

## Celebrating 70th birthday of RNDr. Svatopluk Bílý, CSc.

On February 9, 2015, the eminent Czech coleopterist and internationally recognized authority in buprestidology, RNDr. Svatopluk Bílý, CSc., celebrated his seventieth birthday.

He was born in Prague and later studied biology at the University of J. E. Purkyně in Brno and at the Charles University in Prague. In 1967 he graduated from the Faculty of Science of the Charles University where he also did his postgraduate study in entomology under the guidance of Prof. Karel Hůrka in 1968–1972. Like most other students of Prof. Hůrka he gained there especially the knowledge of the larvae and larval taxonomy of Coleoptera. He could already apply this skill in his research work at the Institute of Parasitology of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in 1972–1978.

In 1978 S. Bílý became the curator of Coleoptera (including the important buprestid collection of Professor Jan Obenberger) at the Department of Entomology of the National Museum,

Prague and he held this position until his retirement in 2010. Dr. Bílý was fond of Buprestidae in the past already and, with the Obenberger's collection at hand, he held all the trumpcards in his hands. He did not miss his chance and soon became one of the leading buprestid specialists on a worldwide scale. His activities did not cease after his retirement, which rather brought him liberation from the limiting official duties. He published over two hundred scientific papers as well as many popularization articles and underwent many collecting trips throughout the world.

Due to his undisputed scientific qualities combined with his open and friendly character, Dr. Bílý is a respected authority among the Czech



Svatopluk Bílý during a get-together with other Czech entomologists in Újezd, Czech Republic in August 2007 (photo: J. Schneider).

coleopterists. He is a member of several editorial boards both in the Czech Republic and abroad. He has been a member of the committee of the Czech Entomological Society since 1985 and was a president of the Society in the years 1997–2008.

For a detailed biography and complete bibliography of S. Bílý see JELÍNEK & KUBÁŇ (2015).

Josef JELÍNEK

Below we include two recollections of his colleagues, to commemorate the occasion.

### **For the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Svát'a Bílý**

My postal acquaintance with Dr. Svatopluk (Svát'a) Bílý started back in 1974 but our first personal meeting took place only in 1987 during my first foreign trip to Budapest (by this time we had published a joint paper with the descriptions of new species of Palaearctic Acmaeoderini). Once we found out that neither of us was a member of the Communist party, our mutual sympathy grew significantly. By this time Svát'a had become a well-known world-class expert in Buprestid taxonomy who had published many papers and several books, not only on the Buprestidae, but also on Coleoptera in general.

Soon after our first meeting, Svát'a with his wife Vlasta came to St. Petersburg (Leningrad in 1989), then I with my wife first came to Prague (1990). Since then, our meetings became regular. I frequently came to Prague during entomological fairs to meet our buprestophile friends and to work with the enormous buprestid collection of J. Obenberger deposited in the National Museum (NMP) and huge Svát'a's private collection (currently also deposited in NMP), every time staying in the Bílýs' hospitable home and Svát'a occasionally visited St. Petersburg to work with collections in the Zoological Institute (ZIN). We even carried a family trip to the marine station of ZIN in the White Sea not far from the Polar Circle (2001). We also met at buprestological meetings (1st International Symposium on Buprestidae, Visegrad, Hungary, September 1995, and Buprestid Millennium Meeting, Abruzzo National Park, Italy, September 2000) and took part in a collecting trip to Mexico (1992). Throughout our long friendship, we have prepared 21 joint publications and participated in some large-scale projects such as the Catalogue of Palaearctic Coleoptera (2006, 2016) and Arthropod Fauna of the United Arab Emirates (2011, 2014), but a significant part of our publications has been devoted to morphology of exotic buprestid larvae, mainly collected by Svát'a himself.

Svát'a's contribution to buprestid taxonomy is truly enormous. He has described 4 tribes, 2 subtribes, 17 genera, 11 subgenera, and about 400 species (including 3 fossil taxa) and 20 subspecies belonging to nearly 50 genera from all buprestid subfamilies.

His main specialization and love is the tribe Anthaxiini, in which he described more than 250 species (nearly 200 species in the highly speciose genus *Anthaxia* Eschscholtz, 1829). Svát'a has published about a dozen books and monographs on Buprestidae and even Cerambycidae and Coleoptera in general, among them 'Key to Czech Buprestidae' (1977), 'Buprestidae of Fennoscandia and Denmark' (1982), 'World Catalogue of Anthaxia' (1997), 'Larvae of Buprestidae of Central Europe' (1999), 'Synopsis of bionomy of Buprestidae of Central Europe' (2002), 'Revision of *Anthaxia aeneocuprea* species group' (2015), and others (see reference list in JELÍNEK & KUBÁŇ 2015). In addition to taxonomic works, he published numerous papers on the buprestid faunas of Sudan (1972, 1973), Afghanistan (1972), Bulgaria (1979), Saudi Arabia (1979, 1980, 1982, 1985, 1990), Iran (1983), Turkey (1984), Taiwan (1989), Malta (2002), and others. During his entire career, Svát'a has also published a huge amount of book reviews and popular articles and books. In contrast to many other taxonomists, Svát'a understands the great importance of larval morphology for solving complex problems of buprestid classification and phylogeny and pays much attention to it. He described the larvae of many buprestid species from Central Europe as summarized in his review published in 1999. He collected a great number of larvae of exotic genera during his numerous collecting trips to South East Asia, Africa, South America, and, particularly, to Australia, described partly by Svát'a himself and partly in our joint papers but many genera are still waiting for their turn.

Over the years of his scientific career and numerous trips Svát'a has collected a priceless worldwide collection of jewel beetles. This collection contains type specimens of most species-level taxa described by him and a great number of extremely rare species absent in most museum and private collections. In terms of its importance for taxonomic studies of the Buprestidae, his collection is comparable with the famous collection of J. Obenberger. Through these collections, NMP will remain a Mecca for the buprestologists around the world for ever.

In addition to his brilliant professional skills and a great love of nature and desire for travel (in the year of his jubilee, he realized his 6<sup>th</sup> trip to Australia), I was always struck by Svát'a's vast erudition in various fields of natural history. Another outstanding human feature of Svát'a is his open friendly nature that allowed him to acquire a great number of friends in all countries where he travelled. This is also mirrored in a number of patronyms dedicated to Svát'a, including 2 genera, 1 subgenus and 26 species level taxa of Buprestidae (not counting this AENMP issue). For many years a large and noisy party of friends and colleagues got together in the Bílýs' apartment in Hradčany during the Prague entomological fairs; this tradition, although to a lesser extent, continued after their moving to a small apartment in Braník. And I hope that our meetings, friendship and cooperation will continue for many years to come...

Mark G. VOLKOVITSH

### Visiting Southern Moravia

After his retirement Svát'a is able to spend more time in his beloved Southern Moravia, dividing his time between the beetles and fishing. We underwent many common collecting trips in this beautiful region in the past and experienced a lot of adventures there. Some of them took place in the military zone along the frontier, which was inaccessible without a special permit during the communist reign. We remember especially the day, when our car collapsed within this zone and we, both being a dead loss at car repairs, were forced by the circumstances to fit together our partly dismantled car by ourselves – and the car did move after all. Of course, it collapsed again almost immediately after having left the military zone and we had to march, hungry and dirty, in a deep night, some 10 more km to our place of accommodation.

Another happening was almost supranatural. Marching in a hot weather towards a remote locality we were thirsty and our discussion turned towards drinks. Svát'a dreamed about beer, whilst I preferred an old-fashioned raspberry flavoured soda water. And when we arrived to the forest, we saw no trace of anybody, but in the shadow under one tree there were one bottle of beer and one bottle of the red soda water...

Josef JELÍNEK

On behalf of the staff of the Department of Entomology, National Museum in Prague, the editorial board of *Acta Entomologica Musei Nationalis Pragae*, and all the authors contributing on jewel beetles in this dedicated volume, we wish Svát'a all the best in the years to come.

### Reference

JELÍNEK J. & KUBÁŇ V. 2015: RNDr. Svatopluk Bílý, CSc. sedmdesátiletý. (70th birthday of RNDr. Svatopluk Bílý, CSc.). *Klapalekiana* **51**: 109–121 (in Czech and English).