

BERNARDO VILLA RAMÍREZ: AN INTRODUCTION

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Bernardo Villa Ramírez was born in Teloloapan, in the state of Guerrero, México, on May 4th, in 1911, to S. Andrés Villa-Brito and Delfina Ramírez. Bernardo is of the proud Aztec race, truly a native American, brought up in the Christian teachings of the Catholic faith. He attended the Escuela Primaria del Estado in Teloloapan in Guerrero and then left home as a young lad to attend the Escuela Secundaria in México City. He became a teacher in the remote village of Yerbabuena, near Teloloapan, where he not only began a school for the village children, but with the help of the older boys, and their fathers on occasion, he also built the school building. Not content with this first experience as a teacher he resolved to learn more about biology, a field that had interested him since boyhood. He continued his education at the Escuela Nacional Preparatoria at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México in México City and in 1944 was awarded the degree "Maestro in Ciencias". The title of his thesis was *Contribución al conocimiento morfológico y osteológico de Citellus adocetus arceliae*. He then traveled to the University of Kansas where he earned a Master of Arts in Zoology degree in 1947 under the direction of the late Professor E. Raymond Hall. His thesis was entitled *Subspeciation in the pocket gophers of Kansas*. While he was earning his degree he held the position of Assistant Professor of Comparative Anatomy. It was there that he made many of the contacts with mammalogists from the United States that would later serve both him and them so well in the future. Upon his return to México City his career and education continued at UNAM. He began his doctoral studies and chose as his major subject the bats of México with the companionship of the late Professor Málaga Alba. While undertaking this extension of his education he also served on the faculty, rising steadily in rank to the position of Professor in the Instituto de Biología. After many years of research, often interrupted by his heavy teaching duties, he presented as his doctoral thesis the now classic *Los Murciélagos de México*. He continued to serve on the faculty at UNAM, where he pursued the extraordinarily successful career that continues at present.

Bernardo was married to Clemencia Cornejo, (now deceased) and has three children. His only son, Bernardo Villa-Cornejo, is a physician with the National Health Service of México. Beatriz Villa-Cornejo, is a Doctor in Veterinary Science at UNAM, Martha Villa-Cornejo, married William López-Forment and is a zoologist, as is William. Martha and Beatriz are twins. Bernardo continues to reside in the Coyote district of México City.

Dr. Villa has published over one hundred papers and notes and is the sole or senior author of the vast majority of these. His co-authors constitute a veritable

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Who's Who of Mammalogy in México and Central América. Most of these papers are in Spanish, but many of these have English abstracts or summaries. Several are in Portuguese, one is in German, and several are in English. Of these notes and articles, 42 are concerned with bats specifically, 13 of these with vampire bats and/or rabies in these animals. Fifteen titles are concerned with rodents, and seven with whales or other cetaceans. There are two titles on wolves and coyotes, two on the white-tailed deer, two on seals, and one each on the pronghorn antelope and on monkeys. The rodent papers dominate the earlier titles, those concerning bats dominate the middle third, and share about equally with whales and seals in the last third of the titles. This is a good reflection of Bernardo's early interest in rodents, and how his attention then became focused on the Chiroptera. His later involvement with marine mammals was a harbinger of the quickening interest world-wide in these endangered taxa. His titles also include 19 works on mammalian distribution, mostly in México, and several titles on techniques useful in field work in mammalogy, and one title on parasitology. He also had the sad but honorable duty to write obituaries in memory of Raymond Gilmore, E. Raymond Hall, Starker Leopold, Alejandro Villalobos F., and William A. Wimsatt.

His published works also include five books. 1) *Mamíferos del Valle de México*, 1953; 2) *Los Murciélagos de México*. 1966; 3) *Anatomía Comparada de los Animales de Laboratorio*, 1970; 4) *Mamíferos de México*, in press and 5) A translation, 1989, of N. Pelham Wright's *A Guide to Mexican Mammals and Reptiles*. Of these, *Los Murciélagos de México* is a monumental work, of a thousand pages. After a quarter century of use by every bat biologist who has ever worked in México, and many other mammalogists around the world, this remains "the book", the definitive source on questions concerning distribution and systematics of the Mexican Chiroptera. Dr. Villa has also served as a critical reviewer, editor, or consultant to over 225 articles, books and other published works, the vast majority of which called upon his expertise as a chiroptologist. He has also translated many major papers from English to Spanish so that they could be of use to a wider audience.

Dr. Villa has always been popular on the lecture-seminar circuit and has given invited lectures, seminars, or other presentation to over 250 audiences in many countries. Many of these were also presented in the popular press, on radio and on television. Most of these have been in presented in México where he has earned the status of "superstar" on topics related to biology and conservation.

Those of us who attend meetings more or less regularly, are always pleased to see Bernardo there. He has attended and contributed to over 100 symposia, congresses, meetings and other formal scientific gatherings. Foremost among these are the annual Meetings of the American Society of Mammalogists, of which he has attended no less than 15, beginning in 1946. When that Society met in México City in 1964, Bernardo served as Host and Chairman of the local committee. This is an especially nostalgic meeting for this author, it was there that I presented my first paper and had the honor of being introduced by Bernardo. He has been active in the Desert Bighorn Sheep Council Meetings. He was one of the founding members of the Annual North American Symposia on Bat Research at its first meeting in Tucson, Arizona in 1970, and has attended several of those symposia. I have seen his list of meetings, etc., that he has attended in México over the years, it includes nearly 100 gatherings, but I know

of several that I have attended and have seen him there, yet many of these are not included in his resume. How many more are there if one had remembered to keep accurate count? He has presented papers at over half (61 at best count) of these meetings. His written and spoken contributions are among the most extensive in existence concerning Mexican mammalogy, and are held in high esteem by all mammalogists who have come in contact with his work.

Dr. Villa has been mentor and advisor to 37 students for the Degree of Licenciatura including his two daughters, Beatriz and Martha, and his son-in-law, William López-Forment. He also directed the graduate study of six students for the Maestría or Master's degree, including López-Forment. He served as faculty advisor and director for the doctoral work of José Ramírez-Pulido, María Enriqueta Velarde González, and Víctor Hugo Tejera Nuñez. In addition he served as juror or examiner on the committees of 40 candidates for the Licenciatura, six for the degree of Maestría and five for the degree of Doctor.

Dozens of professional biologists have been officially affiliated with Dr. Villa as post-doctoral students, visiting faculty, trainees, or research associates. Countless other professionals have had the pleasure of Bernardo's company as field companion, translator, guide, or gracious host, sometimes all of these at once. These fortunate people include such distinguished mammalogists as Lendell Cockrum, Robert Dickerman, Raymond Hall, Knox Jones, Phillip Krutzsch, Joseph Marshall, Terry Vaughan, Don Wilson, and William Wimsatt, to name but a very few. This does not count the veritable legion of bewildered and lost graduate students in a strange land who needed help, none more than this author 30 years ago. For all these people, Bernardo was always there.

Dr. Villa is an active member of the following societies: The American Society of Mammalogists (honorary life member and trustee); Sociedad Mexicana de Historia Natural (serving as Secretary from 1952-54); Southwestern Association of Naturalists (founding member); Socio Aspirante del Colegio de Biólogos de México, A.C.; Miembro de la Asociación de Profesores e Investigadores de Tiempo Completo (Secretario); Academia de la Investigación Científica (founding member); American Museum of Natural History (corresponding member); The National Geography Society; Internacional Union for the Conservation of Natural Resources; California Academy of Sciences; International Theriological Society; International Seabird Society, Bioconservación, A.C. (served as President); Colegio de Investigadores del Instituto de Biología (served as President); Sociedad Mexicana para el Estudio de los Mamíferos Marinos (served as First President); The Marine Mammal Society (founding member); Asociación Mexicana de Mastozoología (President and Honorary Life member); Bat Conservation International (Serving on Scientific Advisory Board); and The Annual North American Symposia on Bat Research (charter member).

His colleagues around the world have found it appropriate and fitting to award him no less than fifty distinguished awards, diplomas, constancias, y reconocimientos for his contributions and outstanding service to so many organizations and to science. Typical of these awards and recognitions is the following, one of his most recent. At the Twentieth Annual North American Symposium on Bat Research at the University of Nebraska in 1990, Dr. Villa was presented with the Gerrit R. Miller Jr. Award. The award reads, "*In recognition of outstanding service and contributions to the field of chiropteran biology, this award is presented by his colleagues to Bernardo Villa-Ramírez at the Twentieth Annual North American Symposium on Bat Research convened at*

the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, Nebraska, on October 26, 1990." In twenty one years this award has been given to eight individuals, a very small but elite group of chiroptologists, including Karl Koopman, Don Griffin, and Bernardo's very dear friend, the late William A. Wimsatt; this is distinguished company indeed and made more so by the addition of Bernardo Villa.

When I was approached to write this introduction, I protested that there were many others who have known Dr. Villa for a longer time, or knew him better than I, until I was reminded that we first met in 1962. I also remembered that we have seen each other nearly every year since, sometimes for only a few days at conferences, at other times for extended periods of up to several weeks on field trips. We have been in many caves together, once during an earthquake. Together we have been accosted by banditos, and we were lost together on more than one occasion in the jungle, and we have spent many happy hours sitting by bat nets, talking quietly in the dark. He and his family have been guests in my house, and my family and I have been guests in his. It has been my pleasant duty to edit and review some of his papers, and he has edited some of mine. Most of all he has been a true and steady friend for nearly thirty years. On the very large presumption that I am equal to the task, and with a great sense of honor and privilege, and with great pleasure, I humbly submit this introduction. I have borrowed from a short but beautifully written biographical tribute to our subject by late William A. Wimsatt (Bat Research News, 1982), and also managed to obtain a complete copy of Bernardo's curriculum vitae which contains a gold mine of information. I have consulted with his friends and colleagues, too numerous to mention, but who know who they are, and with members of his family. Happily, in this case, it is impossible to be too generous with praise. Try as one might, the only dark side to our much admired and much loved subject that can be substantiated, is that he never smoked very good cigars, and to many of his friends, this is his only sin.

The author is indebted to Bonnie Ryan for her assistance in translations, but any errors in translations are my own. For the many omissions of pertinent details and unmentioned contributions I apologize to Bernardo and to his friends.