

Chronicle

Professor ordinarius Jan Drózdź DVM, PhD (1931–2013)



On 12th of March 2013, Professor Jan Drózdź died in Warsaw. He was an eminent scientist and parasitologist, pioneer of the study of the parasites of free-living animals in Poland, creator and long-time head of the Laboratory of Parasitoses of Wild Animals at the Witold Stefański Institute of Parasitology of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

Professor Jan Drózdź was born in 1931 in Cracow but attended primary and secondary school in Warsaw. In 1950, he graduated from the J. Jasiński memorial high school and joined the Veterinary Faculty at the University of Warsaw. In 1952, while in his second year of studies, he began his scientific career at the Department of Parasitology at the University of Warsaw, headed by Professor W.L. Wiśniewski. While working in this department, he took part in parasitology field studies conducted within the area of lake Drużno, Lukniany and Kortowo. In 1953, he was awarded the position of Deputy Assistant at the Parasitology and Invasive Diseases Department of the Veterinary Faculty of the SGGW. After acquiring a veterinary doctor's diploma in 1955, he was promoted to the position of Assistant and subsequently, in 1956, to

Senior Assistant. In 1961, he was awarded the degree of PhD based on the dissertation: „Studies of helminth and helminthiases in bison, *Bison bonasus* (L.) in Poland”, and was promoted further to the position of Assistant Professor. He worked at the Parasitology and Invasive Diseases Department of the SGGW until 1964, when he was transferred to the Institute of Parasitology at the PAS. Then, while working at the Veterinary Faculty, he was also employed by the Hunting Department of the Forest Research Institute in Warsaw for 3 years between 1959–1962, and gave Zoology and Parasitology tutorials at the Pharmaceutical Faculty of the Medical Academy.

Between 1953 and 1964, he conducted Zoology tutorials for first-year students and Parasitology tutorials for third- and fourth-year students of Parasitology at the Veterinary Faculty. When not lecturing at the faculty, he led Zoology and Parasitology tutorials at the Medical Academy, and gave numerous lectures as part of courses for doctors of Veterinary Science, veterinary technicians and foresters, as well as popular Science lectures at the Society of Common Knowledge and the Polish Zoology Society.

At the turn of 1961/62, Professor Drózdź was working at parasitological institutions in Moscow and Alma-Ata as part of a half-year internship. In the same year, he was delegated to Northern Vietnam by the Polish Academy of Sciences for two months as a specialist to train Vietnamese parasitologists in the diagnosis and abatement of invasive diseases of domestic ruminants. While there, he also had the opportunity to collect scientific materials for his own studies. Subsequently, in 1966, he was delegated to the Mongolian Socialist Republic for a period of 2.5 months, where he collected comparative parasitological materials for his studies of the historical formation of ruminant helminth fauna. He also conducted training for the employees of the Parasitology Department of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences.

In 1966, he completed his habilitation proceedings based on the dissertation: „Studies on helminths and helminthiases in Cervidae”, and in doing so, acquired the title of Associate Professor (Docent) of Veterinary Parasitology, before later taking a work placement in France at Rennes University in 1970. During his stay there, he described a new species of *Parastrongylus dujardini* nematode that can be found in the pulmonary arteries of rodents in southern France, he published a cycle of papers concerning the morphology of the species, its spread and its development cycle in the intermediate and final hosts, and also completed a systematic revision of the *Angiostrongylus* genus.

He was awarded the title of Professor Extraordinarius in 1974. In 1976, he was appointed Head of the Laboratory of Filogenetics and Ontogenetics of Parasites, whose name was changed three times in the course of the next twenty years: first in 1981, to the Laboratory of Filogenetics and Evolution, then in 1988, to the Laboratory of Mammal Parasites and finally, in 1997, to the Laboratory of Parasitoses of Wild Animals. Professor Drózdź acted as Head of the laboratory until he retired at the end of 2002.

In the years 1980 to 1981, he took part in an Antarctic expedition to the Arctowski Station situated on King George Island, where he gathered a rich collection of parasitic worms from birds and animals and described 6 new species of coccidia that can be found in Antarctic seals. In 1989, he was awarded the title of Professor Ordinarius of Natural Sciences.

The rich achievements of Professor Drózdź encompass over 120 scientific publications, including 85 original papers concerning parasites and factors concerning the formation of the parasitofauna of free-living ruminants, particularly nematodes from the subfamily Ostertagiinae, studies of nematodes from the Angiostrongylidae family and their role in the etiology of hemorrhagic encephalitis and meningitis, as well as research into the parasites of the mammals and birds of Antarctica. Some of his most important

achievements are a description of the process of formation of bison helminth fauna and its change during the 45-year restitution of the bison population in Poland, studies of helminth fauna of the Cervidae family in Poland, creation of the parallel evolution theory of nematodes and their hosts, with an example of Cervidae and their parasites from *Spiculoptera* and *Mazamastrongylus* genera and a description of the genetic polymorphism of nematodes from the subfamily Ostertagiinae.

Professor Drózdź promoted four doctors, one of them foreign. He was a guide in one habilitation proceeding and a reviewer of numerous doctoral dissertations, habilitation proceedings and procedures concerning the title of Professor.

He was also a member of the Polish Society of Veterinary Sciences for many years, the Polish Parasitological Society, the Parasitological Committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences as well as the National Council of Nature Conservation. He was also a member of the Warsaw Scientific Society. His achievements earned him numerous awards including The Golden Medal of Ho-Chi Minh, The Golden Cross of Merits, The Knight's Cross of the Order of the Polonia Restituta, The Medal of the 40th Anniversary of the Polish People's Republic and The Prize of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

Professor Drózdź was an active member of the Scientific Council of the W. Stefański Institute of Parasitology of the Polish Academy of Sciences: for over 30 years, until his last days, without a single pause, he was a head of the Doctoral Proceedings Commission. He also played a key role in the study of the parasitoses of wild animals, using his rich experience to guide and help others.

Professor Drózdź was a great authority, he possessed enormous knowledge and at the same time, he was extraordinarily humble. He showed exceptional tact and kindness toward his co-workers and as such, he will remain in our memory.

Prof. dr hab. Aleksander W. Demiaszkiewicz