

IN MEMORIAM JOZEF K.A. VAN BOVEN (1915-1997)



On 7 April 1997, the Belgian Zoological Society lost one of its eminent entomologists with the passing of Professor van Boven.

Jozef van Boven was born on 19 May 1915 in Roermond. Even as a young boy, he was impressed by the diversity of animal life he found in the rural fields in this area of the Netherlands. Especially the variety of insects left a deep impression, and formed the basis of his later career as an entomologist. After completing secondary school, he entered the catholic seminary in Roermond, where he received his priest ordination on 10 April 1943. Priesthood brought him in contact with the Jesuit fathers Erich Wasmann and Hermann

Schmitz, who were both well-known myrmecologists. The need to hide during the war, however, brought him by coincidence to Leuven, where he came in touch with Jezuit father Albert Raignier, also a renowned myrmecologist. From his diocese in the Netherlands, he got permission to enrol as a student of biology at the university in Leuven. Here, the professional contact with the ant world began, and led, in 1957, to the completion of his PhD-thesis on allometry and polymorphism in ants. This same year, he was appointed as Professor of zoology at the K.U.Leuven.

For his main research on the taxonomy and biology of the Dorylinae, he carried out extensive field work in the former «Belgian Congo». The taxonomy of the Dorylinae remained his main field of expertise with annual expeditions to Africa, and several tens of articles published in this field. In addition, the ants of Belgium and the Netherlands were also the subject of his research, and led in 1976 to the publication in «Acta Zoologica et Pathologica Antverpiensia» of the very valuable *De mierenfauna van België*, that introduces the fascinating life of ants and includes a key to the Belgian Formicidae. As a Dutchman, he kept in touch with the Museum of Natural History in Maastricht, where he was curator of the Wasmann collection from 1963 until 1973. From 1967 to 1973 he was president of the «Natuurhistorisch Genootschap Limburg».

During his long academic career in Leuven, he taught entomology as well as an introductory course on the behaviour of social insects to hundreds of students. Professor van Boven was an extraordinarily talented teacher, who understood perfectly the art of grip-

ping the audience – his classes were even attended by students that did not have to take his courses, but that were just fascinated by his charming way of teaching!

Until his retirement in 1984, he was head of the division of animal ecology and systematics in the Zoological Institute, and for several years was member of the zoological committee of the National Fund for Scientific Research. When he retired, he divided his very professional entomological collection into three parts: the research collection with army ants went to the Royal Museum of Central Africa in Tervuren, the general ant collection moved to the Natural History Museum in Maastricht to join the Wasmann collection, while the general insect collection remained in the Laboratory of Entomology at Leuven.

After retiring, professor van Boven moved from Leuven to Kortrijk, where he exchanged scientific research for an active and serving pastoral life in the St. Maarten and Our Lady parishes. In addition to celebrating mass at noon, he would also walk to church to say mass at 7 am every morning, five days a week. On a dark and grey morning in November 1991, trying to escape from the wind and drizzling rain, a severe fall on his way to church resulted in a broken hip followed by a long and slow recovery period in hospital. His health became more fragile thereafter, but his spirit remained strong as ever. During his retired years in Kortrijk, he took part in three pilgrimage trips to Lourdes, the last time in August 1995 shortly after another stay in hospital.

Jozef van Boven will be remembered as an extremely charming and modest personality, a most respected colleague and wonderful friend.

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