

In memoriam Johann Probst (1930-2011)

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Objektyp: **Obituary**

Zeitschrift: **Entomologica Basiliensia et Collectionis Frey**

Band (Jahr): **33 (2011)**

PDF erstellt am: **23.07.2024**

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In memoriam
Johann Probst (1930–2011)

by Jiří Moravec

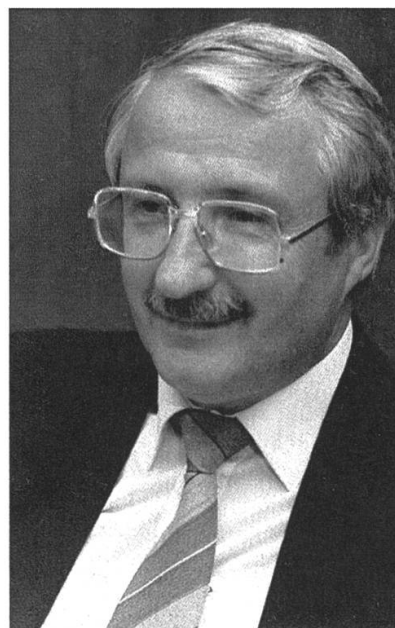
On 14 June 2011, the entomological community lost a well-known member and a wonderful man, Johann Probst.

Johann, known to his friends and colleagues as “Hans”, was born on March 7, 1930 in Vienna, Austria. Hans was very young when he lost his father during World War II, so his childhood and teenage years were not easy. He was given full training as a chemist and eventually became a specialist in pharmacy, working for various pharmaceutical concerns as a consultant. After his first wife Theresie passed away, he re-married in 1992 and spent the rest of his life with his second wife Jana, a native of Prague in the Czech Republic. He is survived by his son Johann and daughter Evelin from his first marriage.

Hans was attracted to nature in childhood, and soon became interested in entomology. As an entomological amateur – in the original sense of this word, “one who loves” – he gave particular attention to the tiger beetles (Cicindelidae) and, especially once he had retired, became a taxonomist of sound scientific competence. He published several important taxonomic papers with descriptions of new taxa, some of them as a co-author with his colleagues Fabio Cassola (Roma, Italy) and Jürgen Wiesner (Wolfsburg, Germany). He collected beetles in several countries, including Greece, Turkey and Sri Lanka, but his favourite country was Nepal. In the course of five collecting trips to Nepal, mostly with his Austrian colleague Karolus Holzschuh and also once with his wife Jana, he collected a large number of specimens, mostly Cicindelidae and Meloidae. He worked up an important paper on the Cicindelidae of Nepal (PROBST 1996). However, Hans also collected many other beetles of different families, which he always passed to other specialists. In this way Hans contributed to the discovery of a great number of species new to science, described by specialists in other beetle families, and many of the taxa were named after him. In addition to the species names dedicated to Hans, the new genus *Probstia* Cassola, 2002 was named after him. Apart from his primary interest in Cicindelidae, he was also interested in the taxonomy of the blister beetles, Meloidae, and collaborated with Meloidae taxonomists all over the world, particularly with Czech specialist Miroslav Dvořák, who named one new species after him (Miroslav died in 2009, during Hans’s illness).

In the course of more than 50 years, Hans assembled a large collection, exclusively of Cicindelidae and Meloidae, which is now deposited in the NHMW collection of the Naturhistorisches Museum Wien (Vienna, Austria).

Unfortunately, in 2004 Hans began to suffer from a progressive and very insidious illness, later complicated by another condition, also very serious. It was not long before his friends and colleagues were to bear sad witness to the rapid progression of his disease. I greatly admire his wife Jana, who took exceptionally patient and tender care



of Hans during his lengthy illness, when Hans became confined to a wheelchair, gradually losing his memory, as well as his ability to move and speak. He spent his final three years in a medical institution for long-term patients, one of the best hospices in Vienna, where he was given the finest care and Jana visited him daily.

I remember visiting Hans in the hospice in 2010, accompanied by his wife Jana. Although he could barely recognize us at that late stage of his illness, when I showed him some colour photos of tiger beetles, he browsed through them repeatedly, picking them up from the table several times, and smiled at me with a vivid spark of interest in his eyes.

For all that, Hans will remain in my memory as a man full of life and enthusiasm for tiger beetles, and I will cherish the memories of us discussing taxonomy in his flat, where I often visited him. I would like us to remember Hans by the portrait which accompanies this short memorial, but I would also like to refer to the group-photo in the book on African Cicindelidae (Vol. 1, page 81) published in 1999 by our sociable colleague Karl Werner, known to us as “Charly”, who suddenly and regrettably passed away in May 12, 2007.

With the death of Johann Probst, we lost not only one of our valued colleagues in entomology, but also a very good friend.

Entomology papers published by Johann Probst or together with his colleagues

- PROBST J. 1986: *Beschreibung einer neuen Therates-Art aus Nepal (Cicindelidae, Col.)*. Koleopterologische Rundschau **58**: 117–119.
- PROBST J. & WIESNER J. 1994: *Therates nepalensis, eine neue Art aus Nepal (Coleoptera: Cicindelidae)*. Entomologische Zeitschrift **104(1/2)**: 30–32.
- PROBST J. & WIESNER J. 1994: *Über Sandlaufkäfer der Gattung Therates aus Thailand. (Coleoptera: Cicindelidae)*. Entomologische Zeitschrift **104(5)**: 92–102.
- CASSOLA F. & PROBST J. 1995: *A new Cylindera species (subgenus Leptinomera Rivalier) from Brunei, northern Borneo (Coleoptera: Cicindelidae)*. Coleoptera, Schwanfelder Coleopterologische Mitteilungen, Schwanfeld, **10**: 11–15.
- CASSOLA F. & PROBST J. 1996: *A new Cylindera species (subgenus Verticina Rivalier) from north-western Vietnam (Coleoptera: Cicindelidae)*. Coleoptera, Schwanfelder Coleopterologische Mitteilungen, Schwanfeld **10**: 13–17.
- PROBST J. & WIESNER J. 1996: *Therates pseudomandli, eine neue Art aus China (Coleoptera: Cicindelidae)*. Entomologische Zeitschrift **106(1)**: 68–71.
- PROBST J. 1996: *Beitrag zur Kenntnis der Cicindeliden Nepals (Coleoptera: Cicindelidae)*. Koleopterologische Rundschau **66**: 19–37.

List of names in Coleoptera dedicated to Johann Probst

Genus-group name

Probstia Cassola, 2002

Species-group names

Cephalota zarudniana probsti (Mandl, 1976) (Cicindelidae)
Therates probsti Wiesner, 1988 (Cicindelidae)
Protocollyris probsti Naviaux, 1994 (Coleoptera, Cicindelidae)
Carabus tamang probsti Deuve, 1991 (Coleoptera, Carabidae)
Chlaenius (Amblygenius) probsti Kirschenhofer, 2006 (Carabidae)
Dischissus probsti Kirschenhofer, 1996 = *Craspedophorus probsti* (Kirschenhofer 1996) (Carabidae)
Peliocypas probsti (Kirschenhofer, 1994) (Carabidae)
Risophilus probsti Kirschenhofer, 2004 (Carabidae)
Trichotichnus (Bellogenus) probsti Kirschenhofer, 1992 (Carabidae)
Ampedus probsti Zeising et Sieg, 1992 (Elateridae)
Dima probsti Platia et Schimmel, 1991 (Elateridae)
Melanotus (Melanotus) probsti Platia et Schimmel, 2001 (Elateridae)
Silesis probsti Platia et Schimmel, 1991 (Elateridae)
Xanthopenthes probsti Schimmel, 1999 (Elateridae)
Epilachna probsti Jadwyszczak, 1994 (Coccinellidae)
Epicauta probsti Dvořák, 1996 (Meloidae)
Formicomus probsti Kejval, 2000 = *Anthelephila probsti* (Kejval, 2000) (Anthicidae)
Themus (Haplothemus) probsti Wittmer, 1993 (Cantharidae)
Agapanthia probsti Holzschuh, 1984 (Cerambycidae)