

Pierre Compère (1934–2016)

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On April 29th, 2016 Pierre Compère left us after a long scientific career at the age of 81. Pierre was born in 1934 in Aywaille (Wallonia, Belgium). He got his degree in Botanical Sciences at the University of Liège and put his first steps in field work at the Biological Station of Mont Rigi (Hautes Fagnes, Belgium). Very soon in his career he got the opportunity as a young scientist to work in Belgian Congo in 1959, where he prepared a vegetation map of the Bas-Congo region for the Institut National pour l'Étude Agronomique du Congo (INEAC). During this study, he collected more than 2000 plant specimens, preserved in the herbarium of the National Botanic Garden of Belgium. The political events that resulted in the independence of Congo in July 1960, made him return earlier than expected to Belgium. Several fundings of the Belgian Science Foundation (F.N.R.S) and the Belgian Institute for Overseas Sciences (I.B.E.R.S.O.M.) allowed him to publish on the taxonomy and nomenclature of several vascular plants and finish the *Cartes des sols et de la végétation du Congo*, for which he won the Prix Emile de Wilde-man awarded by the Royal Botanical Society of Belgium.

In 1963, Pierre got a position at the National Botanic Garden of Belgium (since 2014 Botanic Garden Meise) and started his long and successful career in phycology with a major contribution to systematics and ecology of freshwater algae and cyanobacteria. He became a world reference in freshwater algae and published several major contributions to the knowledge of algae from the African continent, such as his 7 volumes of the algae from Lake Chad (Algues du Sahara et de la Région du lac Tchad) that remain a very useful reference for algologists interested in the African and tropical microflora.

Later on, Pierre broadened his scope and started to study algae in different parts of the world. He published four volumes of a very practical flora of the Belgium freshwater algae from 1987 to 1992, based partly on his own collections but also on herbarium material and an intensive literature search. For this work, he received another prize of the Royal Botanical Society of Belgium (Prix François Crépin). In 1998, he was invited in Brazil to teach about algae, a visit that resulted in a contribution to the knowledge of the Brazilian flora.

The last years of his career, Pierre published several papers on tropical marine diatoms from the Indian and Pacific Ocean. Despite his retirement in 1999, Pierre remained ac-



Pierre Compère in 1994.

tive as a phycologist till a few days before his death. Twice a week, he continued his work at the Botanic Garden Meise, not only his research on diatom taxonomy, but also to fulfil his editorial duties as editor and reviewer. For more than 30 years, Pierre served as editor-in-chief of the *Bulletin de la Société Royale de Botanique de Belgique*, the journal of the Royal Botanical Society of Belgium (later changed into *Belgian Journal of Botany* and since 2010 merged with *Systematics and Geography of Plants* into *Plant Ecology and Evolution*).

For a long time, Pierre has been an active member in several international associations. From 1988 till his retirement in 1999, he was president of the Association des Diatomistes de Langue française (ADLaF) and for many years, he served as Secretary of the Committee for Algae at the International Association for Plant Taxonomy.

In 1999 (at the occasion of his retirement) and 2014 (when Pierre celebrated his 80th birthday), two large tributes were published highlighting Pierre's extraordinary career (*Systematics and Geography of Plants*, issue 70(2), 2000; *Plant Ecology and Evolution*, issue 147(3), 2014). In the latter issue, the complete list of taxa he described (Bogaerts et al. 2014) and of his publications (Van de Vijver 2014) was given. The list at the end of this note completes the latter bibliography.

Above all, Pierre will always be remembered as the gentleman-scientist. Pierre was a humble, kind and extremely competent man, always ready to help, no matter if you were a young inexperienced student knocking at his door or an established senior scientist asking questions about algae from a trivial Belgian pool or from a very peculiar African waterfall with lots of endemic taxa. Pierre would spend hours of his time with you at the microscope trying to solve your identification problems.

His death leaves an immense gap, not only as a scientist but so much more as a friend and a very warm person. Pierre leaves behind his wife Gerda, his children and grandchildren. Pierre will stay forever in our memory.

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