



## A tribute to Bert Boekschoten – Introduction

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On 2 November 1998, the Paleontologische Werkkamer of the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen (RUG) organised a one-day scientific symposium in the Biology Centre at Haren, on the occasion of the retirement of Prof. Dr G.J. (Bert) Boekschoten as Professor of Paleontology (Figure 1). Most of the symposium contributions were collected as articles for the present issue. Regrettably, two interesting presentations ('Holocene deer in an archeological context' by A.T. Clason, Groningen Institute of Archeology, RUG, and 'Planctonic Foraminifera: how small creatures document global change' by J. Bijma, Geosciences, University of Bremen) were not committed to paper. Two contributions to this special issue (i.e., those by F. Marin et al. and by A.W. Janssen) were not presented at the symposium.

The idea behind both the symposium and the special issue was to give an impression of the range of present-day Dutch paleontological research with contributions by the 'younger generation' of professional Dutch paleontologists 'grouped around Boekschoten'. A glance through the table of contents and the list of authors will show that the original plan was not strictly realised.

The title of the present issue was thought up by Bert Boekschoten himself and covers much more than the contents of this issue: in fact it summarizes in one line forty years of Bert's active paleontological life up to the present day. The diversity of the subjects dealt with at the symposium and in the present issue reflects not only the wide range but also the steadiness and continuity of his interests, many of which (corals, molluscs, trace fossils, erratics) first manifested themselves in Bert's activities at the former Institute of Geology in Groningen (see the biographical sketch and the included bibliography by Lambers in this issue).

This issue chiefly contains articles that deal with original research, or outline the state of the art in a particular research field. The subject treatment is as



*Figure 1.* With a feeling for tradition Bert Boekschoten reads out his retirement speech, standing on a chair. Biology Centre, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 3 November 1998. Photograph by Mr Henk Groot.

diverse as the subjects themselves: results of experimental archeology (fire tool making) are discussed; brittle star faunas with environmental interpretations are presented in one article, methods and reconstruction of airborne dispersal of gastropods in another; a classical, thoroughly descriptive, systematic approach of pteropod paleontology is found side by side with a critical evaluation of molecular (immunological) phylogenetic techniques. There are a brief bioerosional case study, an appeal for an interdisciplinary approach of threatened coral reefs, an attempt to correlate regional lithostratigraphy and numerical distribution of corals, and the determination of a parietal and the coccoliths in the sediment on the bone. The studied fossil remains themselves include plants, invertebrates (molluscs, corals and echinoderms) and vertebrates (a mosasaur, fish) at macro or micro level. The periods covered vary from Recent to (Late) Silurian, with three contributions about the Late Cretaceous, not surprisingly from the southern Netherlands and adjoining Belgium. Three contributions report on material collected in the Netherlands; one describes material collected partly in former overseas territory (Indonesia), and six mention or have made use of material forming part of important Dutch professional or amateur collections.

As Head of the Paleontologische Werkkamer in Groningen, Bert Boekschoten especially stimulated work on fish remains from archeozoological or paleontological perspectives. The last two contributions in this issue, on the actinopterygians of Solnhofen and on fish microfossils from erratics result from that policy. In Bert Boekschoten's career the encouragement of fish research has been characteristic of (and almost uniquely confined to) his academic activities over the last fifteen years at the Werkkamer. No wonder the initiative to the scientific meeting and this special issue, as an homage to Bert Boekschoten, was taken at the Werkkamer, a unique relict and sanctuary in the history of paleontology in the northern Netherlands.

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