

Monty Wood – a life of travel around the world for tachinids sake

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Perhaps there is no better way to illustrate the life of the multi-talented D. Monty Wood than in the words of Adler & Currie (2021), **“a naturalist and systematist nonpareil”**. It would be fair to add that he was eager to collect as many tachinids as possible from all biogeographic regions to advance his understanding of the phylogeny of the family. Monty’s travels resemble in some ways those of 19th Century explorers who devoted their lives to exploring remote places, motivated by curiosity about the unknown and collecting as much information and specimens as they could that would later serve as the foundations of their revolutionary ideas.

Admittedly, this comparison may seem a magnification of Monty’s contributions. But his authorship of chapters in the *Manual of Nearctic Diptera* (e.g., Wood 1987), on the phylogeny of the Nematocera (Wood & Borkent 1989), on external morphology of Diptera (Cumming & Wood 2009), on homology of male terminalic characters (Wood 1991, Sinclair *et al.* 1994, Cumming *et al.* 1995, Sinclair *et al.* 2007), and a book on the black flies of North America (Adler *et al.* 2004), among other works, speak for themselves. Such comprehension of the diversity of this insect order that constitutes around 10% of animal diversity was reached through Monty’s involvement as one of the coordinators of the *Manual of Nearctic Diptera*, his opportunities to work on distantly related families like black flies and tachinids, but also through an entire life of collecting expeditions and observations.

Monty was interested in finding zoogeographical connections between the Palaearctic and Nearctic regions through Beringia (Wood 1978, Lafontaine & Wood 1988) and this interest led to multiple expeditions to the Yukon territory in northern Canada early in his career, and later to the eastern regions of the former Soviet Union and Japan. At the same time, Monty’s friend Vera Richter at the Zoological Institute in St. Petersburg had similar interests in species with Holarctic distributions. Their collaborations resulted in a couple of papers on the tachinids of the Yakutia and Kamchatka regions (Richter & Wood 1995, 2004).

Monty’s growing interest in rearranging the classification of the world Tachinidae took him throughout the New World on multiple travels, including most of the countries of Central America and down through the Andes and Patagonia. Monty was especially fond of visiting summits in search of hilltopping tachinids. These hilltops also allowed him to observe, and speculate on, the characteristics of mate-searching behavior in tachinids on summits (Wood 1987, 1996). His enthusiasm for hilltops and their tachinid visitors motivated his colleagues to collect on hilltops as well (O’Hara 1996, 2012, Tschorsnig 1996, Stireman *et al.* 2018).

Monty’s determined spirit took him, and on most occasions also his dear wife Grace, on a myriad of travels over five decades around the world, in many places undoubtedly engaging in constructive discussions with other restless colleagues and friends. I have used the georeferenced records available in the Canadian National Collection of Insects

(CNC) specimen database to plot on the maps below the many locations where Monty collected insects (Figs. 1,2). These records total about 47,000 for specimens of all orders, with tachinids making up over 16,000. However, these records do not fully document all of the tachinids in the CNC that Monty collected because only a portion of his tachinids have been databased. Locality data from all databased insects collected by Monty has been used to help show where Monty collected around the world. Most of Monty's tachinids were collected after his retirement in 1986 and were collected, pinned and labelled at his own expense. They were later donated to the CNC over the course of many years. Such a personal collecting effort not only assisted Monty to revolutionize the classification of the New World Tachinidae, but also made available for future generations of dipterists a huge number of undescribed taxa not otherwise represented in natural history collections. Thanks Monty!

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Figure 1. Map of the Old World and Greenland showing places where Monty collected insects.

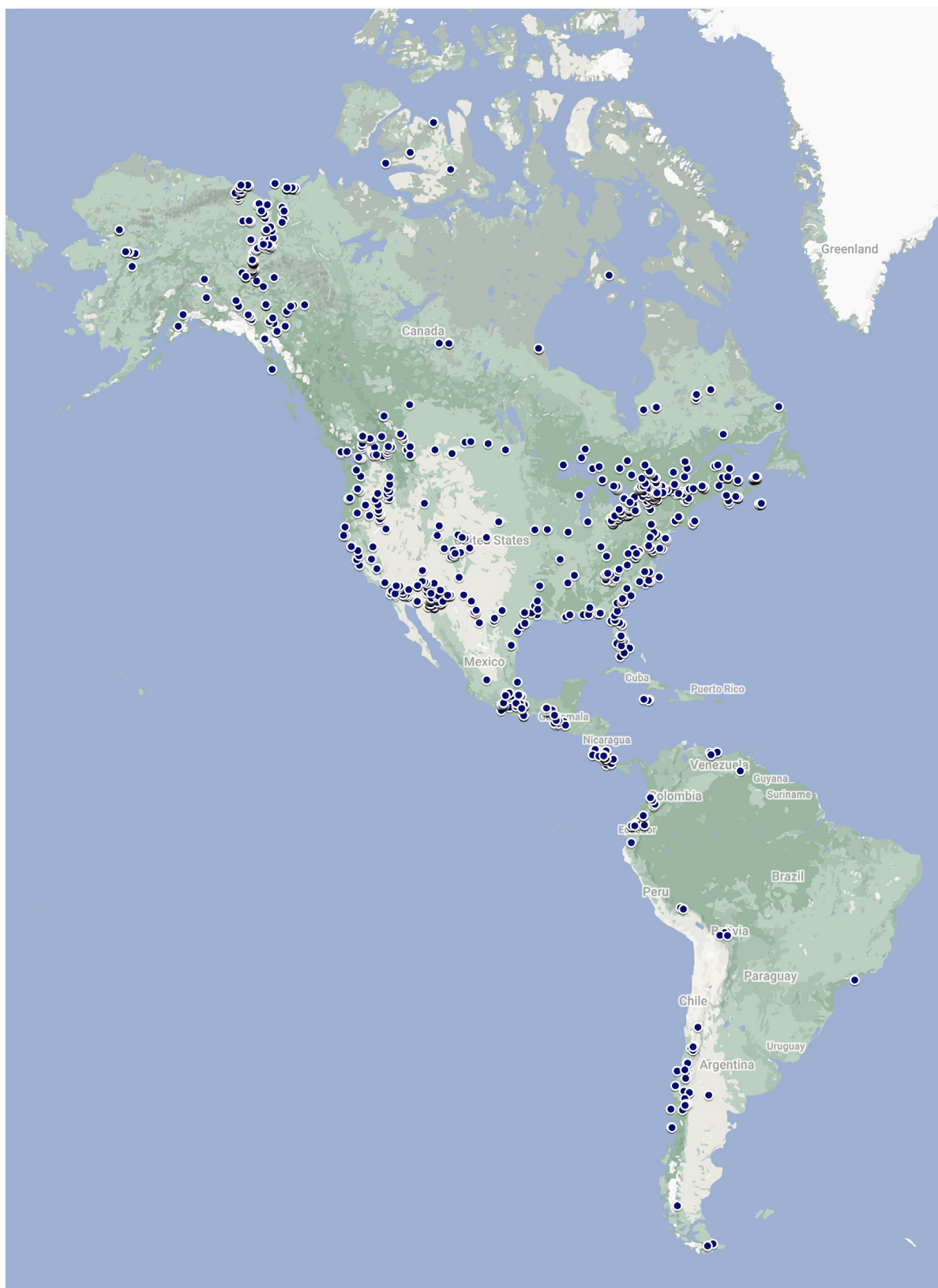


Figure 2. Map of the New World showing places where Monty collected insects.