

In memoriam



Professor Shela Gateva (1926-2014)

Professor Shela (Rahila) Davidova Catalan-Gateva, an outstanding Bulgarian zoologist and former long-term head of the Department of Zoology and Anthropology at the University of Sofia “St. Kliment Ohridski”, passed away on 8 November 2014 in Sofia.

Shela Gateva was born on 14 April 1926 in the town of Kazanlak, where her family settled after moving from Spain. In 1950-1955, she studied biology at the University of Sofia and started her first research activities in zoology. In 1956, she became PhD student at the Department of Zoology of Invertebrates at the University of Sofia. Since 1960 she joined the teaching staff of the same department.

Her PhD thesis “Phytonematode fauna of Thracian Plain (Southern Bulgaria)”, defended in 1963, was a successful start of her long-term research career as phytonematologist. Twenty years later, in 1983, she defended her thesis for Doctor of Sciences (DSc) entitled “Phytonematodes of Bulgaria – taxonomy, ecology, distribution”. On the next year (1984), she was appointed as Professor of Invertebrate Zoology at the University of Sofia. She was the founder and scientific director of the Phytonematology Research Group at the Department of Zoology (1976), which was transformed into a specialised research laboratory in 1981. In this laboratory, under the direction of Professor Shela Gateva, many students have started their research activities and later turned into well-known names in the field of plant nematology.

As a member of the university teaching staff, Professor Shela Gateva lectured invertebrate zoology and general parasitology. She co-authored the university textbook of invertebrate zoology (1976) and the guide for practical classes in invertebrate zoology (1974). She also had several administrative positions such as Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Biology (1976-1979), Chairman of the University Council on Environmental Protection (1983) and Deputy Director of Research Management Department of the University of Sofia.

Professor Shela Gateva authored more than 70 research articles in the field of plant nematology as well as the monograph “Phytonematodes of Bulgaria” (1999, Publishing House of the University of Sofia, 350 p.). She recorded 339 species of nematodes for the fauna of Bulgaria and described five new species. As an outstanding Bulgarian nematologist, she was a member of the European Nematological Society, Bulgarian Parasitological Society and the specialised research councils of zoology and parasitology. She also served as a member of the editorial board of the Annual Book of the University of Sofia (Zoology).

With the death of Professor Shela Gateva, Bulgarian zoological science has lost a longtime active researcher of the nematode fauna and a remarkable teacher and lecturer in zoology.

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