

**IN MEMORIAM**

**ACAD. BĂNĂRESCU PETRU MIHAI**  
(the 15<sup>th</sup> of September 1921, Craiova – the 12<sup>th</sup> of May 2009, Bucharest)

**VICTORIA TATOLE**



This spring, on the 12<sup>th</sup> of May, Acad. Petre Mihai Bănărescu, renowned ichthyologist, fulfilled zoologist, zoogeographer of international importance and as well a special character, full of humbleness, kindness, understanding, tolerance, humour and high spirits died after a long and hard illness.

Acad. Petre Mihai Bănărescu was born on September 15, 1921, in a family of intellectuals, his father, Marin Bănărescu being a university teacher at the Mechanic Faculty of the Polytechnics University of Timișoara, well known as the founder of the Romanian School of Thermal Engines.

Early in his childhood, Petre Mihai Bănărescu has shown a sustained interest for the life of aquatic ecosystems. As he confessed to me, he was not 11 years old yet and he was already enjoying himself by starring at what was happening in the garden pool of his family. Later he started to collect, observe and identify fishes from the neighbourhood of the city of Timișoara.

In 1940, when he graduated from high-school, he was able to identify all the fish species described in Grigore Antipa's monograph.

Petre-Mihai Bănărescu attended the classes of the Science Faculty, the Department for Natural Sciences of the "King Ferdinand I" University, in Cluj.

His university career begun as a tutor at the Zoology Chair of the Faculty of Sciences in Cluj, at that time situated in Timisoara, later becoming an assistant at the same Faculty Chair, and locum tenens lecturer at the Biogeography Chair.

In 1949, he obtains the PhD. in natural sciences with a thesis on the comparative anatomy of the encephalon of the telosteen fishes.

After one year spent in a political prison he returns home, is still unemployed for over a year, but succeeds to elaborate and publish seven papers.

Beginning with 1953 he works as a researcher at the Pisciculture Research Institute in Bucharest and later as a scientific researcher at the Biology Institute of the Romanian Academy, where he works until the end of his career. In 1962 he receives the Docent PhD. title.

PhD. Petru Mihai Bănărescu distinguishes himself in the zoology domain both at a national and international level. Concentrating in the beginning on the research of taxonomy, systematics and biology for the fresh and salt water fish found in Romania, in time he diversifies the frame of his research domains, approaching in details:

- the systematics of the Cyprinidae and Cobitidae families in Europe and Asia;
- the problematic of biogeography, zoogeography in general and of zoogeography of fresh water fish and invertebrates, in special;
- the complex problematic of taxonomical principles;
- the complex problematic of the speciation;
- problems concerning the nature protection.

Among the special results obtained, the following must be enumerated:

- the description, alone or in cooperation, of certain new taxa in Romania's and the entire world's ichthyofauna, for example: a genus, two subgenera, one species and two new fish subspecies from Romania, a subfamily, 10 genera, 38 subspecies and 26 fish subspecies from China, Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Israel, Turkey etc.

- studies of taxonomical revision, as: the synonymisation of 6 genera from the Cyprinidae family; the revalidation of two generic names for Cyprinidae and four for Cobitidae and the reviewing of a subfamily;
- the first quotation in the Romanian fauna, by himself or/and in cooperation of eight fish species and six copepod species;

- the elaboration of the first and only zoogeography for fresh waters, on a worldwide level;
- the involvement in the problematic of the nature protection, through the elaboration of the scientific documentation for declaring new protected areas;

- elaboration of the Pisces chapter from the Romanian Red Book of Vertebrates.

As a PhD. coordinator he played a part in the formation, advancement and promotion of over 25 Biology PhDs.

As for the original scientific papers of Acad. P. M. Bănărescu<sup>1</sup>, these include 327 titles, 316 of them being articles written in periodicals, collections or chapters from books, and 12 books.

Six of these were published in Romania, two being already translated: "Principles and Problems of Zoogeography" and "Biogeographie. Fauna und Flora der Erde und ihre geschichtliche Entwicklung", and six were published abroad, as "Zoogeography of Fresh Waters" (three volumes) and "Freshwater Fishes of Europe" (three volumes). Most of his papers (over 60%) have been written in important foreign languages as: English, German, French, Russian. The works of Petre-Mihai Bănărescu are, have been and will be quoted in important national and international papers from all the continents.

Spanning his entire important career amongst the Animal Taxonomy Board from the Romanian Academy, Petre-Mihai Bănărescu established almost religiously a big collection of fresh water fishes, especially Cyprinidae and Cobititidae. This extremely wide and valuable collection contains personally collected or offered through exchange specimens from Romania, Greece, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Spain, Israel, Ukraine, Turkey, Korea, etc., in fact from the big majority of aquatic basins from Eurasia, North America and partially from Africa.

The Collection *Bănărescu-Nalbant* can be found at the *Grigore Antipa* National Museum of Natural History since 1999.

Petre-Mihai Bănărescu was a fervent catalyst of knowledge exchanges, crossing over the iron curtain even in historical moments when such a step seemed quite impossible. He kept open and tempting the scientific dialogue with specialists from the country and from abroad, well known remaining the meeting and the correspondence with the Emperor of Japan himself, an accomplished ichthyologist. He was engaged in a great number of study journeys in Austria, Belgium, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Korea, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Macedonia, Holland, Spain, Russia, Ukraine, Hungary etc.

For special accomplishments, Petre-Mihai Bănărescu received the following awards:

- "Emil Racoviță" – the Romanian Academy (1964);
- Honorary foreign member of the American Ichthyologic and Herpetological Society (since 1975);
- Honorary member of the European Ichthyologic Society (since 1988);
- Honoris Causa Doctor of the "Al. I. Cuza" University in Iași (since 1999);
- Full member of the Romanian Academy (since 2000).

We worked together more than 25 years and all these years Petre-Mihai Bănărescu kept taxonomy as an independent domain. I honoured, respected and loved him as an elite colleague, funny, warm and accessible.

As many of my colleagues and friends I regret and already miss him.

**Victoria Tatole**

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<sup>1</sup>In Trav. Mus. natl. Hist. nat. "Grigore Antipa", **36**: 497-510, 1996, has been published the list of papers until 1997.