

OBITUARY

Doctor Maurice SABELIS (1950–2015)

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As most acarologists know by now, Maurice Sabelis passed away earlier this year after prolonged sickness. Maurice was an active member of the Editorial Board of *Acarologia* (and also of the other two acarology journals, *Experimental and Applied Acarology* and the *International Journal of Acarology*), and a renowned acarologist, among many other things.

Maurice Sabelis was educated at the University of Wageningen, where he obtained his MSc in 1975 and his PhD in 1981. Although Maurice did complete his PhD, he did not consider it as finished: the title of his thesis was "Biological control of two-spotted spider mites using phytoseiid predators. Part I: Modelling the predator-prey interaction at the individual level": he was convinced he would complement the manuscript with a part II. This small anecdote illustrates the scientific nature of Maurice Sabelis: he was always seeking for more than what he had achieved. With hindsight, we can say that the rest of his impressive career was devoted to this second part.

Maurice was appointed assistant professor at the University of Wageningen, then Associate Professor at the University of Leiden. In 1988, he was appointed full professor in Applied Entomology at the University of Amsterdam, but actually taught courses in the broader areas of evolutionary ecology, epidemiology and theoretical ecology. His in-

augural address in 1994 was entitled "Natural selection and population dynamics". He was trying to bridge the gap between these two disciplines at a time when this was clearly a pioneering endeavour. It is now a field of research in its own right. In 2006, he was awarded the Academy Professor Prize by the Royal Academy of Sciences, the most prestigious academic position in The Netherlands.

Maurice has published nearly 400 publications during his career, encompassing research topics such as biological control, epidemiology, diapause, learning, plant defences, food webs, etc. Many of these articles were highly influential. He worked mostly with mites from different families and with different ecological roles (plant-inhabiting and soil-dwelling herbivores and predators, and even mites occurring on bird feathers), but also occasionally made excursions to other taxonomic groups, or developed theoretical models, either of population dynamics, evolution or both.

Maurice Sabelis has been a prominent figure

of the Netherlands scientific community, but he has also established his footprint in the Acarology community throughout the world. His former PhD students, counting more than 60, are scattered throughout the five continents, from Australia to Colombia, passing by Sri Lanka or Benin. During the last years, he was in particular close contact with the Acarology community in Japan and Brazil.

Maurice will be remembered by his colleagues for his sharp comments, his broad knowledge and his particular sense of humour.

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