mightily to see this project to completion, often finding it necessary to enlist additional authors to get things back on track, or, in Rich's case especially, doing it themselves. This attests to Rich's absolute persistence in seeing things to completion, even in the face of colleagues who are not so committed.

Rich has made numerous contributions to the local entomological community. He was president of the New Zealand Entomological Society from 2005 to 2006, was Scientific Editor for New Zealand Entomologist from 2000 to 2003 and was lead organizer for the 2007 conference in New Plymouth.

Outside of entomology Rich has interests beyond beetles, including his passion for music that started when he received his first guitar – aged nine. Rich is a well-known and liked musician among the folk music community in NZ. He founded the Bunker Hill Folk Review, as part of the Mount Victoria Bunker events, which opened the forum to younger folk musicians looking for a venue to start their careers. Rich writes and composes his own songs and has recorded 9 albums, toured around the country a few times, and was interviewed by Jim Mora, from RNZ.

Rich is a congenial and entertaining friend and colleague to many. He has hosted and provided accommodation for visiting researchers from all over the world, often putting them up in his home. Manaaki Whenua - Landcare Research could not have hired a better expat to represent the scientific and cultural interests of New Zealand.

We as nominees hereby submit Richard Alan Bierhoff Leschen for consideration by the executive council and broader membership for the title of Fellow of the Entomological Society of New Zealand.

### ***Nominators***

Chris Carlton, Ph.D., Director and Professor Emeritus, Louisiana State Arthropod Museum, Honorary Member, Coleopterists Society



Thomas Buckley, PhD, Senior Researcher Systematics, Manaaki Whenua -  
Landcare Research

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Th Buckley', with a long, sweeping underline.

Adam Ślipiński, PhD, Research Entomologist, Australian National Insect Collection

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adam Ślipiński', written in a cursive style.

Stephen Pawson, PhD, Honorary Member of the Entomological Society of New  
Zealand, Assoc Professor of Forest Health and Biosecurity, School of Forestry,  
University of Canterbury.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Pawson', written in a cursive style.

## Publication List

Compiled from the Elsevier Scopus database, we acknowledge that this is not comprehensive but represents a selection of more than 300 published outputs.

- Leschen, R. A. B., I. Lobl and K. Stephan (1990). Review of the Ozark Highland *Scaphisoma* (Coleoptera: Scaphidiidae). *Coleopterists Bulletin* 44(3): 274-294.
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- Leschen, R. A. B. and C. E. Carlton (1994). Three new species and a new record of neotropical *Pocadlus* erichson 1843 (Coleoptera: Nitidulidae). *Tropical Zoology* 7(1): 209-216.
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- Leschen, R. A. B. and P. Wegrzynowicz (1998). Generic catalogue and taxonomic status of Languriidae (Cucujoidea). *Annales Zoologici* 48(3-4): 221-243.
- Leschen, R. A. B. (1999). Pseudoliodini (Coleoptera: Leiodidae: Leiodinae) of New Zealand. *New Zealand Entomologist* 22(1): 33-44.
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