

In memoriam RNDr. Vladimír Švihla, CSc.

29.ix.1952–8.ii.2015

As peacefully and equanimously as he lived and worked, our friend and colleague Vladimír Švihla deceased on 8 February 2015.

Vladimír was born on September 29, 1952 in Prague. Already as a secondary school student he showed interest in collecting beetles and butterflies. This brought him to the Department of Entomology of the National Museum, Prague, which then served as an informal consulting center for beginning young entomologists. In spite of the future development of Vladimír's career this contact was never interrupted. At the same time, in 1968, he also became a member of the Czechoslovak Entomological Society. After completion of the secondary school in 1971, Vladimír attended the Faculty of Science of the Charles University, Prague as a student of Systematic Zoology-Entomology. He gained a MSc. title with his thesis 'Seasonal and daily cycles of the order Coleoptera monitored by sweeping, rotary and suction traps'. One year later, Vladimír defended his rigorous thesis entitled 'Revision of Czechoslovak species of the tribe Malthinini (Coleoptera: Cantharidae)' and received a RNDr. title. At last, in 1984, at the Institute of Entomology of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, Vladimír successfully defended his dissertation thesis 'Revision of genus-level classification of the Old World Oedemeridae (Coleoptera)' and received a CSc., the equivalent of the day of the present Ph.D.

Vladimír's first job was at the Department of Insect Ecology, Institute of Entomology, Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in 1976–1980. In 1980–1981 he was employed at the Department of Entomology of the National Museum for the first time, this time only as a temporary substitute for Dr. L. Hoberlandt, who was on a foreign stay. Subsequently, he was employed at the Department of Science Popularization of the National Museum until he reached the permanent position of his dreams as a curator and research fellow at the Department of Entomology in 1984, after the retirement of L. Hoberlandt.

As the successor of L. Hoberlant, Vladimír took care of the Heteroptera collection and also co-authored several papers about true bugs; however, his research interest was focused especially on the taxonomy, nomenclature and zoogeography of soft winged flower beetles (Dasytidae: Malachiinae), and predominantly soldier beetles (Cantharidae) and false blister beetles (Oedemeridae). During his career he published 137 scientific papers on this topic and described 34 genus-level taxa and 593 species-level taxa. Vladimír participated in several inventory projects of the fauna (orders Heteroptera and Coleoptera) of protected nature areas in the Czech Republic – e.g. protected areas in Prague, Pálava Protected Landscape Area, Podyjí National Park, and České Švýcarsko NP. Vladimír also elaborated Cantharidae and/or Oedemeridae taxonomically for many international projects, namely: 'Fauna of Saudi Arabia' (editors: W. Büttiker & F. Krupp, 1980, 1984, 1990); 'Ergebnisse der Bhutan-Expedition des Naturhistorischen Museums in Basel' (editor W. Wittmer, 1980); 'Results of the Czechoslo-



Fig. 1. Vladimír Švihla on the photo taken in 1969.



Fig. 2. Vladimír Švihla and Yuichi Okushima in Vladimír's museum office in 2009.

vak-Iranian expeditions in Iran 1970, 1973 and 1977' (editor: L. Hoberlandt, 1983, 1987); 'Check-list of Czechoslovak Insects. IV. (Coleoptera)' (editor: J. Jelínek, 1993); 'Material collected by Czech Baikal expedition in 1993' (editor: J. Mlíkovský, 1995), 'Insect Fauna of United Arab Emirates' (editor: A. van Harten, 2008); 'Catalogue of Palaearctic Coleoptera, volume 5' (editors: I. Löbl & A. Smetana, 2008). Vladimír also took part in several collecting expeditions; the most important were those to Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, or Vietnam. So far, 16 beetle species were named in Vladimír's honour.

Vladimír was divorced and childless and he lived a quiet solitary life, dividing his time between entomology and his other hobbies, such as orchid and bonsai cultivation, mineral collecting, mushroom picking or the fantasy and sci-fi literature. As such, he rather watched over his peace and manners and may have seemed reserved to others at the first sight. Nevertheless, the first barrier having been broken, he appeared to be a friendly fellow ready to help or to talk about a broad scale of topics, which made him also an agreeable companion on common collecting trips. He did not avoid social life, participated in the meetings and other activities of the Czechoslovak and later Czech Entomological Society and was elected a member of its committee twice in the 1980's. He also played an active role in the organization of the Biology Olympiad for secondary school students.

His untimely, long-lasting and grave illness forced Vladimír to retire and end all his activities in the last one and a half years. Since then Vladimír lived in a hospice; however, until the very last days he remained in contact and was interested in entomological news from the museum. Vladimír died on February 8, 2015, surrounded with his beloved orchids.

Happy roaming among the stars!

Josef Jelínek & Jiří Hájek

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