



In memoriam

Dr. Petre M. Bănărescu

(15th of September 1921–12th of May 2009)

Dr. Petre Mihail Bănărescu passed away peacefully at his home, afternoon May 12, 2009, close to him being his wife Paulina and his daughter Anca. He was born in Craiova, September 15, 1921. His family then moved to Timisoara at the home of his father Mihail Bănărescu, professor at the Polytechnic Institute in this city. The young Petre finished the high school “Diaconovici Loga” in 1940, and then followed the courses of the Natural Science Division of the University “King Ferdinand” in Cluj (1940–1945). Among his professors there were Emil Racovitza, Alexandru Borza, Victor Pop, Eugen A. Pora, Aristide Grădineanu, Vasile G. Radu. Graduating the faculty, he obtained a position as tutorial assistant at the Department of Zoology and then lecturer in biogeography at the same department (1945–1951).

Due to his political views as an anti-Stalinist and anticommunist, Bănărescu was arrested by the political police and sent in detention in the famous camp of forced labor Danube-Black Sea Canal.

He spent one year in this camp (1952–1953), and after his return, Bănărescu obtained a position as a research-fellow in the Fisheries Institute in Bucharest.

After graduation, he obtained his Ph.D. degree at the University of Cluj in 1960. The subject of his thesis was the anatomy of brain in fishes.

In 1958, Bănărescu obtained a position as research-fellow in the Department of Romanian Fauna of the Romanian Academy. He worked in this division until his retirement in 1997.

Bănărescu was the most prolific ichthyologist in Romania, producing more than 300 scientific papers, most of them concerning on the systematics of fishes, zoogeography, and evolution. He focused his studies especially on cyprinid and cobitid fishes. Hundreds sheets of paper with measurements and observations are preserved at his home. He was a fine observer, mentioning every detail of specimens. In the field he was extremely active, collecting fishes with his famous half-rounded hand net. His collection of fishes mostly cyprinid and cobitid fishes from Eur-Asia, North America and Africa, and containing many type-specimens, preserved now in the “Grigore Antipa” National Museum of Natural History in Bucharest.

Among his important contributions there were the two volumes of "Fauna of Romania" on lampreys and sharks and Pisces Osteichthyes, both totalizing more than 1,000 pages, and his famous work in three volumes (more than 1,600 pages), "Zoogeography of Freshwaters", an unique opera on the distribution of freshwater animals.

He could be considered as the founder of the modern ichthyological school in Romania forming many young people.

Bănărescu was a member of Romanian Academy and Honorary Foreign Member of the European Society of Ichthyology. In 1975, he was elected Member of the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists.

He received also, for his entire scientific activity, the title Doctor Honoris Causa of the Univeristy of Yassy (Iași).

All these were sustained by a strong character, a genuine modesty and unlimited work and a great nature love.

We will never forget you, Don Pedro!

THEODOR T. NALBANT



Fishing party on Argeş River - September 15th, 1978 (Photo Pier Giorgio Bianco).

