

OBITUARY



After a short illness Sakis Drosopoulos, esteemed colleague and friend, passed away on March 30, 2014. Sakis was born in Skaloula, Doris, a village near Lidoriki, where he attended high school. Being a true countryman with an open eye for nature, he decided to study agriculture and was admitted at “Aristotle” University of Thessaloniki in 1963. In the course of his studies, he was introduced to Entomology and he decided to follow that branch of science. He graduated in November 1971, having fulfilled his military service at the same time. From January 1972 to June 1977, Sakis worked at the Agricultural University of Wageningen, the Netherlands, at the Laboratory of Entomology, Taxonomy Section, where he awarded his PhD under the supervision of the late Prof. Dr. R.H. Cobben.

In 1977 Sakis returned to Greece, to Benaki Phytopathological Institute, Kiphisia, where he had been offered a position as curator of the Laboratory of Agricultural Entomology and remained till 1992. During that period, he made several studies on

agricultural pests and faunistic, as well. Thus, he found numerous species that had not been reported from Greece before and several that were new for science. One of the new species he described was the spittle bug *Philaenus loukasi*. Intrigued by the polymorphism in this insect, he would continue to work on *Philaenus* for more than twenty years. Also, in the same period, Sakis started to build the first Hemiptera collection in Greece. His collection, now including more than 30.000 specimens, representing over 1.800 species and including several holotypes and numerous paratypes, is today accommodated at the Agricultural University Athens (Laboratory of Agricultural Zoology and Entomology). Approximately half of the material is identified. Therefore, the Hemiptera fauna of Greece is now one of the best studied and most species-rich in Europe.

In 1991 he was elected Associate Professor of biosystematics of agricultural pests at the Agricultural University Athens and was promoted to Full Professor in 1999. He taught biosystematics on a graduate level, also organizing numerous field trips for his students to teach them flora and fauna on the spot. He retired from AUA on February 1st 2011.

Sakis was also involved in numerous collaborative research projects supported by bilateral programs with institutions of various countries (Philipps-University, Marburg, Germany, John Innes Research Centre, University of Norwich, Great Britain).

He also became involved in work on cicadas of which acoustics were an important part. As a milestone contribution to the research field of insect acoustic behaviour, Sakis edited together with Mike Claridge, Emeritus Professor of the University of Cardiff, Wales, the multi-

authored book: *Insect Sounds and Communication. Physiology, Behaviour, Ecology and Evolution*, which was published in 2006 by CRC-Press, Taylor and Francis Group, Boca Raton, Florida. In recognition of his outstanding contribution to research on acoustic communication in insects, Sakis was awarded the first “Insect Drummer Award” of the German Entomological Society, together with Mike Claridge (Cardiff University, Wales, UK) and Hildegard Strübing (Freie Universität Berlin, Germany), on the occasion of the society’s biannual meeting held in March 2011 at the Humboldt-University in Berlin, Germany.

Sakis organized the 8th International Auchenorrhyncha Congress, in Delphi, and many others. He was the instigator of the “First” and “Second Mikrolimni Meeting”, which were first Rhynchota meeting in the Balkan area. This series of conferences has since evolved into the “European Hemiptera Congress”, that is regarded the main forum for research on Hemiptera in Europe and attracts participants worldwide. The first meeting of its kind was organized by Sakis in Amaliapolis in 1998. He served on the Board of the Hellenic Zoological Society since 1979, and was President twice. He edited the proceedings of various congresses and was a member of the editorial board of the “Fauna Graeciae”, edited by the Greek Zoological Society, and of the “Red Data Book”, published by the Greek Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climatologic Change. He was also a member of the advisory board of the journal “Deutsche Entomologische Zeitschrift”.

Sakis was a good observer, an enthusiast and keen researcher. He would notice the

peculiarity in ‘ordinary’ things and would wonder rather than be surprised, not letting himself being sidetracked by an established opinion. His colleague and good friend, Peter de Vrijer, Wageningen University, the Netherlands, characterized him as a ‘tracker dog’ in science. The thread running through all his research was evolution and speciation, a subject wherefore his beloved Greece, by its unique geographical position and constitution, provides ample material. Sakis was also a dedicated teacher and a true friend. To many of the graduate and PhD students he supervised and colleagues he worked with he became like family. He was an amiable personality, yet he was his own person. Sakis has left an important scientific legacy and an imprint on all who got to know him. The impressive Heteroptera collection, accommodated in our Laboratory after Sakis’ donation, will always remind us, not only a worldwide known scientist and hard worker in Entomology, but also a very good friend. He is deeply missed.

Sakis was married to Hanneke van Albada. They obtained two children, Spyros and Loukia and a granddaughter, Laura.

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