

OBITUARY

Francis Dov Por (1927–2014): A life dedicated to zoology remembered

On 25 October 2014, the International Society of Zoological Sciences (ISZS) family lost one of its most eminent members, Professor Francis Dov Por, who passed away at the age of 87. Dov was born on 25 May 1927, in Timișoara, a city that is now the capital city of Timis County and is considered the informal capital city of the historical region of Banat, Romania. Dov obtained a Diploma in Biology in 1956 from the University of Bucharest. Recognition of his potential as a biologist was demonstrated through his early appointment as a Curator for the Grigore Antipa Museum of Natural History in Bucharest.



Francis Dov Por, at the 19th International Congress of Zoology, Beijing, 2004. (Photograph by Michael Schmitt.)

Dov spent much of his youth (1940–1960) in Bucharest, during a time of great global turbulence. As he so vividly described in his autobiographical book *Wallachian Years* (published under an alias, referring to his original Rumanian name Bernard Politzer) he saw himself as “a decent survivor and always curious traveller, through an all too often Dantesque world.” Dov married Esther Sandbrand in 1949 in Romania and they had a daughter, Naomi, who is now 50 years old. Esther died in 1977. In 1979 Dov married Maria Scintila de Almeida Prado, with whom he lived until his death.

In 1960 Dov moved to Israel, where he made his home for the next 54 years. In 1962 he completed his Doctor of Philosophy degree at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem; his thesis was entitled “A study of the Levantine and Pontic Harpacticoida”.

In 1976 Dov Por was elected Professor of Zoology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Whilst there, he was one of the founders who equipped, organized and directed the university’s Marine Laboratory in Eilat during the period 1967–1975. He was Chair of the Israel Society of Zoology from 1977 until 1979. Later, during 1985–2005, he was the series editor of *Fauna and Flora Palaestina*, Chairman of the Zoological Nomenclature Committee and held other important positions. During his academic career, Dov published more than 160 scientific papers, including 13 books, in fields ranging from taxonomy, through evolution of the animal kingdom, ecosystems, environmental science and zoogeography. He had a particular fascination with the marine world and in later years became passionate about the biology of Brazil, especially the Pantanal, a region of extraordinary beauty and biodiversity, encompassing the world’s largest tropical wetland area. Dov’s second wife, Scintila, was Brazilian and they visited Brazil regularly for at least 2 months a year from 1983. Research over this time led to a monograph of which he was justifiably very proud, *The Pantanal of Mato Grosso (Brazil)*:



Francis Dov Por, with his new diploma, celebrating his election as President Emeritus of the International Society of Zoological Sciences at the awards ceremony of the 20th International Congress of Zoology, Paris, 2008.

World's Largest Wetlands, which was published by Dordrecht, Kluwer, in 1995.

Dov was a true citizen of the world, speaking more than seven languages fluently. In his last years he worked with enthusiasm on Lamarck's *Philosophie Zoologique* and the *Ophel*, the hypoxic chemoautotrophic groundwater biome discovered by him in 2010.

He was one of the first (1996) who recognized the fragmentation of the science of zoology and the crisis in

the professional zoological education that became rampant after the suspension of the last International Congress in 1972. In 2000 with the Hellenic Zoological Society, Dov was instrumental in organizing the 18th International Congress of Zoology, bringing forward again the rich unifying aspects within zoology. This successful activity paved the road to the establishment of the ISZS, a process in which Dov had a significant role. In 2008 Dov's contribution to the ISZS was recognized through his election as President Emeritus of the International Society of Zoological Sciences.

His vision, for a society that would unite individual scholars and educators with national and professional organizations to promote an integrative study of the animal organism had been realized. The ISZS, in which he played such a pivotal role in establishing, now promotes coordination, collaboration and cooperation between the different specialized fields of zoology, involving both recent and extinct animal taxa. This is his legacy and it is one of which he can be very proud. His co-workers and friends of the ISZS will remember Dov Por as a lively, witty and influential person, whose contribution to our science has been exemplary, and whose passing will sadden us all.

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