

IN MEMORIAM:  
MICHAEL H. MACROBERTS  
28 SEPTEMBER 1941–18 DECEMBER 2021

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**Christopher Reid, Louisiana State University**

Michael H. MacRoberts was born in Shreveport, Louisiana. Readers will be most familiar with the extensive botanical and ecological work he carried out in the West Gulf Coastal Plain over the last 30 years with his wife Barbara. It is impossible to write about Michael without including Barbara, his wife of 58 years. The pair published over 150 papers together on diverse research topics, and have been inseparable through numerous adventures. Michael earned his Ph.D. at the University of California-Berkeley in 1968; his dissertation was on the social structure of Barbary apes in Gibraltar. Michael and Barbara lived in the UK for several years. They conducted research and published articles on animal behavior and communication, sociology and philosophy in science, and especially botany and ecology. In addition to their research, Michael and Barbara worked with resource managers at the USDA Forest Service and other agencies to implement sound management practices for habitats such as pitcher plant bogs and calcareous prairies.

I first met Michael and Barbara in 2003. I met them in the Winn District of Kisatchie National Forest to help with monitoring of Louisiana's only known population of *Parnassia grandiflora*. At the time, I was a botanist with the Louisiana Natural Heritage Program. In the subsequent years I spent a lot of time in Northwest Louisiana, which is a definite hotspot. I would frequently visit with Michael and Barbara and share any interesting finds. I always appreciated their support when I had struck out on finding something I was looking for, and their excitement when I would relate a really great discovery to them, such as a state record or a new, interesting site. I have especially fond memories of bringing them out to a beautiful saline barren complex. Our relationship continued for nearly 20 years. I will miss the hugs Michael would give me when I departed to drive back to Baton Rouge.

**Lynn Jackson, Kisatchie National Forest**

I had the privilege of working with Barbara and Michael MacRoberts from 1992 to 2008 on the Winn Ranger District of the Kisatchie National Forest. I was the district wildlife biologist and enlisted them to survey the district for new prairies and pitcher plant bogs. They were invaluable to the Kisatchie National Forest and increased our knowledge of the botanical resources on the forest. In addition to the professional relationship, we enjoyed a personal relationship. When the two would visit the forest, often they would spend the night at my house and eat a delicious fried fish meal prepared by my husband. We would discuss work, politics, and the meaning of life usually over several bottles of wine. Michael and Barbara became great friends. Time spent with them was not wasted. I learned a lot from him, and I was proud to call Michael my friend. I miss him every day.

**John Michael Kelley, Walter B. Jacobs Nature Park**

I only knew Michael for a couple of years, and it certainly was not long enough for me to synthesize his full character. It was just "Michael"; no "sir." If we could not speak as equals then we could not speak. Michael gave me an opportunity to work in the herbarium at LSUS for my fledgling botany projects. It was always

interesting to tell Michael what I was working on. He and Barbara approached problems from different angles, but from a place of shared wisdom on the issues of Louisiana botany. Michael sometimes left me notes about his opinions on my endeavors: "Cronquist says" this and "Have you checked FNA for that?" At the end he would tell me to publish my conclusions regardless of what they might be. He never discouraged me from writing; as long as I was publishing, I was doing the Lord's work. A young scientist needs that sort of endorsement. When my retirement comes, and my tenure has been earned, I will try to look at the animate young naturalists who find me with that same sort of respect. I will speak to them as an equal. Just "John Michael," no "sir."

#### **Jennifer S. Kluse, Shirley C. Tucker Herbarium (LSU)**

Though I only had the fortune of meeting Michael once, his generosity and enthusiasm for Louisiana botany left a lasting impression on me. In 2016 Lowell Urbatsch and I drove a university van north to Louisiana State University Shreveport (LSUS) to receive a sizable portion of The D.T. MacRoberts Herbarium at the time of Michael's retirement. We were able to secure the most valuable specimens and much of the duplicate material while leaving an intact, robust teaching reference collection at LSUS. Appropriately, most collections we examined were inscribed "DTM" for Michael's father or the inseparable team of "B.R. & M.H. MacRoberts." Aside from gifting their collections to the Shirley C. Tucker Herbarium at Louisiana State University (LSU) and future botanists in the state, Barbara and Michael generously wrote letters and sent donations each year thereafter to LSU to support curation and digitization. Michael was an outspoken academic and diligent planner, working to ensure that the MacRobert's family legacy of tracking rare plants and describing unique habitats continues to be accessible and relevant. While his legacy carries on, his presence will be missed.

#### **David C. Moore, Kisatchie National Forest**

I first learned about Barbara and Michael MacRoberts while browsing the stacks at Dartmouth College in 1993. It was there that I came across an article they had written on the "Vascular Flora of Two West Louisiana Pitcher Plant Bogs" (MacRoberts, B.R. & M.H. MacRoberts. 1992. Floristics of four small bogs in western Louisiana with observations on species-area relationships. *Phytologia* 73:49–56). That initial discovery turned into an all-day search for articles by the MacRoberts. I did not leave Dartmouth that day disappointed, other than not having enough change to make copies of every article. Four years later I found myself working for the Kisatchie National Forest and soon after had the privilege of meeting them for the first time. I felt an instant connection. My work included those very pitcher plant bogs and the calcareous prairies they have so thoroughly studied. I was lucky in that I was able to spend a lot of time with them in the field and learned something new every time we went botanizing. Barbara and Michael proved to be a formidable team when it came to discussions about ecosystem restoration on the Kisatchie National Forest, and their work still influences decisions made there. Michael's dedication to all things botanical in the West Gulf Coastal Plain will be missed greatly. Godspeed Michael.

#### **Guy Nesom, Phytoneuron**

I first met Michael (and Barbara, too) in the TEX-LL herbarium while they were working on IDs for a WGCP project. Clearly someone who enjoyed what he was doing and nearly always with a laugh (often nearly a guffaw) that seemed to imply philosophical undertones.

The three of us worked together in 1997 on a study of an unusual baygall-like community south of Huntsville, Texas. Each trip we lunched and laughed under the shrubs on the slopes. Besides the dominants, Michael was particularly delighted to encounter plants of the rare (in Texas) *Hottonia inflata* and spent lens time looking at it closely.

The last time I saw him was on a visit to their apartment in Shreveport, book-walled and cozy, with a strong aura of the botanist/philosopher who lived there. With admiration and great respect to a friend who did what he enjoyed and did it well.

**Rosanna Ohlsson, Walter B. Jacobs Park (formerly)**

I had the pleasure of working for a brief time in the field with Michael, and Barbara in the herbarium at LSUS. Good memories were made collecting, identifying, and preparing plant specimens. It was never boring, and always made lively by banter on the subtler points of sedge identification, or complaints of taxonomic changes. It was followed by deliberations on politics, the attributes of felines, a particularly good novel, then closed with beverage of choice, a glass of vino.

Listening to the narratives about the many unique places they had worked and lived was such a pleasure; from studies of the Barbary Macaques in Gibraltar, or the Acorn Woodpecker, to floristics in Texas and Louisiana. Their contributions to science and the fact that they worked and collaborated their studies jointly, in addition to staying married for so many years, is truly admirable.

Collectively we would discuss our concerns about the degradation and loss of habitat in areas we held special. In a moment of doom and gloom, I recall how Michael was optimistic about the future of these treasured natural areas. He believed that people did indeed care and that yes, a younger generation would step up to help protect and preserve habitats and species of special concern. He gave me more of it, this thing called 'hope,' and for that I am grateful.

**Suzanne Birmingham Walker, Azimuth Forestry Services, Inc.**

I met Michael and Barb over 25 years ago. I cannot believe it has been that long. Michael, although short in stature, was easily seen in the field with his requisite red cap. He was ready for the woods, when he popped that hat on, changed his driving moccasins for his field boots and hoisted his backpack that was adorned with old pet tags, from he and Barbara's cat(s) I imagined. We could be carrying a long conversation about the state of the world, environment, lack of field botanists, or politics and he would break conversation to say "hey there is *Carex tenax*" or some other species. I truly enjoyed working with Barb and Michael as we would plan trips to the National Forest or Big Thicket. I learned much from those days and years in the field.

One time Barbara and Michael came to my office to vet numerous specimens for me. I implored him to send me an invoice, because they spent so much time helping me out. A few days later I received an invoice and the fee was a bowl of menudo and a some tamales. He loved authentic Mexican food and I happily paid the invoice. He will be dearly missed.

**Theo Witsell, Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission**

I came to know Michael through the many wonderful papers that he and his wife Barbara published on the floristics of the West Gulf Coastal Plain. It seemed like he and Barbara had at least one, but often more than one, robust vouchered floristic paper in each issue of *Sida*/*JBRIT*. These were always focused on some interesting area or habitat and I read each one, poring over their species lists and gaining perspective on the flora and natural communities of the region. In a time when this sort of basic floristic documentation is more needed than ever, yet seldom performed, it is hard to overstate how important these papers are.

When I finally met Michael in person in 2010 I was pleasantly surprised. For some reason I was expecting a buttoned up academic type, but instead I found him wonderfully informal, blunt and to the point – and with a sailor's mouth! His floristic skills were legendary and I was not disappointed in the field, though he confronted me early on at our first field site together after I made some comment about which subspecies or variety something might be. "Are you one of these botanists who goes on and on about 'taxa?!'"

We only collaborated on a single study together, a floristic analysis of some blackland prairie remnants in southwestern Arkansas, but I was honored to get to work with him and Barbara and to have many of their specimens in the ANHC Herbarium. I hope to leave as valuable a legacy of specimens and scholarship when I'm gone.

**Barney Lipscomb, Fort Worth Botanic Garden|Botanical Research Institute of Texas**

Michael MacRoberts was a friend, colleague, and a longtime subscriber, contributor, and supporter of *Sida* and of *JBRIT*. His first paper of many papers was in 2002 in *Sida* (*Floristics of xeric sandylands in the post oak savanna region of East Texas*, 20(1):373–386). However, D.T. MacRoberts, his father, first published in *Sida* in

1977 (Additions to the Louisiana flora, 7(2):220–222). I was then assistant editor working alongside Wm. F. Mahler, editor. Michael and Barbara not only submitted manuscripts to *Sida* and *JBRIT*, but they were always willing to give back by contributing detailed and prompt reviews of submissions from colleagues. They were thorough yet kind reviewers! I remember in 2006, when volume one of the Illustrated Flora of East Texas was published, and there was a book signing at Stephen F. Austin State University. Of course the MacRoberts were there praising and congratulating the authors.

To the MacRobert's family, it is a pleasure for Fort Worth Botanic Garden|Botanical Research Institute of Texas to recognize, honor, and remember Dr. Michael H. MacRoberts, a dear friend, colleague, and member and faithful servant of the botanical community. Thank you for giving us so many wonderful contributions to botany!

#### BRIEF CURRICULUM VITAE

### MICHAEL H. MacROBERTS

#### Birthdate/place

28 September 1941. Shreveport, Louisiana.

#### Education

Post-Doc. Department of Zoology, Oxford University, 1969–1972

Ph.D. University of California, Berkeley, 1965–1968

University College, London, 1963–1964

B.A. University of Arizona, Tucson, 1959–1963

#### Current Positions

Ecologist, Bog Research, 740 Columbia, Shreveport, LA 71104 (sole proprietor); Phone 318-218-8297

Gratis Professor and Curator, Herbarium, Museum of Life Sciences, Louisiana State University-Shreveport, Shreveport, LA 71115; mmacrobe@lsus.edu

Research Associate, Red River Watershed Management Institute, Louisiana State University-Shreveport, Shreveport, LA 71115; mmacrobe@lsus.edu

#### Main Research

1964. Six-month study of social organization and behavior of Barbary Apes on Gibraltar.

1968 and 1971–1974. Three-year field study of the social organization of Acorn Woodpeckers in California.

1969–1971. Several field studies of the breeding biology and behavior of gulls in Cumbria, England, and of flocking and feeding in titmice, Oxford, England.

1974–1983. Studies in the field (Nova Scotia and California) of animal communication and theoretical studies of animal communication.

1983–present. Research on the sociology and philosophy of science, notably on credit allocation in scientific research.

1986–present. Botanical/ecological research on biogeography, plant communities, and rare species in the West Gulf Coastal Plain. Floristics of the Big Thicket National Preserve.

#### Grants, Presentations, aAwards

Have received many grants, made many presentations at innumerable conferences, and received several awards. Contracts include Texas Parks and Wildlife, Louisiana Natural Heritage Program, The Nature Conservancy, U.S. Forest Service, U. S. Park Service, American Philosophical Society, National Institutes of Health, National Research Council, Nature Conservancy, United Kingdom, and private citizens.

#### Publications

MacRoberts, M.H., B.R. MacRoberts, & C. M. Allen. 2020. *Polyopogon viridus* (Poaceae):new to Louisiana. *Phytoneuron* 2020-73:1–4.

MacRoberts, M.H. & B.R. MacRoberts, 2020. Additions to the vascular flora of Caddo Parish Louisiana. *Phytoneuron* 2020-74:1–3.

MacRoberts, M.H., B.R. MacRoberts, & M.J. Lewis. 2018. Additions to the vascular flora of Caddo Parish, Louisiana. *Phytoneuron* 2018-57:1–4.

MacRoberts, M.H., B.R. MacRoberts, E.L. Keith, & G.L. Nesom. 2018. *Palhinhaea cernua* (Nodding club-moss) west of the Mississippi River. *Phytoneuron*-2018-4:1–5.



Michael, with his wife Barbara at right, and Jesse Johnson, in a calcareous prairie in Kisatchie National Forest.

MacRoberts, M.H. & B.R. MacRoberts. 2018. The mismeasure of science: citation analysis. *J. Assoc. Infor. Sci. Techn.* 69:474–482.

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MacRoberts, B.R., M. H. MacRoberts, D. Craig Rudolph, & D.W. Peterson. 2014. Floristics of ephemeral ponds in east-central Texas. *S. E. Naturalist (Steuben)* 13(5):15–25.

MacRoberts, B.R., M. H. MacRoberts, C.S. Reid, & R. Ohlsson-Salmon. 2012. Further additions and emendations to the vascular flora of Caddo Parish, Louisiana. *J. Bot. Res. Inst. Texas* 6:279–281.

MacRoberts, M.H. & B.R. MacRoberts. 2012. *Portulaca umbraticola* (Portulacaceae) in Louisiana. *Phytoneuron* 2012-6:1–4.

- MacRoberts, B.R., M.H. MacRoberts, & C.T. Witsell. 2011. Small-scale vascular plant species richness in southwestern Arkansas blackland prairies. *J. Bot. Res. Inst. Texas* 5:743–751.
- MacRoberts, M.H. & B.R. MacRoberts. 2011. *Desmanthus virgatus* (Fabaceae) new to Louisiana. *Phytoneuron* 2011-54:1–3.
- MacRoberts, M.H. & B.R. MacRoberts. 2011. *Kallstroemia parviflora* (Zygophyllaceae): new to Louisiana. *Phytoneuron* 2011-40:1–3.
- Brown, L.E., B.R. MacRoberts, M.H. MacRoberts, W.W. Pruess, I.S. Elsik, & S. Jones. 2010. Annotated checklist of the vascular flora of the Jack Gore Baygall and Neches Bottom units of the Big Thicket National Preserve, Tyler, Jasper, and Hardin counties, Texas. *J. Bot. Res. Inst. Texas* 4:473–488.
- Reid, C.S., P.L. Faulkner, M.H. MacRoberts, B.R. MacRoberts, & M. Bordelon. 2010. Vascular flora and edaphic characteristics of saline prairies in Louisiana. *J. Bot. Res. Inst. Texas* 4:357–379.
- MacRoberts, M.H. & B.R. MacRoberts. 2010. *Hydrocleys nymphoides* (Limncharitaceae): New to Louisiana. *Phytoneuron* 2010-29:1–2.
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- MacRoberts, M.H., B.R. MacRoberts, & G.M. Hanson. 2008. Vascular flora of C. Bickham-Dickson/Red River Education and Research Park, Caddo Parish, Louisiana: an oxbow lake community, with comments on exotic/native species ratios. *J. Bot. Res. Inst. Texas* 2:1389–1406.
- MacRoberts, M.H. & B.R. MacRoberts. 2008. Rare and endemic plants of the Big Thicket: a phytogeographical analysis. *J. Bot. Res. Inst. Texas* 2:1475–1479.
- Brown, L.E. B.R. MacRoberts, M.H. MacRoberts, W.W. Pruess, I.S. Elsik, & S.B. Walker. 2008. Annotated checklist of the vascular flora of the Loblolly Unit of the Big Thicket National Preserve, Liberty County, Texas. *J. Bot. Res. Inst. Texas* 2:1481–1489.
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