

## ANNA STAŃCZYKOWSKA-PIOTROWSKA (1932–2021) – OBITUARY

Professor dr hab. Anna Stańczykowska-Piotrowska passed away on November 24th, 2021, aged 89. Though for a long time, seeing her regularly, I watched with regret her gradual fading, Ania's death came as a real shock to me.

She was a prominent scientist: hydrobiologist and malacologist. She was among the most outstanding and world-wide recognised Polish researchers of the malacofauna of lakes.

Prof. Anna Stańczykowska-Piotrowska studied at the Faculty of Biology and Earth Sciences, Warsaw University, to get her master's degree in 1956. In the same year she was employed in the Department of Ecology, Polish Academy of Sciences with which she had been associated, conducting malacological research since the second year of her studies. In 1964 she obtained the degree of doctor of natural sciences at Warsaw University. During more than a year she did research at Montreal University in Canada (1969–70). She habilitated in 1977 at the Institute of Ecology, Polish Academy of Sciences, where she worked till 1986.

In 1984 she started working at Agricultural-Pedagogical University in Siedlce (at present University of Natural Sciences and Humanities in Siedlce). In 1986 she established there the Chair of Ecology and Environment Protection of which she was head till her retirement. In 1989 she became extraordinary professor, and in 1992 – ordinary professor (Catholic University of Lublin).

During many years she cooperated with the Organisation Committee of Olympics of Ecological Knowledge; she participated in the work of Programmatic Group for Biology of the Ministry of Education and in the work on the system of biology teaching of the Committee of Evolutionary and Theoretical Biology, Polish Academy of Sciences.

All the time prof. Anna Stańczykowska's scientific activity focused on aquatic molluscs which play a considerable part in freshwater ecosystems: snails of the genus *Viviparus*, bivalves of the family Unionidae, and especially the invasive species *Dreissena polymor-*



*pha* (zebra mussel). Besides her main research, mostly concerned with the lakes of north-eastern Poland, *D. polymorpha* was also studied in cooperation with significant European research centres, such as Vienna University, University of Zurich, the Italian Pallanza, the Hungarian Tihany, or the Russian Borok. In Poland she cooperated, among other institutions, with Warsaw University, Jagiellonian University, and the Institute of Inland Fisheries.

An effect of collaboration with the American University of Ann Arbor was the extensive first chapter describing 30-year studies on *D. polymorpha* in the Masurian Lakeland – part of a monumental book (over 800 pages) devoted to biology and ecology of the species, published by the international publishing house Lewis Publishers (1993). The second edition of the book on the zebra mussel, published 20 years later, considers Polish research of 50 years.

Prof. A. Stańczykowska was the best specialist in the ecology of *D. polymorpha*. She was invited, among others, as an expert of the WHO to the then Yugoslavia, or to North America, to design a strategy for counteracting the expansion of the zebra mussel.



Figs 1–2. Vistula bar „Konfederatka”, 1955. Photos: archive of ANNA STAŃCZYKOWSKA-PIOTROWSKA



Figs 3–4. Masurian Lakeland, July 1960. Photos: JAN EBERT

The comprehensive character of her studies on *D. polymorpha* included first of all intensive, detailed observations and experiments in selected lakes, secondly extensive studies in many lakes in the same period, thirdly studies repeated every few years which in effect resulted in a unique – on a world's scale – continuity of the observations to show the tendencies in changes through time in the bivalve populations in various ecological situations. Also her unique experiments with filtration activity of the zebra mussel brought her worldwide recognition.

Her scientific output includes about 150 publications (some of which won awards), several dozen lectures, nine books, 19 practical expertises. Within the field of education, she supervised more than 60 master's theses and five doctoral theses, she refereed numerous doctoral theses and habilitation theses, as well as scientific production of people aspiring to professor's title.

She loved to work with young people; she was always willing to share her knowledge during lectures, seminars and laboratory courses in Agricultural-Pedagogical University in Siedlce, Catholic University in Lublin (the newly established Chair of Environment Protection of which she was head), and High School of Ecology and Management in Warsaw. Because of her openness, friendliness and sensitivity

she was very popular among students and doctoral students (during many years she was head of the Department of Doctoral Studies of the Institute of Ecology, Polish Academy of Sciences) and co-workers. Many of them became her friends for life.

A very important part of Prof. A. Stańczykowska's work was popularisation and education within hydrobiology and ecology. Two of her books: "Ecology of our waters" and "Invertebrate animals of our waters",



Fig. 5. On Lake Mikołajskie, 4.05.1974. Photo: KRZYSZTOF LEWANDOWSKI





Fig. 6. Prof. Anna Stańczykowska-Piotrowska receiving Alfred Lityński Medal, 26.10.2006. Photo: JOANNA RYBAK

each with several editions, played a large part in sharing the hydrobiological knowledge. She took active part in the Festivals of Science and Art, and was president of the Chapter of the Medal of Mazovian Forget-me-Not.

Thanks to the activity of prof. A. Stańczykowska and her numerous students and successors, University of Natural Sciences and Humanities in Siedlce became a significant hydrobiological and malacological research centre in the country.

She was one of the initiators of meetings of the Polish malacologists; this later led to establishing of the Association of Polish Malacologists which then honoured her with its greatest distinction – honorary membership of the Association.

She was one of the founder members of the Polish Hydrobiological Society (1959) and during many years performed various functions in both its Warsaw division (president of many years) and in the Main Council. She was also a founding member of the Polish Ecological Club. She was awarded the Prof. Alfred Lityński medal of the Polish Hydrobiological Society.

After retirement Ania remained scientifically active, was full of ideas and gathered around herself a group of students, co-workers and friends. I have known Ania and cooperated with her for exactly 50 years. During that time I witnessed many of her suc-

cesses, interesting research work, completed grants, conferences with presentations, publications of important scientific papers and books, her habilitation and her numerous awards.

I owe her very much. I feel honoured and privileged to be her first promoted doctoral student. It was she who for a long time (and successfully) kept persuading me to habilitate. By the way, it was the last habilitation in the later dissolved Institute of Ecology, Polish Academy of Sciences in Dziekanów Leśny. Its closing down was a great personal tragedy to Ania, though at that time she worked at Siedlce University, since she had worked at the Institute since the moment of its establishment.

Considering Ania's tragic experiences of her early youth: the death of her father before the War, and the death of her mother and younger sister during the Warsaw Rising, the illness resulting in repeated operations, arduous long rehabilitation, her later limited mobility and at the end of her life being confined to a wheelchair, we are all impressed by her brave attitude, strength of character and the enormous activity, not only scientific and didactic, but also touristic (she got driving licence and did many trips by car), sailing (she sailed in the Masurian Lakeland and the Baltic) and also social life. With much nostalgia and pleasure I recall our many-day scientific expeditions, camping on the lakes, for example with divers who



Figs 7–10. XXIII Polish Malacological Seminar, Prof. Anna Stańczykowska-Piotrowska becomes Honorary Member of the Association of Polish Malacologists, Serpelle 26.04.2007. Photos: PAWEŁ JAKUBIK and ANNA SULIKOWSKA-DROZD (bottom, right)

helped us collect biological material from under water, occasional tourist and sailing trips, not to mention conferences or malacological seminars – Ania was always the life and soul of the party. For example, for many years near the name day of Anna and Krzysztof she organised meetings of friends, mostly of the same names.

Ania's activities were very much supported by her husband Andrzej Piotrowski, whom not long ago she buried at the Powązki Cemetery in Warsaw.

Many a time Ania told me that, paradoxically, her life was happy. She saw her luck in the fact that in her life she always met friendly and helpful people and that she had so many friends.

All those now saddened friends said goodbye to her on the 8th of December 2021 at the Powązki Cemetery in Warsaw where she now rests next to her parents and husband.

The demise of Prof. Anna Stańczykowska-Piotrowska is an irretrievable loss for the Polish malacology and hydrobiology. We shall miss her greatly.

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Figs 11–14. XXV Polish Malacological Seminar, Boszkowo  
21–24.04.2009. Photos: ANNA SULIKOWSKA-DROZD



## APPENDIX I. A. STAŃCZYKOWSKA-PIOTROWSKA – LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

1959

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1961

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## APPENDIX II. ANNA STAŃCZYKOWSKA-PIOTROWSKA – LIST OF SELECTED POPULAR SCIENCE PUBLICATIONS

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