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Vzpomínky na Aleše Smetanu 1931–2021

Reminiscences on Aleš Smetana 1931–2021

Mám dojem, že to bylo jen včera, co jsme oslavovali osmdesátiny Aleše, v sympatické restauraci v Praze na Albertově. V následujícím desetiletí zůstal stejně aktivní a věrný drabčíkům i taxonomii. Ještě koncem minulého roku jsem měl tu výsadu s ním diskutovat a pak publikovat článek o pochybných kvantitativních metodách používaných k odhadu biodiversity a přitom jsem obdivoval jeho časem neotupený bystrý duch, široký rozsah zájmů a kritický pohled. Aleš ještě oslavil výročí své devadesátky jakož plně produktivní entomolog. To nevšední výročí bylo současně také výročí osmdesáti let intensivního zájmu o brouky a sedmdesáti let od přípravy popisu prvního nového brouka, drabčíka *Gabrius exspectatus*, publikovaného v Německu v roce 1952 (v současnosti známého z většiny evropských zemí). Aleš postupně nalezl a publikoval nesčetné další nové druhy. A co je zvlášť cenné, ač čím dále tím vzácnější, spravoval obrovské množství materiálu z vlastních sběrů i z nejrůznějších institucí a sbírek. Výsledky své práce publikoval ve formě rozsáhlých revisí a monografií, které podstatně usnadňují práci s čeledí drabčíkovitých, která je s více než 60 000 druhy nejbohatší z celé živočišné říše a přispívá k celkové znalosti biodiversity. Nemluvě o studiu jiných skupin, jako například vodomilů nebo vší. Tak úspěšných výsledků lze sotva dosáhnout bez některých předpokladů. K nim patří vztah k přírodě, schopnost si povšimnout detailů, houževnatost i tělesná vytrvalost. Kdykoliv jsem s Alešem sbíral, udivoval mne intensivním vychutnáváním si krásy přírodního prostředí, snadností, s jakou nalezl nejzajímavější druhy, i svojí neúnavností. Vlastně jen jednou jsem viděl Aleše unaveného. Bylo to při výstupu do Thorongského průsmyku, dobrých 5400 metrů nad mořem, na severní straně nepálské Annapurny. Nicméně mám dojem, že ten den měl Aleš přetížený ruksak.

Vzpomínky na minulost mne přivádí k paradoxu, který ovlivňuje úsilí o lepší poznání fauny, domácí i světové. To je zvlášť aktuální nyní, kdy následkem antropického tlaku většina druhu mizí z povrchu světa. Tak jako jiní aktivní přírodovědci, Aleš byl i v období nejhoršího komunistického útlaku svobodný, pokud šlo o výzkum fauny. Nikdo neviděl něco zlého na sběrech hmyzu, které byly a zůstávají předpokladem získaní nových vědomostí a jsou nutné pro ověření starších, nejistých informací. Omezení sběrů se limitovalo na faunu národních parků. Tehdy i děti věděly, že množství hmyzu je korelované s výkyvy počasí a odběr jedinců prakticky nevadí. Ještě koncem sedmdesátých let minulého století bylo tolik hmyzu, že ani vliv rostoucí dopravy neměl katastrofální následky, přes hekatomby usmrcených jedinců. Ekologická studie university v Grazu ukázala, že v Rakousku je auty během jediné sezóny usmrceno 14×10^{15} živočichů. Což je přibližně milionkrát více usmrcených kusů, než je souhrn všech živočichů uložených ve sbírkách muzeí za více než dvě století, a to na celém světě. V současnosti můžeme autem projet stovky kilometru bez toho, abychom zabili jediného motýla či brouka. Přesto se na sběratele poukazuje jako na příčinu či spolupříčinu vymíraní. Ochranáři a zákonodárci hrají do rukou těm, kteří pro ekonomickou krátkozrakost degradují prostředí, regulují toky, odvodňují močály, sází monokultury na obrovských plochách, znečišťují vodu a půdu a podporují světelné znečištění (abych jmenoval jen několik faktorů z celé legie příčin). Místo aby

se podporoval výzkum diversity organizmů, pokud to ještě jde, administrativy zavedly téměř celosvětovou síť omezení a zákazů. Sběr potřebný ke studiu biologie organismů je označen jako potenciálně škodlivý. Tím těžko přitahuje další dorost, nevyhnutelnou podmínku pro kontinuitu studií. Tak se dostáváme k dalšímu paradoxu: institucionální ochrana druhů, která by měla vést veřejnost k citlivosti k přírodě, vede spíš k odcizení a nepochopení. A navíc brzdí výzkum. Sotva pochopitelný postoj našel svůj vrchol v Nagojském protokolu, který vyžaduje podílení se na ziscích z výzkumu. Bez toho, aby vzal do úvahy skutečnost, že výzkum vede k získávání nových informací, jejichž šíření je podmíněné jejich publikováním. Je přehlížena skutečnost, ze informace jsou potenciálním bohatstvím, pokud se rozumně použijí. Netrvalo dlouho, aby se rozšířila představa, že brouk sebraný pro vědecké účely představuje únik zisku, a rozšířil se termín „biopirátství". V mnoha zemích je dnes velice obtížné nebo i vyloučené přispět k lepšímu poznání fauny, i když je nedostatečně známa a je bezprostředně ohrožena. Aleš měl vlastně štěstí uniknout z této uzákoněné iracionality.

Aleš také patřil ke generaci přírodovědců, která měla výsadu být posuzována podle obsahu a výsledku své práce. Dokonce i za komunizmu, pokud se výzkum netýkal zakázaných oborů, jako byla genetika, pod vlivem sovětského akademika T. D. Lysenka. V současnosti převládá hodnocení podle kvantitativních parametrů, ve víře, že kvantita zrcadlí kvalitu. Vše se měří – od universit, jednotlivých oborů, časopisů, publikací, až po jednotlivé vědce. Pro publikace se zavedl systém, jehož páteří je axiom „peer reviewing" článků, zaručující korektnost. Nesčetné případy sice ukazují opak, nicméně tuto víru (či aplikaci této víry) nijak neoslabují. Eugen Garfield, který v 1960 roku zavedl Science Citation Index a Impact Factor, aby knihovnám ulehčil výběr vědeckých časopisů, určitě netušil následek: kvantitativní hodnocení se přeneslo z časopisů na jednotlivé publikované články a z nich na autory. To v kombinaci s pandemickým „publish or perish" stimulovalo založení obrovského počtu nespecializovaných časopisů, orientovaných na upoutání pozornosti široké vědecké veřejnosti a tím zaručený impact (Impact Factor), který se postupně stal pro autory nezbytný. Druhá perverse systému je jeho inflační tlak. Jen PLOS ONE publikoval od roku 2006 přibližně milión vědeckých článků. Většina těchto nově založených vědeckých časopisů patří podnikatelům, kteří požadují poplatky, i když někdy nepřímé (například PLOS Biology požaduje 2350 až 4000 $ za publikaci příspěvku). Tak se část státních rozpočtů určených na vědu použije k placení publikačních poplatků, na úkor specializovaných časopisů nejrůznějších společností a institucí. Což je zřejmě další paradox modernity. Jak ukazuje DORA (San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment), problém je vidět v celé řadě vědeckých disciplín. Nicméně je zvlášť vyostřený v taxonomii, která je silně specializována. Taxonomie kromě toho trpí nepochopením: bývá ztotožňována s určovací praxí, ač to je pouze její aplikace (tak jako diagnosy jsou aplikací výzkumu v medicíně), lepí se na ni mýtus, že jejím cílem je pojmenovávat taxony a tvrdí se, že je v podstatě jen popisná. Přičemž taxonomie je pravděpodobně nejintegrativnější z biologických disciplín, a je založena na hypothezách, které jsou ověřitelné, zatímco jména taxonů nejsou nic jiného než etikety potřebné pro komunikaci. Je mimochodem pozoruhodné, že astronomii nikdo nevyčítá její popisnou povahu ani označovaní (= pojmenovávání) jednotlivých hvězd a galaxií, či medicíně její popisné diagnosy a pojmenování jednotlivých patologií. Důsledky kvantitativního přístupu k hodnocení vědy ve spojení s nepochopením taxonomie jsou vidět každodenně. Výzkum se soustřeďuje na otázky, které lze krátkodobě řešit s použitím pokud možno co nejnáročnějších technologií. Kromě toho systém podporuje inflaci spoluautorů (kteří tak všichni dosáhnou určitého skóre i při popisech nových taxonů,

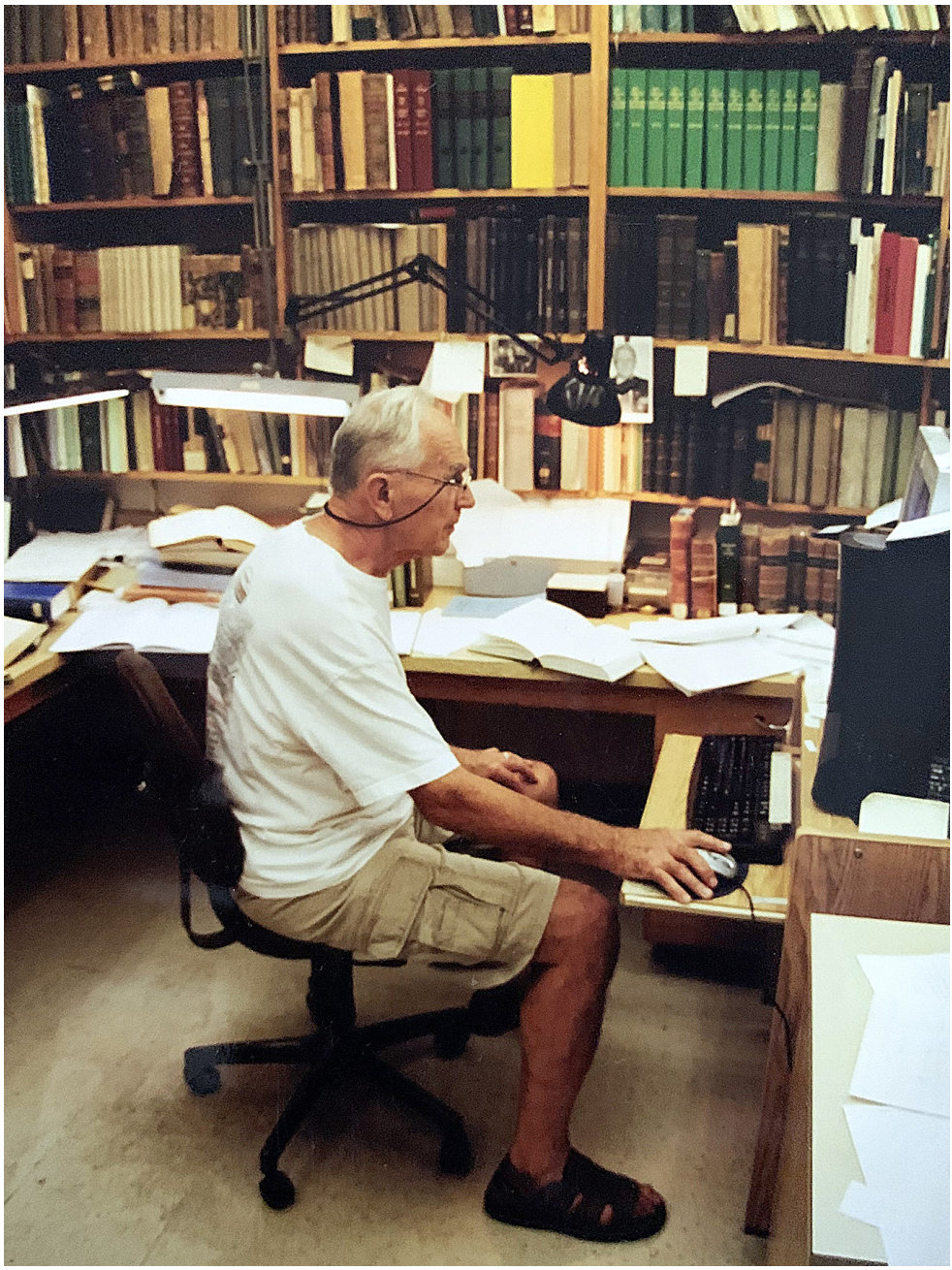


Fig. 1. Aleš at his office on the 4th floor of the Neatby Building, Canadian National Collection of Insects, Arachnids and Nematodes, *circa* 2005.

a vede k tragikomickým citacím, jako např. „*Leonhardia jajcensis* S. Ćurčić & T. Rađa in S. Ćurčić, T. Rađa, Mulaomerović, Vrbica, Antić, B. Ćurčić, B. Rađa & Vesović, 2014“). Paralelně se zamrazuje práce na monografickém zpracování megadiverzních skupin, které vyžadují dlouhou řadu let. Nicméně nejvážnější následek kvantitativního hodnocení je přesun paradigmatu k docílení publikací v časopisech s vysokým impact faktorem.

Aleš svojí prací ukazuje, jak jsou akademická svoboda a vědecká práce neregulovaná technokracií efektivní ve snaze docílit robustních poznatků o fauně. Tyto řádky jsou pro mne příležitost popřát ostatním entomologům zdravější podmínky pro práci, podobné jako měl Aleš, umožňující nejen úspěch, ale i soulad s etikou a racionalitou.

For me, it felt like yesterday that we celebrated Aleš's 80th birthday, in a friendly restaurant in Prague Albertov. In the ten years since, Aleš remained active and devoted to taxonomy of the rove beetles. Still, at the end of last year I had the privilege to discuss and then publish with him a paper on doubtful quantitative methods used to evaluate biodiversity, and I appreciated his intellect, unaffected by years, remaining critical and keeping a broad purview of interest. Aleš celebrated his 90th birthday as a productive entomologist. That quite extraordinary jubilee was also marked 80 years of his interest in beetles and 70 years since he worked on his first description of a new species, the rove beetle *Gabrius exspectatus*, published in Germany in 1952 (and now known from most European countries). Subsequently, Aleš published numberless descriptions of new species. Nevertheless, his most valuable works were his studies of extensive collections, his own as well as those of many institutions (work that has become rare in spite of the necessity for it). The results of his studies were published in extensive revisions and monograph that form a baseline for the study of many groups of rove beetles, a family that with over 60,000 recognized species, is the most species-rich of the animal kingdom. His studies of other groups, such as the hydrophilids and lice are also notable. It would be difficult to achieve such remarkable results without certain prerequisites, such as a close affinity to nature, an ability to observe detail, tenacity, and also physical endurance. Whenever I was collecting with Aleš, I was impressed by his ability to enjoy the beauty of nature, the facility with which he found the most interesting species, and his unflagging energy. As far as I can remember, I saw him tired only once. It was on the trail to the Thorong Pass, 5400 m high, north of the Nepalese Annapurna. However, I suspect he had his backpack overloaded on that day.

Recalling the past brings me to a paradox that affects effort to improve our knowledge of beetles as well as that of entire faunas and floras, at local as global levels. Aleš, like other active naturalists, was free in fieldwork, even during the worst period of the communist oppression. Sampling specimens was recognized as a prerequisite for acquirement of new information and verification of older uncertain data. No one considered that it could have any negative effects. Restrictions were limited to fieldwork in national parks. At that time even children knew that populations of insects or birds are correlated with fluctuations in weather, and that the sampling of individuals is irrelevant for them. Still in the 1970s, there were so many insects that the impact of the increasing transport had no catastrophic consequences, though hecatombs of insects and other animals were killed. At that time an ecological study at Graz University demonstrated that cars in Austria kill, in a single year, 14×10^{15} animals. That is about one million times more than all the animals collected and deposited in all the museums, globally and over the course of two centuries. Actually, we can drive a car for hundreds of



Fig. 2. The 'Coleoptera Coffee Club' in the Coleoptera Unit of the Canadian National Collection of Insects, Arachnids and Nematodes, AAFC. From left to right: Go Sato, Don Bright, Ed Becker, Aleš Smetana. No date recorded.

kilometres without killing a single beetle or butterfly. Nevertheless, conservationists consider individuals sampling specimens to be a source of depauperisation and extinction. This opinion indirectly supports those who, from economic myopia, are really responsible for deteriorating habitats and extinctions, by regulation of streams, drying wetlands, planting monocultures on excessive large areas, contaminating water and soil, and supporting light pollution (to name just a few of a long list of causes). Administrations, instead of encouraging research focusing on assessing diversity of organisms as long as it is still possible, have introduced a network of restrictions, almost all over the world. Sampling needed for study of organisms has been designated as potentially detrimental to nature. As a consequence, it is difficult to explain to the youth how important it is for the continuity of research. Here we face another paradox: institutional conservation that is supposed to stimulate public awareness of nature, instead leads to alienation from it and misunderstanding of it. Thus it hampers increase of knowledge. The hardly understandable attitude found its apogee in the Nagoya Protocol, that requests sharing benefits, overlooking the fact that basic faunal and floral research leads to publications that are a benefit to all, at least potentially. As a consequence of misunderstanding, the term "biopiracy" appeared, obviously derived from believe than any specimen of an animal or plant may be a source of enrichment that flows away from its "owner" when collected. At present, is it very difficult or even impossible to improve the knowledge of the fauna in many countries, even when the habitats are endangered and those species that still exist are in danger of extinction. Aleš had the great chance to escape from this kind of legalized irrationality.

Aleš also belonged to the generation of researchers that had the privilege to be evaluated

by the content and results of their work. This was even true under the communist regime, as long as the research did not concern prohibited areas (such as genetics, influenced by the Soviet academician T. D. Lysenko). At present, quantitative (metric) means are used for evaluation of science, likely in the belief that quantity is correlated with quality. Metrics are used to evaluate almost everything, from universities, branches, journals and publications to individual researchers. The "peer review" system, believed to be a guarantor of correctness (in spite of countless cases showing the contrary) became a backbone of a system introduced to evaluate scientific publications. Eugene Garfield introduced the Science Citation Index and the Impact Factor for libraries, to facilitate selections of journals. The consequences of the transfer of his quantitative evaluation of journal to papers and from those to authors was not anticipated. This, in combination with the "publish or perish" and electronic publishing facilities, stimulated creation of a huge number of new, not specialized journals oriented to captivate attention of a large array of scientists and so more easily assure the now-required high metrics. The system resulted in an inflation of publications, becoming another distortion (e.g., since 2006 PLOS ONE published about a million scientific contributions). Most of these new journals are private and request charges for publishing a paper ($2350 to $4000 by PLOS Biology). As result, a part of the governmental funds allocated to science is used to pay publication charges, at the expenses of the more specialized journals of societies and institutions that usually have difficulties in providing high enough scores. As demonstrated by DORA (San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment), the problem affects many branches of science. It is particularly damaging in taxonomy, which is strongly specialized. In addition, taxonomy suffers from misunderstandings: it used to be considered as an identification service, though identification is only one of its facets (like diagnoses, which are applications of medical research), is affected by a myth that its goal is naming taxa and that it is descriptive. In reality, taxonomy is arguably the most integrative biological branch, is based on verifiable hypotheses, and the names of taxa are nothing more than labels needed to communicate. Incidentally, it is notable that no one reproaches astronomy for being descriptive and for name stars and galaxies, nor is medicine criticised for its descriptions and names of pathologies. The consequences of quantitative evaluation in science in combination with misunderstanding of taxonomy may be seen daily: researchers turn to problems that may be dealt with in short-term studies, that address unspecialized topics, and that use as complex technology as possible. In addition, it stimulates inflation of co-authors who may obtain scores even in descriptions of new taxa and leads to tragicomic references, such as the beetle *Leonhardia jajcensis* S. Ćurčić & T. Rađa in S. Ćurčić, T. Rađa, Mulaomerović, Vrbica, Antić, B. Ćurčić, B. Rađa & Vesović, 2014. Works on megadiverse groups are simultaneously frozen, as they require long-term studies. However, the most important consequence of these metrics is a shift of paradigms, away from increasing knowledge and towards publication in journals with high metrics.

Aleš, through his work, shows how important academic freedom is in the effort to provide robust data on biotic diversity. I here take the opportunity to wish all entomologists healthy conditions for work like Aleš had, enabling scientific success and conforming with ethics and rationality.

Ivan LÖBL, Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, Ženeva, Švýcarsko



Fig. 3. Crossing the Arun River (Nepal) by foot bridge. April, 1982.

The legacy of Aleš Smetana in Canada

I have had the pleasure of working just down the hall from Aleš Smetana since my appointment to the Canadian National Collection of Insects, Arachnids and Nematodes (CNC) in 2017. In this short time, Aleš and I developed a fantastic collaboration where we each brought our own strengths to the study of rove beetles, which we were so passionate about. Aleš was curious about the potential of newer, genomic approaches to systematics and I was always excited to bring him the (sometimes shocking) results of analyses at coffee break. At the same time, Aleš assisted me greatly with questions about Latin, literature, historical authors and collecting techniques. During our work together, it was clear to me that this integrative systematics research relied upon a strong foundation formed by Aleš from countless exhausting hours spent in the field and steady, careful work at the office that brought names and critical diagnoses to the global rove beetle fauna.

Aleš' Canadian life began in 1967, when he starting working at the CNC (then 'Entomology Research Institute') as a National Research Council of Canada postdoctoral fellow. During this short two-year period, he produced a comprehensive monograph on North American Quediini rove beetles (Coleoptera: Staphylinidae: Staphylininae) that was later (Smetana 1971) published in the Entomological Society of Canada's Memoir Series. In the same period, he also extensively sampled North America, including all Canadian provinces

and territories (except Newfoundland, Nunavut and the Maritimes), and many states of the western and southeastern USA. This incredibly valuable and irreplaceable baseline record of Nearctic biodiversity, laid down in only two years' time, is only matched in our staphylinid collection by Aleš' later collecting efforts, together with colleagues such as Milt Campbell. In the 1960s, Aleš' approach of using male genitalia for poorly known Nearctic rove beetles was systematics at the highest level of rigor and considered 'cutting edge'. Upon seeing his unpublished monograph on Quediini, the director of the institute was apparently so impressed that he was committed to ensure Aleš would return as a permanent employee.

Fortunately, Aleš did return and began working officially as Research Scientist at the Central Experimental Farm on September 23, 1971. He was appointed to work on the poorly known North American diversity of the terrestrial water scavenger beetles (Hydrophilidae), alongside which he continued work on rove beetles, also greatly in need of taxonomic attention in North America. During his appointment at the CNC, Aleš drove massive growth of the CNC beetle collection, with numerous expeditions to Canada and the United States (1970–1980s), the Himalaya of Nepal (five yearly trips, 1981–1985), Japan (1980, 1991), Taiwan (1990, 1991, 1992, 1994, 1995) and later, albeit self-funded, multiple trips to China. Aleš was constantly breaking 'new ground' in little known faunas or difficult taxonomic groups. Amongst a multitude of other papers, Aleš completed a series of comprehensive monographs and their supplements on North American hydrophilids and staphylinids (see bibliography in Farkač & Löbl (2011)), many of which were published with the Entomological Society of Canada. Thanks to Aleš, the Staphylininae *sensu lato* is one of the best known and most reliably identified rove beetle subfamilies in North America. In total, Aleš published over 472 research papers, books and large monographs, many of which are regularly cited in diverse papers on North American taxonomy, climate change and natural resources ecology, conservation, biocontrol and archaeology (subfossil deposits in association with humans). Aleš was also a major contributor to *The Canadian Entomologist* and its associated publications, with 19 publications describing 179 species-group and 14 genus group names (Bouchard et al. 2018).

The impacts of Aleš' taxonomic work on the ever-evolving knowledge of the Canadian fauna are numerous and extremely diverse. Good taxonomy catalyses the creation of knowledge long into the future and often in unexpected ways. Just the other day, I identified some interesting photo records on the citizen science-based site inaturalist.org from Ontario, Canada as *Oxybleptes kiteleyi* Smetana, 1982 — one of my favorite Nearctic genera and species described by Aleš. In addition to being valuable datapoints for this infrequently encountered and strongly sexually dimorphic species, the images also showed for the first time (to my knowledge) that females were close by and above the ground, when males form their mysterious, seemingly single-sex aggregations on various bare objects.

At the CNC, Aleš was well known for his love of high-performance automobiles, volleyball and keeping fit, cultivating exotic plants, foraging for mushrooms, an expansive knowledge of Latin and other languages (Czech, German, English), and honest and open opinions about scientific practice and philosophy.

It has been difficult and strange to slowly pack-up Aleš' office at the Canadian National Collection, but I am happy when I realize that Aleš will forever remain all around us here in the Coleoptera Unit and can be easily reached each time one opens an insect cabinet.

Adam BRUNKE, Canadian National Collection of Insects, Arachnids and Nematodes, Ottawa, Canada



Fig. 4. Collecting on Hsin-kangshan, southern Taiwan, April 1998.

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Fig. 5. Aleš Smetana and Petr Baňař, staphylinid meeting in Verona, May 2019.

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Fig. 6. Lise Robillard and Aleš Smetana, collecting at Stožec, Šumava Mts., Czech Republic, June 2019. Photography by Jan Farkač.

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