Professor emeritus Ole A. Sæther died January 8 this year. His death did not come as a surprise as he had been fighting cancer for several years. He had his retirement office at the Department of Natural History, University Museum of Bergen and was working with his chironomids until shortly before his death.

Sæther was born in Kristiansand in southern Norway in 1936. He enrolled at the University of Oslo in 1955 and obtained his master degree (cand. real.) in 1963. From 1961 to 1966 he was employed, first as assistant professor, later as university lecturer at the Department of Limnology, University of Oslo. From 1966 to 1977 he worked as research scientist at the Freshwater Institute in Winnipeg, Canada. In 1977 he was appointed professor in systematic zoology at the University of Bergen, a position he held until his retirement.

Sæther specialized in aquatic Diptera, especially Chironomidae and Chaoboridae. He penned about 270 academic publications and authored or co-authored 3 subfamilies, 42 genera and nearly 400 species, mostly chironomids. Most of his publications are concerned with descriptive and analytical systematics, but several of his studies are also treating the use of chironomid communities to characterize lakes and to monitor environmental change.

Sæther’s work on comparative morphology and terminology of the larval mouthparts and the male and female genitalia in chironomids and other Nematocera is among his most important scientific contributions. His glossary of chironomid morphology terminology is now a standard text for chironomid descriptions. He was also a major contributor to the three volumes with complete diagnoses and keys to the larvae, pupae and male adults of Chironomidae of the Holarctic region; a second edition of the larvae key was printed in 2013 after his death.

Phylogenetic theory and cladistic analyses have been two of Sæther’s main areas of interest through most of his career. His taxonomic experience with a morphologically highly complex taxon combined with the efforts of implementing Hennigian phylogenetic thinking in chironomid systematics, made him believe that character evolution was more complex than originally anticipated in phylogenetic theory. This belief led Sæther to ad-
vocate the idea of “underlying synapomorphies”, a concept introduced by Lars Brundin as “inside parallelism”. An underlying synapomorphy is regarded as the potential capacity of a character to develop into an apomorph character state, and is unlike parallel selection caused by inheritance.

Several of Sæther’s recent publications concern the zoogeographical patterns found in chironomids. In addition to the well-known transantarctic Gondwanan pattern there are, among others, a northern Gondwanan or Inabrezian connection and an Afrotropical - South Asian connection often extending to East Asia and/or Australia. Through numerous studies, Sæther has showed the importance of using phylogenetic hypotheses as backbones in zoogeographical analyses.

Sæther participated on several projects and expeditions to Asia, Africa and South- and Central America. Together with master and PhD students from Norway, Ghana, China and Brazil he revised several genera of Orthocladiinae and Chironominae and described many new species. Throughout his career, Ole Sæther was always willing to help those of us who have asked for assistance and guidance in species identifications and phylogenetic analyses. He was an active participant in the chironomidologist community, and participated in all international chironomid symposia since the 4th in Ottawa in 1970.

A list of Sæther’s publications from 1962 to 2006 was given by Ekrem & Andersen (2007). Publications from 2007 to 2013 are listed below.

Reference

Ole A. Sæther : List of publications 2007-2013

2007

2008


2009

Sæther, O.A. 2009. Telmatogoton murrayi sp. n. from Iceland and T japonicus Tokunaga from Madeira (Diptera: Chironomidae). – Aquatic Insects 31: 31-44.


2010


2011


2012


Kong, F., Sæther, O.A. & Wang, X. 2012. A revi-
ew of the subgenus *Eudactylocladius* (Diptera: Chironomidae) from China. – *Zootaxa* 3341: 46-53.


2013 (Posthumously)


Trond Andersen
Department of Natural History
University Museum of Bergen
University of Bergen
P.O. Box 7800, N-5020 Bergen
Norway.