

*In Memory of Professor
Zbigniew Piesik*



Z. Piesik

REMEMBERING PROFESSOR ZBIGNIEW PIESIK

Zbigniew Piesik, D professor of the Pomeranian Pedagogical University in Słupsk, editor of *Baltic Coastal Zone* passed away on the 2nd August 2004 at the age of 56.

Professor Zbigniew Piesik was born on the 4th January 1948 in Maliniec near Szczecinek. There he received his education completing Princess Elisabeth High School in 1966. His interest in biology was a family heritage as his father was a biologist working for the Fishing and Hunting Institute in Bydgoszcz, the University of Poznań until 1939 and after the II World War he taught biology at school.

Professor Piesik graduated from the Faculty of Biology and Earth Sciences of the Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznań in 1972 earning the degree of Master of Science in Zoology. Still as student, he broadened his biological knowledge in the Academic Circle of Nature Lovers where he did his first fauna related works concerning epizoic Infusoria and the gammarids of *Gammarus* genus. His degree thesis "Epizoic Infusoria on gammarus of Karaman *Rivulogammarus* sub-genus in the streams surrounding the city of Poznań" was supervised by Prof. Jan Rafalski of the Animal Morphology Unit of the Poznań University. In summer 1971, he had a month long practical training in the Marine Fisheries Institute in Gdynia, which was very much in line with his interests.

He started his scientific career at the Chair of Hydrozoology of the Marine Fisheries Faculty at the Agriculture Academy in Szczecin, headed by Prof. Lech Szlauer. There he carried out several works regarding the taxonomy and the phenomenon of the epizoics among Peritricha. His epizoic works were pioneer quantitative surveys on *Gammarus* and *Asellus*. He described one completely new genus and 6 species among epizoic Peritricha occurring on various hosts. At the same time he was conducting research on applied hydrobiology, biology and the ecological role of hydrobions, molluscs in particular (*Dreissena polymorpha*). The applied hydrobiology works concerned the possibility of using epiphytic complexes (periphyton) for water, aquaculture and mariculture final clearing up. Further, Prof. Piesik was also involved in the implementation processes, particularly those regarding molluscs fighting that overgrow water structures and also turning invertebrates into fish feed.

During his sea voyages (marine training trips) on board m/t "Sejno" and "Bonoto" trawlers in 1980 and 1984 (SW Atlantic) he was concerned with the biology and parasitic fauna of kalmar and the possibilities of its artificial spawning for the purpose of reconstructing that over-exploited population.

In 1978, before the Faculty Council of the Agriculture Academy in Szczecin, he presented his dissertation entitled "The role of plastic net barriers applied for the final

clearing up of waste matter and dissolved biogenes” which he had written under the supervision of Prof. Lech Szlauer thus earning the title of Doctor of Philosophy in Nature Sciences.

From March to May 1987, Prof. Piesik was staying in Naples as a scientific trainee with the Zoology Station (one of the first oceanography research stations in the world) where he had the opportunity of conducting some of the research indispensable for his *doctor habilitatus* degree. Working for the Faculty of Marine Fisheries he acted as tutor of the academic Hydrobiologists Circle. He supervised students' works concerning their research covering the biology of mollusc inhabiting the Odra river estuary and the impact of detergents on the aquatic fauna. Those works were awarded at national students scientific conferences.

The year 1988 saw many changes in Professor's scientific life. He was employed by the newly formed University of Szczecin where he started and headed the Institute of Water Protection and Reconstitution. The research conducted in that unit focused on marine biology and applied hydrobiology. Professor Piesik was very keen on his work and for this reason he went to sea (1990/1991) on board of m/s Kopalnia Sośnica for six months to collect material for his Institute from the Atlantic and the Mediterranean Sea. In the period of 1993-1995 he participated in the international Research Exchange Programme Greifswalder Boden und Oderästuar Austausch (GOAP).

As a lecturer, he supervised research by his undergraduates and the members of the Interuniversity Marine Biology Scientific Circle of the Maritime League. The work carried out within the activities of those students involved fouling and bottom fauna ecology in the Odra River estuary (Dąbie lake, the Szczecin Lagoon, the Gulf of Pomerania). At that period of time, Prof. Piesik gave lectures on biologic oceanography, mariculture for the students of Marine Biology and also commissioned lectures, seminars and arranged laboratories for the Szczecin Agriculture Academy undergraduates.

In 1994, professor Piesik was awarded *doctor habilitatus* in agricultural sciences by the Faculty Council of the Agriculture Academy Faculty of Fisheries in Szczecin. His dissertation dealt with “The Biology and the Ecological Role of Perifiton Organisms Inhabiting Artificial Medium in Various Water Types”.

In 1995, Prof. Piesik decided he wanted to join the Pomeranian Pedagogical University in Słupsk. On his arrival he set to establishing a new Biology and Sea Protection Institute, which was combined with the Institute of Ecology soon afterwards. Prof. Piesik conducted courses for biology, geography and physics students; both stationary and extramural ones. He also acted as supervisor for the Marine Biologist Circle of the Maritime League which specialised in research on the impact of the Pomeranian rivers pollution on the Baltic coastal zone.

What characterised Prof. Piesik's scientific work was his urge to find practical application for his findings. He was always trying to put his ideas to practice yet on few occasions did they meet understanding of those who were responsible for the funds, as they were usually terrified by Professor's boldness and the swinging range of his actions. Many conferences, the facility of getting acquainted with the city authorities and other scientists made our ideas well known among the citizens of our region and

scientific staff of other academic centres. One of the major subjects handled by Professor's fellow-hydrobiologists was working out a concept of shore lakes reconstitution (Jamno, Serbsko) and the development of the adjacent areas for the sake of the local society. On many occasions was Professor invited to speak on the subject of water bodies reconstitution. The last research that he was trying to extend in Słupsk was protection of the water against the blue-green algae blooms. Until the last moment, Prof. Piesik was working on the details of his concept concerning the rescue of endangered lake Trzesiecko – a place close to his heart in his family area.

Professor Piesik loved the sea and he did his best to make his students share his attitude. As a result many of them submitted their degree theses on the mid-coast offshore Baltic zone. In 1996 and 1999 he organized an international symposium entitled: "Ecology, protection, shaping of the coastal zone of the Baltic Sea". His opinion was that owing to its geographical location, Słupsk must concentrate on educating biologists. From the very start, it had been Professor's dream to establish the study area of Marine Biology as part of the degree study course. He did not manage to achieve that goal until just before his death. Unfortunately, he will not see any of his own students graduate as marine biologists. It is due to his efforts that our students have the opportunity to learn at courses run by the Baltic University and receive an international certificate of completion. Owing to Professor's personal engagement, in 1996 *Baltic Zone Coastal* appeared. So far the only academic scientific magazine in English in the Pomeranian Pedagogical University. There have been 8 issues and just before Professor's death it was included in the KBN (Scientific Research Committee) list as scored magazine.

As a scientist, Prof. Piesik published 15 scientific articles, was co-author of 27 other articles and a number of publications in conference proceedings. As a teacher he had supervised 43 graduates, two of whom specialised in marine fisheries and 41 in biology. Until his death Prof. Piesik had opted for the development of young scientists which was confirmed by 4 PhDs who learned from him (3 at University of Szczecin and 1 in Pomeranian Pedagogical University in Słupsk). The Council of the Faculty of Science of the Academy in Słupsk had asked him to supervise two other post-graduates. As a member of University staff, Prof. Piesik participated in the works of the Senate in the Agriculture Academy in Szczecin (1984-1987) and in Pedagogical University. Since 1996 he had been Head of the Senate Publication Commission of the University in Słupsk.

Since 1972 he had been member of the Polish Hydrobiologists Society, where he was President of the Szczecin section from 1993 to 1995. Since 1993 he had been member of the Polish Society of Malacologists. He was also active in the Polish Union of Coast Protection (EUCC Poland), where for some time he was Member of the Board. He was awarded III. Award of the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology (1987), the Cross of Honour (2004) and awards by the Rector of the Agriculture Academy in Szczecin (3 times), of the University of Szczecin (3 times), of the Pedagogical University (3 times) and in the eighties Honorable Maritime Activist and Bronze Cross of Honour.

Krzysztof Obolewski