



SHORT BIOGRAPHIES OF MILITARY VETERAN HERPETOLOGISTS

THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE PARTNERS IN AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE CONSERVATION NETWORK SALUTES
DR. STEPHEN D. BUSACK FOR HIS SERVICE TO THE MILITARY AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO HERPETOLOGY

Dr. Stephen D. Busack was born in Rochester, NY, October 1944. As a child he became interested in the amphibians and reptiles he encountered on the Naval Base in Long Beach, CA, where his father was briefly stationed, and those he later captured and kept as pets once his family returned to New York. His interest in herpetology expanded as he aged, and as a young man he participated in a student exchange program to Panamá, served in the U.S. Peace Corps (in Hilo, Hawaii and Manila, Philippines), and later became a Research Assistant working with his undergraduate advisor at the Archbold Biological Station, Lake Placid, FL.



Military Service: After basic training during 1968 at Great Lakes, IL, Dr. Busack was assigned to the USS Holland while it was being repaired and upgraded in Charleston, SC. The Holland, eventually homeported in Rota, Spain, was his only duty station during his four years in the Navy. When off-duty, he enjoyed exploring the southern Spanish Province of Cádiz in his V.W., monitoring amphibian migration activity, and generally recording herpetological species occurrences. From 1969 to 1972, Dr. Busack collected herpetofaunal specimens for shipment to the Carnegie Museum, striving to obtain adequate monthly examples for food habits and reproductive activity analysis of each species collected. His eventual goal was established early-to gather sufficient data for an extensive report on the biology of each species occurring there. Dr. Busack was released from active duty in 1972 with the final rating of Second Class Petty Officer (Personnelman, E-5). Before returning to the U.S., he served as Field Assistant to the International Biological Program, Desert Biome Section, in Gabès, Tunisia, and later visited London for the purpose of gathering data from Iberian false smooth snakes (*Macroprotodon brevis*) at the British Museum of Natural History.

Contributions to the Field of Herpetology: Dr. Busack is a lifetime member of the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists, the Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles (SSAR), and the Herpetologist's League; throughout his extensive career he has also served as a member of the German Deutsche Gesellschaft für Herpetologie und Terrarienkunde, the Spanish Asociación Herpetológica Española, the European Societas Europea Herpetologica and the International Society for the Study and Conservation of Amphibians. Between 1959 and 2018, he has authored over 50 scientific publications on a variety of Old and New World amphibian and reptile species, with topics including biogeographical analysis, morphology, ecology, molecular analysis, and evolutionary relationships.

Education: After receiving a B.S. (Vertebrate Zoology) in 1967 from Cornell University, Dr. Busack completed his M.S. at George Mason University in 1977 (Thesis: Zoogeography of the amphibians and reptiles of the Cádiz Province, Spain) and his Ph.D. at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1985 (Dissertation: A biogeographic analysis of a vicariant event: the herpetofauna of the Gibraltar Strait).

Professional Positions: Dr. Busack has held many professional positions, including those of Field and Research Associate at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History; Field Assistant with the International Biological Program, Desert Biome Section, Gabès, Tunisia; Museum Technician with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (National Fish and Wildlife Laboratory) at the National Museum of Natural History; Staff Research Associate at the University of California, Berkeley, Museums of Vertebrate Zoology and Biology Departments; Crime Analyst for the City of El Cerrito, CA, Department of Police; and Chief Morphologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (National Fish and Wildlife Forensic Laboratory), Division of Law Enforcement.

In 1996, Dr. Busack was selected for the position of Director of Research and Collections for the North Carolina State Museum of Natural Sciences. In this role, among other accomplishments, he assisted with a massive re-development project for the museum as it moved from the N.C. Department of Agriculture to a newly-constructed museum located within downtown Raleigh, N.C. He remained in this position until retiring in 2006.

Now retired, Dr. Busack continues the research he began in southern Spain. He maintains a small laboratory in the basement of his home, and returns to Rota (home of the Naval Base at which the Holland was stationed) as often as possible. He finds the place where "it all truly began" for him is the perfect place from which to continue his research.

Herpetofauna of Naval Station Rota (left to right). Common Chameleon; Spiny-footed Lizard; Iberian False Smooth Snake; Stripeless Tree Frog; Spanish Terrapin. Pictures by: Paul Block, Dr. Stephen D. Busack and Chris Petersen



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For Open Publication

Dec 11, 2018

Department of Defense

OFFICE OF PREPUBLICATION AND SECURITY REVIEW