OBITUARY

Olaf Lawrence Fredrich Weyl (1972–2020)

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The global conservation community has lost a leading figure in freshwater conservation in southern Africa, and I have lost a dear friend. Olaf Lawrence Fredrich Weyl died on November 14, 2020 while in the field in Hogsback, South Africa. Olaf was born in Giesen, Germany, but at an early age, his father, a development worker, moved the family to southern Africa. During his childhood, Olaf developed a love for the African wilds and fishes in particular. After completing his undergraduate and graduate degrees at Rhodes University, South Africa, Olaf moved to Malawi where he worked as fisheries advisor to the Department of Fisheries (1998–2002). During this time, he learned much about interacting with both scientists and managers, which would become a key theme throughout his career. Olaf returned to Rhodes University in 2003, rising from Postdoctoral Fellow to Senior Lecturer by 2009, before assuming a Senior Scientist position at the South African Institute for Aquatic Biodiversity (SAIAB). At SAIAB, he quickly rose through the ranks to Chief Scientist and South African Research Chair in Inland Fisheries and Freshwater Ecology by 2017.

Olaf's research interests are best summarized in his own words, taken from his vitae: "(they) revolved around understanding human impacts on freshwater fish communities and included aspects of conservation, fisheries, and invasion biology. (His) approach was multidisciplinary and focused not only on describing natural systems and processes, but also incorporated research on understanding how humans alter and benefit from aquatic systems. (His) recent work included assessments of the distribution and impacts of alien fishes in headwater streams, fisheries and biodiversity assessments in large African Rift Valley lakes, African floodplain fisheries and, most recently, the role of alien fishes in southern African fisheries." Olaf published over 200 primary publications, dozens of policy reports, and countless articles for the public, and he was the proud mentor of many postdoctoral fellows and graduate and undergraduate students. He was an Associate Editor for several journals, including *Biological Invasions*. Olaf participated in key national and international policy committees, including Regional Chair for Southern Africa in the Freshwater Fish Specialist Group of the IUCN Species Survival Commission, lead author for the IPBES assessment report on invasive alien species, and he contributed to the development of the South African National Strategy on Alien and Invasive Species and National Biodiversity Act: Alien and Invasive Species Regulations and Lists. The

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contributions of those publications, students, and policies will be lasting scientific and societal legacies of Olaf.

Although Olaf enjoyed angling for invasive trouts and basses (he was a highly successful professional bass angler) in South Africa, he was pragmatic about their management. He recognized that these species were a primary threat to many endangered fish species and advocated they be removed from natural systems wherever feasible. This view did not endear him to the affluent trout fishing fraternity. Olaf headed one of the best examples of an invasive fish eradication, which led to the recovery of endemic species in the Rondegat system of South Africa following the removal of invasive basses.

Olaf's transformative research encompassed invasion biology, fish ecology, and inland fisheries management and was facilitated by a robust research group at SAIAB and an extensive global network of collab-

him in 2013, prior to a conference in South Africa. Before the trip, he invited a small Canadian contingent to visit him before the conference. While at the airport, I wondered aloud if we would recognize Olaf and he us. One of my colleagues assured me that we would know Olaf when we saw him. On cue, Olaf appeared and welcomed us as if we were already the good friends we were to become. Since that first meeting, Olaf and I collaborated on many papers and projects, and we enjoyed many braais and barbeques together. By his very nature, Olaf had many friends and colleagues and, no doubt, he made them all feel as special as he did me. I feel very fortunate to have met and spent time with Olaf.

Olaf is survived by his wife Michelle, twin daughters Phillipa and Olivia, parents Ulrich and Gaby, brothers Michael and Phillip, sisters Julia and Anika, and countless friends and colleagues.

Olaf (back left) with his lab members, Makhanda, South Africa, January 2019.

orators. This network was developed by his strategic thinking and maintained by his gregarious personality. I was but one node in Olaf's network, having first met

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