

Rediscovery of a Lost Dragonfly Collection and the Holotype of *Tanypteryx hageni* (Selys)—or—*Tanypteryx* Meets Sasquatch: The Perry Turner Story

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In August 2003, Tim Manolis of Sacramento, California sent an e-mail to Rosser Garrison, Dennis Paulson and Andrew Rehn and asked, "Have you guys ever heard of Perry Turner?"

In fact, we had, but we shall return to the question of "who is Perry Turner" in a moment. Manolis had inquired because, a few days earlier, his friend Lew Oring (an ornithologist at the University of Nevada, Reno) and his wife had happened through Susanville, California on a bird-watching trip. While in Susanville, they visited Pat's Antiques and Used Furniture store. Oring's wife noticed several butterfly and dragonfly specimens on display and learned from the store's owner (Pat Hafflich) that the collection had belonged to Dr. Perry E. Turner, Jr. Thinking

that the collection might be of some interest to local dragonfly enthusiasts and/or museums, Oring alerted Manolis, knowing of Manolis' interest in dragonflies and contacts with other dragonfly-knowledgeable colleagues.

A few days later, mainly out of mild curiosity, Manolis and Rehn traveled to Susanville to examine the collection. Manolis was hopeful that the collection might contain county records for California, and Rehn was hopeful that there might be a few old reprints associated with the specimen collection. They had little idea of what they were about to discover.

After arriving at what turned out to be little more than a junk shop, Manolis and Rehn learned that Hafflich had

acquired the odonate collection when he purchased the entire contents of a large storage locker that had been rented for years by Turner. The locker apparently contained all of Turner's worldly possessions, but after he disappeared and stopped paying rent (sometime around 2001), Haflich purchased the entire contents for \$125. Haflich's shop was full of Turner's belongings, all for sale, including old toy trains, used camera equipment, hundreds of photographic slides in dozens of carousels, oil paintings, etc. The odonate collection was in a back room against the wall. Much of the collection was pinned and stored in three California Academy style insect cabinets with six drawers each. Fortunately, the drawers were tight-fitting and of good quality, because Rehn noticed immediately that two of the cabinets contained numerous specimens of the family Petaluridae that clearly had been borrowed from museums around the world, and that most were still in good condition. In particular, there were four specimens of *Tanypteryx bageni* (Selys) from the Selys collection at the Institut Royal des Sciences Naturelles de Belgique (IRSN) in Brussels. Rehn highly suspected that one of the males, labeled "Nevada, morr." in Selys' hand, was the holotype. Other specimens were clearly indicated by their labels as belonging to various museums, including the United States National Museum (USNM), the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), the British Museum of Natural History (BMNH), the University of Michigan Museum of Zoology (UMMZ), the California Academy of Natural Sciences (CAS), Oregon State University (OSU), the Florida State Collection of Arthropods (FSCA), and the Victoria University of Wellington (VUW).

The third cabinet contained Turner's personal collection of dragonflies and other insects. There were also several Schmitt boxes containing approximately 200 pinned Odonata that had been borrowed from the University of California, Davis (UCD), and a small 3 × 5 card file that contained approximately 200 papered Odonata and Lepidoptera collected by Turner in California and Oregon. Much of the material in the Schmitt boxes and card file had been heavily damaged by dermestids. There was also a file cabinet full of many papers pertaining to dragonfly collection research and records, especially for *T. bageni*. Rehn and Manolis were especially amused to discover that in addition to research on petalurid dragonflies, Turner had long been on the path of Sasquatch (Bigfoot)! There was a voluminous manuscript that described Sasquatch as a new family, genus and species of hominid, and a second, equally voluminous manuscript that described Sasquatch insectivory on petalurid larvae: apparently Sasquatch digs the larvae out of their burrows and eats them, and is rare because its food source is rare!

After having a good laugh over the Bigfoot manuscripts, Rehn explained to Haflich the scientific value of the collection and that much of the material had not rightly belonged to Turner. Haflich was unsympathetic to the scientific value and importance of this material, and the encounter became somewhat unfriendly when Haflich said that he would not give the museum specimens back to rightful owners (i.e. museums), having acquired them legally. Haflich indicated that he would only sell the collection in its entirety and that he expected to get several thousand dollars for it. However, Haflich later agreed (to Rehn) that he would give back any material that could be documented, and he gave Rehn one month to produce the documentation. Also during their visit with Haflich, Rehn and Manolis learned from him that in addition to the items on the sales floor, there were approximately 150 additional boxes of stuff in Turner's storage locker that Haflich had not had time to open and sort through. Haflich claimed that those boxes were not on the premises.

Returning to his home in Sacramento, Rehn reported his findings to Paulson and Garrison and began contacting the various museums to acquire the old loan forms necessary to document ownership. He was particularly dismayed when, with the help of Garrison, he learned from Jérôme Constant at the IRSN that the type of *T. bageni* was not present in the Selys collection and that there were records of four specimens being loaned to Turner in 1984. In addition, Rehn learned that Turner had borrowed from the IRSN a large collection of letters sent from R. McLachlan and H.K. Morrison to Selys between 1878 and 1881, but the documents had never been returned. Morrison was a commercial insect collector in the late 19th century who operated first out of Cambridge, Massachusetts, and then later out of Morganton, North Carolina. He collected specimens all over North America and sold Odonata to Selys for 10 cents each, including the holotype of *T. bageni*, which he collected somewhere in the Sierra Nevada above Reno in 1878.

All of the museums provided Rehn with copies of their loan records, and there was much evidence that over the years many curators had repeatedly asked Turner to return the loans, which he never did. Meanwhile, Paulson had related the story on the Natural History Collections Listserve (NHCOLL-L), where it caught the attention of USNM collections manager David Furth, who would soon become very involved in the story. After six weeks, Rehn contacted Haflich and indicated that he had acquired documentation from most of the collections known to have loaned material to Turner. At that time, Haflich claimed that he had sold the collection to a university, but would not divulge where.

Allow us to digress for a moment and introduce Dr. Perry E. Turner, Jr. Turner was a doctoral student of Michael Ghiselin (a famous systematist and evolutionary biologist) at UC Berkeley in the late 1960s. Having completed both his undergraduate and Master's degrees at Berkeley with R.L. Usinger, he earned a doctorate in Zoology from there in 1970. His dissertation research centered on the ecology and population biology of *T. bageni*, which at that time was considered to be much rarer than is known today. Turner became somewhat infamous among other odonatists, entomologists and ecologists because his dissertation ("Allusive Dragons") was rather obtuse and speculative, often drifting into lengthy discussions of general principles of ecology, the genetics of speciation and the philosophy of science. After finishing at Berkeley, he acquired a post-doctoral position at Harvard to study with Ernst Mayr, but he never attended (we discovered a letter that Mayr had written to Turner in 1971, clearly annoyed, explaining that Turner's appearance on the Harvard campus for an hour one afternoon did not constitute enrollment).

More importantly, Turner was known for borrowing material and never returning it. During the 1960s, '70s and '80s, Turner borrowed Odonata specimens, especially of the family Petaluridae, from public and private collections all over the world. In addition to the museums noted above, he acquired material from the personal collections of Tony Watson, Syoziro Asahina, and Dennis Paulson, and possibly others. As we discovered, he corresponded voluminously with Bastiaan Kiauta, Minter Westfall, Allen Davies, and many others. In 2003, Rehn learned from Kiauta that Turner had acquired much antiquarian literature from SIO over the years, and that Turner eventually left at least two large invoices unpaid: one for a full run of the journal *Konowia*, and a second for the lavish *Dragonflies of Japan in Color* by Hamada and Inoue (1986). Turner claimed repeatedly over the course of several years that he was going to privately publish his dissertation as an encyclopedic account of the life history and population biology of *T. bageni*, and that additional volumes on ecology and biogeography were forthcoming. He was self-employed as an ecological consultant, and used his business (Turner Laboratories, Ltd.) as a front for borrowing material under the guise of ongoing research in dragonfly ecology and systematics. However, we never discovered evidence of him ever having any clients, and it was apparent from many of his personal letters that he often received money from his parents. Rehn met Turner by chance in 1995 at Butterfly Valley in California, a well-known *T. bageni* locality. It was clear at that time that he was living out of his car, a 1968 Mercury Cougar, which was eventually purchased by Haflich (entirely dismantled) as part of the contents of Turner's storage locker.

Now, back to the caper . . .

In October 2003, after Haflich claimed that he had sold the Turner collection to an anonymous source (which was obviously untrue), Dave Furth (USNM) and Rehn began discussing the possibility of taking legal action to recover the borrowed material. First, Furth embarked on a covert spying operation in December 2003 to confirm that the material was still at Haflich's junk shop in Susanville. Accompanied by a personal friend (Doug Unger from Reno, Nevada), he anonymously visited the shop as an "ignorant" tourist. The only employee at the store that day was Haflich's ex-wife. Furth found the Turner materials exactly as described by Rehn, in the back room against a wall. The cabinets were stacked on top with many Kodak carousels of slides as well as various glass top display boxes with butterflies (e.g., a case with giant silk moths marked for \$79, a case of a male and female birdwing butterflies marked at \$100, an unmarked larger case of exotic butterflies that Haflich's ex-wife thought may be selling for \$300, etc.) After the appearance of Furth's casual interest in butterflies, Haflich's ex-wife freely divulged that there was a lot more of the Turner material at Haflich's home and that she thought that he had only paid about \$25 for the abandoned storage locker. She also told stories she had heard about Turner's weird existence. She showed off many large oil paintings of dragonflies, butterflies, trout, and other natural history scenes painted by Turner hanging around the store (priced from about \$100–\$300). Also there were many used cameras and especially a significant collection of 50-cent coins—all for sale in the store.

Armed with the knowledge that the Turner collection was, in fact, still in Susanville, Furth returned to Washington, D.C. and approached Elaine Johnston of the Smithsonian Institution's Office of General Counsel (OGC) about using legal recourse against Haflich should he refuse to cooperate in returning any borrowed material to the appropriate institutions. Beginning in December 2003, Furth acquired Authorization and Release Forms from appropriate persons at several institutions that had loaned material to Turner; these forms gave the Smithsonian permission to act on their behalf in recovery of the specimens. It took many months for Ms. Johnston to affect any action, but Furth refused to allow the issue to be forgotten and tenaciously pressed Johnston to present Haflich with a formal request from the Smithsonian's OGC to return the borrowed material. The first author thinks that the entire odonatological community owes an enormous debt to Dave Furth, because his unwavering persistence finally achieved results. In August 2004, the Smithsonian Institution, with the support of the U.S. Department of Justice (Sacramento), formally drafted a request that Haflich return all the dragonfly specimens and related archival

material to the USNM and other collections. It was made clear in the request that the U.S. Dept. of Justice was prepared to use all legal recourse against Haflich, including civil or criminal prosecution, should he destroy, sell or dispose of in any way any part of the dragonfly collection.

In early September 2004, Furth returned to Susanville, this time not so anonymously. He presented Haflich with the letter from the Smithsonian's Office of General Council and the supporting letter from the U.S. Dept. of Justice. He also showed Haflich the loan forms from the many institutions and the letters written by various curators over the years as they attempted to get Turner to send their material back. Haflich became very cooperative at that point, and Furth was able to retrieve many of the lost Odonata specimens that day. The specimens were transported (in two trips via Reno) in bulk to the Bohart Museum of Entomology at UC Davis where Rehn sorted through them, associated specimens with loan forms to the extent possible, and finally boxed them up and returned them to their institutions. Furth also found the Morrison/McLachlan correspondence to Selys, and many rare and important books including: Rambur (1842) *Histoire naturelle des insectes—Névroptères*; Ris (1911–1919) *Libellulinen monographisch bearbeitet*; Tillyard (1917) *The Biology of Dragonflies*; a large collection of Selys reprints, and several others which Rehn and Garrison eventually purchased from Haflich. Furth also found a collection of 24 books that bore the bookplate of the late Robert L. Usinger, an aquatic entomologist and professor at Berkeley when Turner was a student there. There were many classic books on ecology and evolution in Usinger's collection, and they have since been returned to Usinger's widow, Martha, who is 92 years old and still lives in the Berkeley area. We speculate that Turner either took or simply failed to return them when Usinger died in 1968.

Some of the material that was documented on the various loan forms was not recovered on Furth's first visit. For example, the CAS had loaned Turner over 200 Odonata specimens between 1964 and 1967, but with the exception of a single Schmitt box containing a few specimens from the Galapagos Islands, most of it was not recovered. About a dozen AMNH specimens were unaccounted for, and at the time we also suspected that additional years of correspondence from McLachlan to Selys were still missing, but this later proved to be a misunderstanding due to a probable typo on the original loan form. Moreover, there were still many boxes that had been in Turner's locker which Haflich had never opened and were not available to Furth on his first visit to recover the material. Thus, he made a second trip to Susanville in December 2004 and went through the remaining boxes, which Haflich had stored in a rental locker off site. Furth was able to recover

the additional material from the AMNH, but unfortunately most of the CAS material, the Konowia volumes and Dragonflies of Japan in Color were never recovered. Also, several of the Smithsonian's specimens were not recovered. In the end, however, much of the material that Turner had borrowed was recovered and returned to the appropriate institutions. In cases where specimens had been lost or destroyed by pest damage, we used Turner's own collection to replace them. The type of *T. bageni* and the hand-written letters that Morrison and McLachlan sent to Selys are now safely home in Brussels.

We discovered so many oddities (in addition to the Bigfoot manuscripts) while looking through Turner's belongings for odonate-related material that it would be impossible to recount them all here, but a few choice examples are worth mentioning in closing. At one point we found the top of what appeared to be a mammalian skull in a wooden box. Eventually we found a file of seemingly related correspondence between Turner and several mammalogists to whom he had sent the skull. In his letters, Turner had argued that the skull fragment belonged to a previously unknown species of *Homo* that had inhabited the Pacific cordilleran region, but the mammalogists all assured him that it was from a baby elk. Turner was a member of the International Society of Cryptozoology, and wrote several personal accounts of visual and "non-visual" encounters with Sasquatch. He evidently spent hundreds of hours during the winter typing, re-typing, and annotating his dissertation and its multiple editions, which he never published, and he never threw any of the copies away. In time it became clear to us, through Turner's countless and lengthy letters to Bastiaan Kiauta, that he had borrowed the holotype of *T. bageni* and the letters that Morrison had written to Selys in the late 1870s because he was trying to find the exact bog where Morrison had collected the type specimen. He claimed once in a letter to Kiauta (he always kept multiple copies of every letter he wrote) that after receiving the type from Brussels, he could ascertain the type locality from minute morphological variations in the specimen. His new researches were thus the source of constant delay in the publication of *Allusive Dragons*, which he repeatedly assured Kiauta was going to be a fascinating work, well worth waiting for. It never appeared, but copies of it and several of his more bizarre writings are housed at the Smithsonian Institution. His dragonfly collection is at UC Davis.

The fate of Perry Edward Turner, Jr. remains a mystery.