

## The Dennis H. Murphy Valedictory Issue



As the first Honours and M. Sc. student of Professor Murphy, I guess it is quite appropriate that I write this valedictory note. Also, of all the academic staff members in the Department of Zoology, National University of Singapore, I have known Paddy (his nickname) longest - since 1960, when he first taught me Entomology in the then University of Malaya in Singapore.

Paddy Murphy (born 12 May 1931) studied biology at the University of Durham, England, graduating in 1952 with a Class II Division I honours degree in Zoology. He joined the Medical Research Council of Gambia, West Africa, as an entomologist, from 1955 to 1960. In 1960 he served as Lecturer at the University of Malaya in Singapore until 1973 when he was promoted to Senior Lecturer. Ten years later, in 1983, he was promoted to Associate Professor, in which post he is now retiring from service after 31 long, faithful and productive years.

While teaching at the University he enrolled for his Ph.D. candidature in the field of his expertise, namely the systematics of Collembola (springtails). But, somehow, because of his unique love and special attraction for the forest, where he would spend days on end and years unending, collecting insects and other arthropods to whet his enormous taxonomic appetite, he never managed to write up and submit his Ph.D. thesis. In any case, Paddy's contemporary and colleague in the Department, Herbert Fernando (now Full Professor at Waterloo University, Canada), has very aptly said: "He is much more than a Ph.D." Paddy's vast and wide-ranging knowledge of not only the insects but other animals as well, is legendary. Students and staff members alike would invariably consult him when they have an identification problem. He would almost always be able to rattle off a name with just one glance at the animal. Such is his knowledge and familiarity with our local fauna. Indeed, he may be dubbed "The Walking Dictionary".

Paddy's research interest may be broadly categorised into two areas:

**1) General**

- a) *Systematics* - Singapore insects in general and World Collembola and Onchidiacea (Mollusca) in particular.
- b) *Mangrove ecology* - insect-plant relationships, phyto-sociology, herbivory.
- c) *Theory of population dynamics*.

**2) Special**

- a) *Systematics* - Oriental Odonata, Orthoptera (Acrididae, Tettigoniidae, Gryllidae), Phasmatodea, Dictyoptera, Isoptera, Diptera (Calypttratae, Micropezidae, Sepsidae, Lonchaeidae), Homoptera (Fulgoroidea, Psylloidea, Aleyrodoidea), Hemiptera (Gerroidea), Hymenoptera (Formicidae).
- b) *Taxonomy and Biology of Mangrove Insects* - Special studies of oriental mangrove Lepidoptera (Pyalidae, Noctuidae, Xylorictidae), Coleoptera (Scolytidae, Platypodidae, Oedemeridae and some Chrysomelidae), and some Crustacea (Oniscidae, Sphaeromatidae) and Mollusca (Onchidiacea, Ellobiacea).
- c) *Ecology of Mangrove Fauna* - Special studies of inland forest phyto-sociology, herbivory, timber decomposition, inter-tidal insects and isopods, and diptera of public health importance.
- d) *Museum development* - Development of the Zoological Reference Collection; development of keys for genus level identification of Southeast Asian insects.

Because Paddy Murphy is an avid and persistent collector, not only of insects but also of other animal fauna, he has secured so many animals of interest that the local museum and museums overseas (especially the British Museum) have benefitted from his work. Also because of his fame as the most outstanding insect taxonomist in the region, Paddy serves as consultant to

several companies in the identification of medical, forestry, agricultural and stored products pests.

Professor Murphy has supervised many Honours, M.Sc. and Ph.D. students in his 30 years of academic life. One of his latest Ph.D. products is none other than Dr Peter Ng who is now a lecturer in the Department of Zoology, NUS, and an authority on the systematics of Crustacea (Decapoda) and Co-Editor of this journal.

Murphy's most significant contributions to science had been in the field of springtails (Collembola). But now that his interest lies in mangrove systematics and ecology, the scientific world can expect great and significant contributions in this area. Now that he is retiring and has time to write up the voluminous amount of data he has collected over the years, his greatest contributions will no doubt come rolling off the press in the years ahead. No doubt he will prove everybody wrong when he churns out his publications in a most prolific, dynamic and unexpected way. In my judgment, his finest hour is dawning, and the true scientific giant in this man is just about to burst forth.

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**LIST OF PUBLICATIONS**

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1966. Taxonomy and bionomics of eight species of *Sphaeridia* (Collembola, Smithurididae) in a Singapore flood plain. *Rev. Ecol. Biol. Sol.*, 3(1): 65-96.
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- 1971 (first author, with Y. T. Lee) Three new species of *Coniopterys* from Singapore (Planipennia, Coniopterygidae). *J. Entomol.*, (B)40(2): 151-161.
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