

Brien, Paul. 1971. [Entry for Jean-Marie Derscheid]. *Biographie nationale* 37 (supplément tôme 9, 1^{er} fasc.):211-235. Translation from French by Dan Reboussin.

Derscheid (Jean-Marie-Eugène-Léon-Charles) was a doctor of natural sciences, a zoologist and ornithologist, and the first Director and Secretary General of the *Parc National Albert* [Kivu, Congo]. He founded and was first director of the *Office international de documentation et de corrélation pour la protection de la nature*, was Professor of Biology at the *Université coloniale d'Anvers* and a political prisoner of war, born at Sterrebeck (Brabant) on May 19, 1901 and decapitated at Brandenburg prison (Berlin) on March 13, 1944. His childhood was happy and privileged; it blossomed through adolescence under the influence of two families who were illustrious in the arts, sciences, law, and government. His life was brief, both brilliant and tragic.

Jean-Marie Derscheid's great grandfather Thomas Braun was born in Rhineland in 1814, into a family of leather tanners. He had already distinguished himself as a teacher when he was called upon to direct the reform of the Belgian public education system in 1844, as the government was beginning to recognize primary education as critical to social policy. Thomas Braun was named Director of the *École normale de l'État* at Nivelles, in what is now Walloon Brabant, where, having naturalized as a Belgian citizen, he started to raise his family.

Thomas Braun exercised great influence in the world of Belgian education through his distinction, competence, and prolific writing. He became the national *inspecteur général des Écoles normales et Sections primaires*. Totally devoted to his adopted country, he was invited to tutor Prince Albert as is documented by a charming letter, as diligent as it was polite, written by the ten year old prince.

His oldest son, Alexandre Braun, was an academic lawyer, president of the bar, senator, and a federal cabinet minister. Of Alexandre's eleven children, Thomas Braun, named for his grandfather, had a brilliant career as a lawyer, was "devoted to the law, Ardennes, and God" (C.

Bronne). A civil law specialist, president of the Brussels bar, and the *Fédération des avocats*, he was also a member of the *Académie royale de Langue et le Littérature françaises de Belgique*. Thomas Braun was a born poet. As a young man he published in *Durendal* and *Sillon* [Belgian and French literary journals], which frequently published the authors Severin and Delattre. One of the earliest admirers of Max Elskamp [a Symbolist poet, whose themes were based on his Catholicism and his native Antwerp], he found himself taken by the evocations of the imagery of the *terroir*. He was a friend of Francis Jamme. Glaudel and [French author André] Gide were frequent guests in Brussels and at his beautiful vacation home *Maissin*. There, along with the authors Alphonse and Adrien de Prémoré, Thomas Braun was a passionate poet of the Ardennes.

Alexandre Braun had two brothers: Émile was mayor of Ghent and a parliamentary representative and Auguste was Chief Justice of the Supreme Court [*bâtonnier à la court de cassation*]. It was Auguste who acquired the beautiful estate, *ter Meeren*, at Sterrebeek [where Jean-Marie Derscheid was born and lived for most of his life]. His daughter Gabrielle became Mrs. Gustave Derscheid, Jean-Marie's mother. Later, Auguste Braun had a son Pierre, uncle of Jean-Marie, who was only a few years older than his nephew. Having volunteered for military service during World War I at the age of 16, he became the youngest Belgian fighter pilot, dying heroically in 1917 when his plane crashed into the sea near De Panne [northwest of Dunkirk].

The sophisticated Auguste Braun was a strong influence on his grandson Jean-Marie. He inspired in him a taste for beautiful language and a strong inclination for literature that never left him, allowing him easily to approach even the most famous francophone Belgian writers who frequented his mother's salon. Gabrielle Braun-Derscheid surrounded her son with great affection, providing him with the example of an upstanding life devoted to social causes. In 1897

she married Dr. Gustave Derscheid and for the following 50 years she contributed significantly to the development of the country's health and social services. Having obtained her nursing degree in 1915, she was a member of the *Comité national de Secours d'alimentation* during World War I. Her devotion earned her the highest honors among the Allies. With Dr. René Sand, after World War I, she founded the *École centrale de service social*, now known as the *Institut d'Études sociales de l'État*, and in November 1914 created, along with Henri Fuss and Jean Pladet, the *Office d'Identification et de Coordination sociale*. In 1939, Princess de Mérode and Gabrielle Derscheid together established the *Œuvre nationale de service social aux familles des militaires*, which operated until 1946.

On December 16, 1954, in the gothic great room of Brussels city hall, under the patronage of Queen Élisabeth of Belgium, the *Comité national belge de service social* solemnly honored Mrs. Derscheid, one of their founding members: she was promoted as honorary *Doyenne* of social service, with King Baudouin I awarding her the insignia and collar of this high distinction.

Dr. Gustave Derscheid, the father of Jean-Marie, was one of eleven children of Charles Derscheid, plant manager of the Royal Boch porcelain factory at Rœulx. The Derscheids were also originally from the Rhineland, while their Dershay forebears were Hungarians. One of their ancestors was Inspector of Waters and Forests at Trier during the German First Empire. Several members of this large family from Hainault, Walloon, were distinguished.

Louise Derscheid, the eldest, was a virtuoso pianist. She was a student of Louis Brassin, among the most illustrious Russian musicians, whom she accompanied at the St. Petersburg conservatory where she was in residence for five years. There, she became friends with Tchaikovsky, who she met through the celebrated painter Ivan Aivazovsky, and whose

friendship was sustained through the influence of Tolstoy. Upon returning home, she introduced Russian music to the Belgian public. She was also an enthusiastic interpreter of Brahms, who wasn't well known at the time in Belgium. A dedicated Tolstoy fan, she led a generous and brilliant life.

Her youngest sister, Marie Derscheid, attended the *École normale de Mons* and went to medical school at the Free University in Brussels with the kind assistance of Louise. She was the first woman doctor in Belgium, where she practiced pediatric orthopedics, enjoyed painting with watercolors, and was an amateur musician. Surrounded by her many friends from medicine, she married Dr. Albert Delcourt. After World War I, Marie Delcourt-Derscheid founded and was the highly respected president of the *Fédération des femmes diplômées des Universités*.

Three of their brothers were in the colonial service. Eugène Derscheid, [a Lieutenant] in the Guides Regiment, was invited to accompany Lucien Bia, Émile Francqui, and Jules Cornet to Katanga [in 1892; now Shaba] on the famous military and scientific mission that put an end to the slave trade from which the Congo suffered and prospected for the mineral resources that were so sought after by Cecil Rhodes. Jules Derscheid also had a brief colonial career, having been Director of the *Société des Magasins généraux* [retail stores] at Boma. Victor Derscheid participated in the establishment of the first railroad in Lower Congo.

Gustave Derscheid's life was not so adventurous, but his was no less remarkable than those of his brothers. Having just received his medical degree from the Free University of Brussels, he was forced for health reasons to stay in the sanitarium at Davos [Switzerland]. There, he developed a passion for studying tuberculosis and became a brilliant student of Lucius Spengler [whose father, Alexander, was the first tuberculosis specialist at Davos]. Upon his return to Belgium, he took up the fight against tuberculosis, which was ravaging rural and urban

areas of the country. In 1897, he founded a pulmonary tuberculosis service at the Brussels *Polyclinique*. This was the beginning of an illustrious medical career. In 1902, he founded the *Société anonyme des sanatoriums pulmonaires* at La Hulpe and in Waterloo, which were associated with a surgical service that introduced the *pneumothorax* [treatment?]. Along with doctors Malvoz, Van Ryn and Dewez, in 1923 he founded the Belgian *Association nationale belge contre la Tuberculose* and became its first organizer and president. Later, he founded the *Œuvre nationale de Défense contre la Tuberculose* and the Belgian *Société belge d'études scientifiques sur la Tuberculose et la Pneumologie*. With a reserved, serious and austere character, Gustave Derscheid enjoyed great renown both in Belgium and abroad. He and his wife Gabrielle Derscheid-Braun, who he met through his work with these organizations, settled at the family estate in Sterrebeek, where they gave birth to their son Jean-Marie.

Coming from two such exceptionally talented and diversely praiseworthy families, Jean-Marie Derscheid was the recipient of a double and noble intellectual and moral heritage. To his artistic and literary foundation, he soon added scientific training, which his father inspired. He was naturally friendly; sensitive, proud and somewhat distant, but enthusiastic and passionate. Infatuated with music, literature and history, an able hand at drawing, with fine skills as a watercolorist, he was above all else a born naturalist.

He didn't attend elementary school regularly, as private tutors were charged with his early lessons. He was free to roam happily in the park-like estate of Sterrebeek, which was itself without doubt his real mentor. In its groves and on the shores of its ponds, he grew up in daily contact with the plants and animals that he loved and wanted to understand better. He was particularly attracted to the charms and mysteries of the birds. From his earliest years he was an ornithologist. He worked to identify them on his own. When the family moved to Brussels, he

enjoyed spending hours at the Museum of Natural History with his nose glued to the display windows, familiarizing himself with the groups of birds to which the ones he'd already discovered and observed belonged.

It was time for him to consider more regular scholarship. In October 1912, he undertook Greco-Latin humanities at the Saint-Pierre secondary school in Uccle. During the course of these studies, World War I broke out. Without a doubt haunted by the example of his young uncle Pierre Braun, the pilot whose heroic death he had only recently learned about, Jean-Marie, left behind his idealism and joined the Belgian Army in 1917. He was betrayed at the Dutch border by a smuggler in whom he had confided. This was his first disappointment. Imprisoned at Hasselt, he was only freed at the Armistice [November 11, 1918].

In 1919 he enrolled in the Science Faculty at the Free University of Brussels. From 1919 to 1922, Jean-Marie Derscheid was [the author's] laboratory partner for doctoral work in Zoology. We were fraternal friends and both students of the prestigious Professor Auguste Lameere. We spent many happy days during that time. While pursuing my own studies, I also followed those of Jean-Marie. His fervor and competence captured my enthusiasm, despite myself, in the complexities of comparative anatomy of bird skulls. The two of us we immersed in the work of Gadow and Fürbringer, in this magnificent science which Cuvier developed in the early 19th century [Georges Cuvier was a key figure in establishing the fields of comparative anatomy and vertebrate paleontology].

Our mentor Auguste Lameere initiated us together in the field of systematic phylogeny twice a week. He had a broad, stimulating approach and after he'd finished our lesson he would tackle the discussion of a few issues in ornithological phylogeny with his young disciple Derscheid. I listened silently, awed and mesmerized by their exchanges, the mutual, reciprocal

discussion between teacher and student, by my friend's precocious talent and stunning knowledge, but also at the incomparable zoological erudition of our professor and the ease with which our little group was able to consider the fundamental problems associated with our work. During the summer break, our professor invited us to accompany him to the lake biology laboratory at Overmeire that Ernest Rousseau built and which Auguste Lameere directed following the premature death of its founder. We spent many studious days exploring the freshwater flora and fauna with passionate, joyful fervor.

On October 9, 1922, Jean-Marie Derscheid defended, with the highest distinction, his doctoral dissertation: *The Morphology of Bird Skulls [Morphologie du squelette céphalique des oiseaux]*. As he further developed his initial investigations, Derscheid often visited the morphological collections in Paris and London, looking for the necessary evidence for a new taxonomy of bird classification, the subject of a paper that he presented with the greatest success on August 5, 1924 at the Interuniversity Competition, for which he received the gold medal. No trace at all remains of his doctoral dissertation or this prize-winning paper. Nevertheless, among the many large, overstuffed cartons that were carefully kept among his family papers, I found the carefully organized notes, drawings, and watercolors that related to the various anatomical differences of the diverse families of birds. Certainly Jean-Marie Derscheid was destined to assemble the most complete documentation possible, enriched with his personal observations, for a vast monograph on birds. Alas, his study was barely drafted, the incomplete work of a great unrealized dream.

After his doctoral studies, Jean-Marie Derscheid worked for a while at the *Musée royal du Congo belge* at Tervueren. His investigations there broadened to include other vertebrates. In this brief time, he left us several publications regarding his anatomical research: "Structure de

l'organe olfactif chez les poissons” (*Annales de la Société Royale Zoologique de Belgique*, t. LIV, 1923, p. 79-162, 26 fig.); and “Notes sûr les circonvolutions intestinales de Phaëton” (*Annales de la Société Royale Zoologique de Belgique*, t. LV, 1924, p. 119-121, 2 fig.).

When in 1925 Henri Schouteden, at that time director of the Natural Sciences section of the Royal Museum of the Belgian Congo, was charged with a comprehensive exploratory mission relating to the entire colony, Jean-Marie Derscheid was designated as the [interim] replacement for all of his important functions. This interlude in his scientific career was a considerable influence and gave him a new perspective on his activities. The acute problem of plant and animal conservation, particularly in tropical regions, clearly had become most urgent. The wider public was indifferent, but at that time even the naturalists and biologists themselves were uninterested in conservation issues.

Notwithstanding, around 1910 Paul Sarasin, a Swiss doctor, sounded the alarm. In 1913, at the *Congrès international de Zoologie* in Bern, he proposed the creation of an international office to promote and develop expertise on conserving threatened species and environments [*Bureau international de renseignements et d'une Commission consultative pour la protection de la nature, des faunes et des flores menacées d'extinction*]. The war of 1914-1918 caused this opportune initiative to be forgotten.

In 1925, alone in Belgium, Professor Jean Massart reintroduced the idea at a general conference of the International Union of Biological Sciences. This is when Jean-Marie Derscheid, inspired by Massart's expertise and teaching, took up Sarasin's idea and conceived the project of forming an International Office of Documentation and Coordination for the Protection of Nature [*Centre international de documentation et de corrélation pour la protection de la nature*].

Independently, but at the same time, Professor Michel Siedliecki promoted a similar enterprise in Poland. One must recall that in 1922, nature conservation was only an awakening interest even in Anglo-Saxon countries [e.g. in Germany, Britain and the United States]. In Holland, P.-G. Van Tienhoven presided over a Committee for the Protection of Nature, created in Amsterdam. In this current of ideas, Jean-Marie Derscheid proposed to P.-G. Van Tienhoven the creation of an International Office of Documentation and Coordination [*Office internationale de documentation et de correlation*] as the only practical method to implement the projects planned and undertaken by Dr. Sarasin. For his part, Professor Siedliecki was involved with the International Union of Biological Sciences, which put this important issue on the agenda of its general assembly meetings of 1925, 1926, 1927, and 1928. It was in 1927, during the proceedings of the general assembly under the presidency of Professor Léon Fredericq, who created the International Office of Documentation and Coordination for the Protection of Nature. Its founders were Siedliecki, Derscheid, and Van Tienhoven, who in turn recruited Gruvel, delegated groups of Frenchmen, and Pictet, of Geneva. It was a private organization, funded by a membership fee of 500 dollars and subsidized by dues, subscriptions, and grants. It was administered by a commission of eminent scientists and politicians. P.-G. Van Tienhoven was the president. Jean-Marie Derscheid was the facilitator and workhorse as the general secretary and director of its office. During the early years he generously bore the financial burden of collecting and organizing documents, printing brochures and maintaining an international corresponding membership network.

At the same time, Jean-Marie Derscheid was engaged in another vast undertaking that seemed to him applied the principles of the International Office for the Protection of Nature: the creation of a nature reserve in the Belgian Congo. Totally absorbed by this new responsibility

during the years 1931-1933, Jean-Marie Derscheid couldn't continue to devote as much attention and collaboration to the International Office for the Protection of Nature as it required.

Nevertheless, on December 15, 1933, along with Dr. H.-T. Graim, he published with the International Office for the Protection of Nature a voluminous work, *Synopsis des principales mesures législatives concernant la protection des oiseaux*, relating to the Palearctic region of Europe through the Mediterranean region. At the end of December 1933, he requested to be discharged from his duties. This decision, it must be said, can be explained by certain difficulties within the heart of the administration of the commission and by the capital transformation imposed upon the organization. By royal decree on July 7, 1934, a new organization was recognized and substituted by the affiliated governments, having more or less the same name, following exactly the same program of activities and with the same administrative seat. On December 21, 1934 a constituent general assembly officially formed an International Office for the Protection of Nature, with P.-G. Van Tienhoven as its president and Victor Van Straelen as vice president. Jean-Marie Derscheid was not selected. However, during the course of this general meeting, president Van Tienhoven recognized the service of Jean-Marie Derscheid for having been: "during the first years of existence of the International Office for the Protection of Nature the great facilitator of the organization, and one to whom it is incomparably obliged." In his letter of January 14, 1934, Professor Michel Siedliecki expressed to Jean-Marie Derscheid his regrets at no longer "benefitting from his precious collaboration, in view of his definitive departure from the post of Director for the International Office for the Protection of Nature." He added, "You have worked here so energetically during these years and without a doubt one must attribute the development of the International Office for the Protection of Nature to your efforts and ideas."

While he was the principal force behind the International Office for the Protection of Nature, Jean-Marie Derscheid's time was monopolized by the creation of the Albert National Park in Kivu. While travelling in the United States in 1919, King Albert visited the magnificent American national parks—dating from 1871—and had the idea of endowing Congo with similar institutions in order to conserve a virgin and original aspect of nature in one small corner of its territory. He confided to the baron Cartier de Marchienne, Belgium's ambassador to Washington. Three years later, Carl Akeley of the Museum of Natural History in New York, an eminent explorer and naturalist returning from his famous expedition to Kivu, let the ambassador of Belgium know of the beauty and scientific interest of the volcanic region where the gorillas, in their mountainous forests, were threatened with extermination by uncontrolled hunting, as had been recently demonstrated by the notorious practices of Prince William of Sweden.

Baron Cartier de Marchienne, remembering the royal project, conceived the idea of realizing a national park at Kivu, in the volcanic region. With the support of eminent zoologists from the US: John C. Merriam, president of the Carnegie Institute, Professor Osborn, president of the Museum of New York, the ornithologist John Philips, and the brother of the US ambassador in Brussels, whom he called upon, by way of the latter, P.-G. Van Tienhoven, president of the Committee for the Protection of Nature at Amsterdam, and to Jean-Marie Derscheid, interim section head at the Royal Museum of the Belgian Congo at Tervueren. Despite strong opposition, including reticence coming from administrative offices, Edmond Leplae, Director General of Agriculture in the Colonial Ministry, approved the project. With the support of the King, it was submitted to the session of the colonial council on March 28, 1925. On April 21 of the same year, the King signed the decree for the creation, in the volcanic region of Kivu, of a natural preserve with the name "*Parc national Albert.*"

According to the colonial council's proposal, the reserve was to encompass an area of 200,000 hectares. However, a lack of a good understanding of the region, its size, topography, population, and its natural resources, prevented the effective administration of the park. It was decided in 1926 that a field expedition had to be undertaken. Organized by the Baron Cartier de Marchienne, Carl Akeley, the explorer of Kivu, offered to undertake this expedition with funds from the American Museum of Natural History in New York on the condition of having a Belgian scientific adjunct. The Minister of Colonies designated Jean-Marie Derscheid, who received his orders on August 20, 1926. He received a grant of 5,000 francs which, happily, was augmented by the generosity of the King with an additional F25,000. The mission was delayed [from August 1926] until June 1927. Thanks to the intervention of Sir George Graham, British Ambassador at Brussels, Jean-Marie Derscheid was authorized to stay five weeks in Kenya in order to observe the administrative functioning of a nature reserve as it was construed in Nairobi.

In his manuscript diary, retained by his family, Jean-Marie Derscheid relates the stages of this mission that he undertook. Alas, it was greatly saddened and compromised by the death of its leader. Carl Akeley passed away on November 18, 1926 just as the expedition was getting settled at Kabara, on the slope of the volcano, Mt. Mikeno. Jean-Marie Derscheid completed the mission he was assigned alone, despite this catastrophe. He undertook to survey the topography of this mountainous region, with dense forests that made access so difficult. He censused the plants and animals, and researched the basic elements of its ethnography. He ascended the majority of its volcanoes, which he inventoried. The first one he attained was the highest peak of Mt. Mikeno. At the same time, he observed the Mountain Gorillas in their natural habitat, outlining their spatial distribution and estimating their population.

After his return to Belgium, Derscheid delivered his report on October 8, 1927. His findings provided the foundation for the establishment of the Albert National Park. He proposed a modification of its borders by including the groups of central, eastern, and western volcanoes, along with the herded plains of Lake Edward, and with marginal ecological zones as buffers. He insisted on the necessity, despite contestations, of an indirect administration for the park: its management would have to be supported by an independent, scientific institution. In the end, he located the central administrative headquarters and the scientific installation of the park at Rutshuru. In 1928, a provisional commission headed by Director General Leplac adopted the primary points of his recommendation. The Colonial Council approved these after making some modifications before its session on June 28, 1929. The *Parc national Albert* was officially created by royal decree on July 27, 1929 and was ceremonially opened on October 19, 1930. It was placed under the authority of an Administrative Council composed of twenty-one members. Its president was Prince de Ligne and its secretary was Jean-Marie Derscheid. A directorate was created of which Jean-Marie Derscheid was named director. From January 1st to May 1st, 1930, the president and director undertook a second mission to the *Parc national Albert* and to Congo in order to prepare for international collaboration and to research other territories in the colony in which new reserves could be defined. In November and December 1930, Jean-Marie Derscheid was in the United States of America, attending conferences at many institutions to promote the Albert National Park and its opportunities for scientific research. He worked to develop interest as well as moral and financial support in favor of this new institution, which was so well suited to promoting wildlife conservation, so strongly supported by Anglo-Saxons.

Such efforts were new to Belgium, and original to Jean-Marie Derscheid. He had to create every aspect anew, to appease reticence, and vanquish doubts and opposition. Derscheid

the naturalist wasn't well prepared and he was fairly new to administrative work. Nevertheless, he had to go on despite obstacles or inexperience, feeling his way through hesitation and the problems inherent in any new undertaking. He should have been given better guidance and support.

In December 1933, disputes arose in the heart of the Administrative Council and the *Comité de Direction*. Complaints were registered with regard to the management of the park. Minor irregularities in the bookkeeping records were discovered. These incontestable administrative errors weren't at all beyond repair, but at times these criticisms were accompanied by malicious proposals. Jean-Marie Derscheid found himself obliged to abandon his work for the organization to which he had contributed so much, building it up from its formulative principles to which he was so passionately and enthusiastically devoted. The institution, furthermore, was so full of promise. Under the administration of [his successor] Victor Van Straelen, it was to see a great deal of development in later years. The Albert National Park would soon be incorporated into a National Park Administration, which was renamed and continued to grow in importance as it contributed to the understanding of the African environment. However, in 1960, after independence, the metropolitan Institute was dispossessed of its management duties over natural preserves in Congo. One of Belgium's most beautiful creations in central Africa thus came under the administration of the Democratic Republic of Congo. This can be seen, with good reason, as one of her most prestigious cultural patrimonies, the noble mission of which she desires to maintain.

Of Derscheid's activities that would determine the organization and future of the Albert National Park, we are left with a manuscript diary in the form of his letters. A few pages of these were included in a collection entitled *Protection scientifique de la nature*, published by Henri

Kumps of Ixelles in 1927. After a forward on the need to conserve nature in the interest of humanity herself, one can read about the meeting in Nairobi between Carl Akeley and Jean-Marie Derscheid, the progress of the expedition from Nairobi to Rutshuru, Akeley's death, the observations of the Mountain Gorillas, their environment, population numbers, and geographical distribution. One should also recall *Notes sur les Gorilles des Volcans du Kivu (Parc national Albert)*, published in the *Anales de la Société royale zoologique de Belgique*, t. LVIII, 1927, p. 149-159. Finally, I should note that in the annex of his manuscript journal, there exist corrected proofs of a long article entitled *Contribution à la biogéographie de la région du Parc National Albert* which contains data on the extent, topography, and biogeography of the park, with an important note on the birds living in the region surrounding Kivu. This article was dated January 10, 1933, but it wasn't possible to determine to which journal it was intended, nor whether it ever was actually published. In her book *Congo Eden* (New York, 1950), Mary L. Jobe Akeley relates the stories of her Congo expeditions, especially the one during which her husband lost his life. She recalls the participation of Jean-Marie Derscheid, his devotion after the death of Carl Akeley, his tenacity and courage while undertaking alone the exploration of this region of Kivu, and how, for the first time, he was able to reach the summit of Mikeno.

Once he left his work at the International Office for the Protection of Nature and that of the Albert National Park, which in his eyes were intimately linked, Jean-Marie Derscheid devoted himself to his teaching of biology at the *Université coloniale d'Anvers* where he was named Professor on January 14, 1930. He also returned to ornithology. While restoring the ponds of the beautiful «ter Meeren» estate that surrounded Sterrebeek, he built a research station for bird behavior that he called "Armendy Farm." In cooperation with aviculturalists in France, England, Germany, the United States, and Australia he succeeded in assembling one of the best

bird collections in Europe, specializing in *Anatidae* and *Loriinae* [ducks, swans, geese, etc. and the group of small parrots consisting of lorries and lorikeets]. He built laboratories to conduct research on dietary requirements and incubation, work for which he became widely known abroad. He sent specimens from his own collection to similar institutions and zoos throughout Europe, America, and Australia. He was particularly interested in *aspergillosis* [a bronchial disease caused by mold], which decimated flocks of wild sea ducks as he tried to acclimatize them to the freshwater park environment. His techniques were widely adopted and applied, most notably at the nature reserve in Zwin [known for its collections of salt-resistant plants and aviary specializing in wading birds]. In his obituary, published by the *Avicultural Magazine* (5th series, vol. 10, 1945, p. 157), his English colleagues expressed their admiration: “His collection at Sterrebeek was known throughout Europe, America and Australasia, and his success with the *Anatidae*, particularly with the sea-duck, placed him in the forefront of waterfowl experts.”

Derscheid published an article titled “The preservation of waterfowl and aviculture” in the *Avicultural Magazine* (5th series, vol. 4, 1939) where he noted the role of aviculture in species conservation under threat of extinction. Among his papers there is a typed manuscript signed by him where Jean-Marie Derscheid provides a systematic list of *Palmipèdes* [aquatic bird] species from his work at Armendy from 1933 to 1940. There one also finds a catalog of plants and trees that gave charm and interest to the research station where this authentic naturalist worked with the team of researchers that he assembled. This remarkable enterprise, alas, couldn't last. In a manuscript Jean-Marie Derscheid plainly relates, without any impression whatsoever of emotional torment despite the disappointment it must have brought, his resignation to the circumstances that forced him to demolish Armendy Farm. In 1939, he was mobilized and rejoined his medical corps [military] unit. His staff were recalled to England. This

was the first blow to the bird collection that he'd put together with such care. After having participated in operations at Albert Canal [a defensive line dug between 1930 and 1939], Derscheid was evacuated to France. There he was demobilized with his 7th Infantry Division and at the end of August 1940 he returned to *Sterrebeek* to confirm the disaster of his beautiful duck collection. The estate was occupied by waves of invaders who treated his rare birds as game. Only a quarter of the collection survived. Next came the difficulty of feeding them. The precious birds that remained were sold at auction for absurd prices. Armendy Farm ceased to be. Of his behavioral studies to which he devoted himself from 1933 to 1940, there remain only a few articles but how moving they are. They were written during the month of December 1941, in the Saint-Gilles prison where Derscheid had just been incarcerated by the German authorities. They are written in French, with a firm, clear, hand that is almost calligraphic, and illustrated with drawings, at times with watercolors. Reassembled by his wife, Mrs. Jeanne Derscheid, some of these articles were translated into English and published in the *Avicultural Magazine*, while others were destined for *Aviornis, Encyclopédie de l'Élevage*.

In the meantime John Yelland published notes on his *Sterrebeek* collections in the *Avicultural Magazine* from 1940 to 1949: "The Collection at Sterrebeek" (5th series, vol. V, 1940, p. 251-254), "Some Parrot-Like Birds at Sterrebeek" (5th series, vol. V, 1940, p. 288-293), "Some European Waders" (5th series, vol. VI, 1941, p. 160-165), "Notes on the Bearded Reedling (*Panurus biarmicus*)," (5th series, vol. VII, 1942, p. 47-49), "Hand-rearing Freshwater Ducklings" (5th series, vol. VII, 1942, p. 98-101), "The Spiny-tailed Ducks" (5th series, vol. VIII, 1943, p. 73-75), "Full-winged Tree Ducks" (5th series, vol. IX, 1944, p. 90-91). The last, "Mycosis in Birds" (vol. 55, 1949, p. 20-22), relates to the discovery of the means to cure sea ducks of *aspergilosis*.

While from 1934 to 1940 Jean-Marie Derscheid devoted himself to his bird collections and ornithological studies, he also pursued another very long-term project on the Eastern provinces of Central Africa. He had stayed in contact with a good number of colonial administrators there. With their help, he pursued inquiries on the languages, cultures, social evolution and administration of the eastern provinces of Ruanda-Urundi [present day Rwanda and Burundi]. I was able to see this documentation, patiently and systematically assembled, which must have been destined for an important historical publication on these areas. This long-term work remains, like several other projects, unfulfilled, though perhaps one day it will be profitably used by someone who wants to take it on. In the preface to a recent publication, *Rwanda and Burundi* (London, Pall Mall Press, 1970), René Lemarchand, author and professor at the University of Florida, pays homage to this documentation, which was graciously put at his disposition:

My sense of gratitude to them, therefore, is also a reflection of the posthumous debt I—as well as any other scholar for whom the names Rwanda and Burundi mean anything—owe to Jean-Marie Derscheid, whose wide-ranging intellectual interests and life-time devotion to Africa are amply reflected in the collection of documents he has left to posterity, and on which part of this work is based (*Preface*, p. x).

Upon his return to Belgium, in August 1940, with the ruin of the Armendy Farm research station, Jean-Marie Derscheid had nothing left to loose. One further duty imposed itself upon him: he entered the resistance. He established ties with the secret army unit U.C.-L.-55, with the reconnaissance services S.R.A., Benoît and A.B.C. and with the London authorities. He helped to rescue English aviators who parachuted onto Belgian territory, assuring the safety of patriots wanted by the Nazis, and took charge of their evacuation to safety. He directed a [radio] communications service with England using a secret code based on Bantu and Sudanese languages. He was under suspicion and

the authorities tried to force him to give himself up by putting his wife and parents in the Saint-Gilles prison. On October 8, 1941, he taught his last class; on the 17th, the Gestapo arrested him in Brussels. Imprisoned first in Saint-Gilles, he fought boredom and anxiety by drafting notes on raising birds, as he had been doing just a short time before. But soon he was transferred to Germany and faced a thirty month incarceration in concentration camps. Through threats and torture, his tormentors tried in vain to obtain information that they could use to ferret out the resistance groups that Derscheid belonged to. None of this news got back to Belgium or to his family; he was condemned to die! While the Nazi government saw that it was losing the terrible war it had started, Jean-Marie Derscheid was decapitated on March 13, 1944 in Brandenburg prison under Himmler's orders.

“A highly respected explorer, researcher and professor, J.-M. Derscheid was, as a result of his scientific work and heroic conduct, a great contributor to science, Belgium and to the colony.” N. Laude, “Derscheid (Jean-Marie)” in *Biographie coloniale belge*, vol. V, 1958, col. 241.

The ashes of Jean-Marie Derscheid were returned to Belgium on September 15, 1945 and buried in the family vault on May 19, 1946.

Thus ended the life of a man in his prime, so clever and engaged with his research in such diverse areas, an exemplary naturalist and zoologist, passionate about African problems, a visionary pioneer, so tenacious and devoted to environmental conservation. Full of so many good public and private qualities, he was enlivened by an active imagination and enthusiasm for generosity, gifted with a great proclivity for work, it seemed that everything prepared him for a singular career, both brilliant and productive, but it all fell apart so relentlessly, dissolving the fervent flight of his noble ambitions.

In a big album, a precious relic kept by his family, are the scientific awards and honorary distinctions that Jean-Marie Derscheid earned. The medal of the *Société*

d'Acclimatation of France was accorded to him. He was a Fellow of the Zoological Society of London, of the Audubon Society of the United States of America, and an Honorary Life Member of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia.

He was awarded the Civil Cross 1914-1918, first class with gold piping. He was posthumously knighted in the Order of Leopold with palms. The war cross of 1940 was bestowed with the following citation:

“For devoting himself completely in the heart of the intelligence service in the fight against the enemy. With admirable and tenacious zeal, he accomplished the dangerous missions to which he was assigned to the complete satisfaction of his superiors. Arrested and deported to Germany, he was condemned to death and executed at Brandenburg, providing a magnificent example of courage and patriotism.”

He was granted the Political Prisoner Cross 1940-1945 and was named Lieutenant in the S.R.A. (*Service de Renseignements de l'Armée*). A citation of recognition by the President of the United States of America and from King George VI provide testimony of the exceptional merit of his service.

I was granted the honor of consulting the publications, unedited manuscripts, numerous writings, correspondence, and projects of Jean-Marie Derscheid by his son, Mr. Jean-Pierre Derscheid, who maintains these out of great respect for his father. I offer him my warmest thanks for having allowed me to become so intimately familiar with the life of his father.

Publications by Jean-Marie Derscheid:

1923. “Structure de l'organe olfactif chez les poissons.” *Annales de la Société royale zoologique de Belgique*, t. LIV, p. 79-162.
1924. “Notes sur certains Clupeidae de la côte W. de l'Afrique.” *Revue zoologique africaine*, t. XII, p. 278-282.

1924. "Note sur la disposition des tendons du Propatagium chez le Calao (*Bucorvus abyssinicus*).” Bulletin du Muséum national d’Histoire naturelle, t. 30, Paris, p. 41 ss.
1924. "Notes sur les circonvolutions intestinales de Phaetön” (*Annales de la Société royale zoologique de Belgique*, t. LV, p. 119-121.
1927. *La protection scientifique de la nature*. Bruxelles: Henri Kumps. 74 p. Extract of J.-M. Derscheid’s diary from his mission to Kivu, Congo in 1926-’27 with notes on the census and distribution of Mountain Gorillas he conducted.
1927. "Notes sur les Gorilles des Volcans du Kivu (Parc national Albert).” *Annales de la Société Royale Zoologique de Belgique*, t. LVIII, p. 149-159.
1928. "Entre le lac Édouard et le Kivu—Mission Akeley-Derscheid (1926-1927).” *Bulletin de la Société royal de Géographie d’Anvers*, t. XLVIII, p. 92-99.
1933. *Synopsis des principales mesures législatives concernant la protection des oiseaux*. Brussels, Belgium: Office international pour la protection de la nature. December 15 (in collaboration with Dr. H.-T. Graim).

Typed manuscripts:

Summary report on the origins and development of the *Parc national Albert* by J.-M. Derscheid, Dr. of natural Sciences: A. Origins of the *Parc national Albert*. B. The the *Parc national Albert* during the planning phase April 21, 1925 to July 9, 1929. C. First study and planning expedition to the *Parc national Albert* (Akeley-Derscheid mission). D. The *Parc national Albert* during the organizational period (October 19 to November 21, 1931). No information is available on the intended destination for this report, to whom it was submitted or if it was published.

Union internationale des Sciences biologiques (Conseil international de Recherches): communications pour la Protection de la nature présentées aux assemblées générales de 1925-1926-1927-1928 et publiées grâce aux soins de Derscheid, par l’Office international pour la Protection de la nature (Brussels, 1929, 78 pages).

July 7, 1925: "Rapport sur la Protection international de la nature.” By Professor Jean Massart.

May 19 and 20, 1926: "Rapport du Prof. Siedliecki (délégué polonais) et M. Mangin (délégué français).”

July 11, 12, 13, 1927: "Note polonaise relative à la protection de la nature.” By Professor Siedliecki.

July 10, 11, 12, 1928: [Reports by Jean Verne (France and its colonies), M. Loyer (France-Camargue), J.-M. Derscheid (Belgium and Belgian Congo), A. Pictet (Switzerland), P.G. Van Tienhoven (Netherlands), K. Shibata (Japan), B. Nemeč (Czechoslovakia), Odon de Buen (Spain).

Articles written in Saint-Gilles prison, December 1941 for *Aviornis*.

Encyclopédie de l'Élevage, 1942, no. 3; 1943, no. 1; 1945, nos. 2-3.

1945. "Le charme des petits Échassiers en volière." pp. 44-48. Notes avicoles et ornithologiques éditées par *Aviornis*.

Several of these articles were translated into English and published in the *Avicultural Magazine*:

1946. "The Eider Duck in captivity." *Avicultural Magazine*. v. 52: pp. 173-180.

1947. "Strange Parrots. I. The Kea (*Nestor nabilis* Gould)." v. 53: pp. 44-50.

1947. "The Goldeneye in captivity (*Bucephala clangula* L)." v. 53: pp. 217-223.

1948. "Exotic Kingfishers in captivity." v. 54: pp. 93-96.

1948. "Motmots in captivity." v. 54: pp. 101-105.

Paul Brien

[References cited]

Th. Braun, *Ma vie*, 1894 (published privately for his children).

Th. Braun, *Ma famille*, 1902 (published privately for his children).

C. Bronne, "Thomas Braun, 1876-1961." *Annuaire de l'Académie royale de Langue et de Littérature françaises*. Brussels, 1967. pp. 73-97, with portrait.

N. A. Aleksecva. "Tchaïkovsky et les musiciens étrangers." Leningrad. Éd. Muzyka, 1970. [In Russian. Correspondance regarding Louise Derscheid].

É. Zimmer, "La Vie universitaire d'hier et meme d'avant-hier." *Bulletin mensuel de l'Union des Anciens Étudiants de l'Université libre de Bruxelles*, 29^e année. 1956. No. 241, p. 33-34 (obituary of Dr. Marie Delcourt-Derscheid).

M. Coosemans. "Derscheid (Eugène-Charles-Joseph)." *Biographie belge d'Outre-Mer*. t. VI, 1967, col. 316-317.

M. Coosemans. "Derscheid (Jules)." *Biographie belge d'Outre-Mer*. t. V, 1958, col. 242-243.

- Manifestation en l'honneur de Madame Gabrielle Derscheid, Doyenne d'honneur du Travail Social en Belgique, sous le haut patronage de S. M. la Reine Élisabeth.* Brussels, December 16, 1954, 44 p., portrait.
- E. Renaux. "Le Docteur Gustave Derscheid." *Bulletin officiel du Collège des Médecins de l'Agglomération bruxelloise*, 58^e année. 1952, p. 233-234, portrait.
- Prof. Bariéty. "Docteur Derscheid (1871-1952)." *Revue de la Tuberculose*. Paris, 5^e série, t. 16, 1952, p. 233-234, portrait.
- P. Toussaint. "Le Docteur G. Derscheid." *Le Scalpel*, 108^e année. 1952, no. 5, p. 143-147, portrait.
- "Le Docteur Jean Derscheid." *Pourquoi pas?* 21^e année. 1931, no. 899, portrait by J. Ochs.
- P[hyllis] B[arclay] S[mith]. "Obituary Dr. J. M. Derscheid." *Avicultural Magazine*. 5^e série, vo. X, 1945, portrait.
- N. Laude. "Derscheid (Jean-Marie)." *Biographie coloniale belge*, t. V, 1958, col. 238-242.
- M. L. J. Akeley. *Congo Eden*. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1950.
- R. Lemarchand. *Rwanda and Burundi*. London: Pall Mall Press, 1970. xi-562 p., ill.
- "Obituary Madame Jeanne Derscheid." *Avicultural Magazine* vol. LIX, 1953, p. 17.