

OBITUARY

Sérgio de Freitas (9.03.1953 – 21.02.2012)

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It was a Carnival holiday in Brazil, and an opportunity for Sérgio de Freitas (Fig. 1) to ride his motorbike and visit his family back in his hometown, Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais State, Brazil. Unfortunately, on his return to Jaboticabal, São Paulo State, while still in the outskirts of Belo Horizonte, his life was tragically ended by an accident. Sérgio was an adjunct professor at the Faculty of Agricultural and Veterinarian Sciences at the Universidade Estadual Paulista Júlio de Mesquita Filho (FCAV/UNESP), Jaboticabal Campus. He was a restless scholar on the Neotropical Chrysopidae, the green lacewings, dedicating days and nights to the research of this group of predators. He always said to his students: "Time is not an issue! What do you do between midnight and 6 a.m.?"

Sérgio de Freitas was born on March 9, 1953, in the city of Belo Horizonte. He was the second of five children born to Maria de Lourdes Silva Freitas and José Ignacio de Freitas. Married to Elizabeth Oliveira de Freitas, he had three children: Pollyanna, Thiago and Sergio Júnior. His first years of study in Belo Horizonte were carried out at the Catholic School of the Pompéia District, and at the Ângelo Roncalli School. In 1977 he graduated with a major in Biological Sciences in the Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais. He completed his Masters degree (1979) in Biological Sciences (Entomology) in the Universidade Federal do Paraná and in 1988 he obtained his PhD in Entomology in the Escola Superior de Agricultura Luiz de Queiroz, Universidade de São Paulo, in Piracicaba. During this period he studied defoliating insects in eucalyptus. Between 1993 and 2008, he completed seven post-doc internships under the supervision of Dr. Phillip Adams, Dr. Shaun Winterton and Dr. Norman D. Penny, in California, USA, studying Neotropical Chrysopidae.

Between 1980 and 1988, Freitas worked as a professor at the Universidade José do Rosário Vellano, in Alfenas, Minas Gerais. In 1989, he was hired by FCAV/UNESP, teaching undergraduate and graduate students of Agronomy and Biological Sciences programs.

He began his research in Systematics and Biology of Chrysopidae (Neuroptera) at the FCAV/UNESP and, lately,



Figure 1. Sérgio de Freitas, Coquimbo (Elqui), Chile, December 2011.

he had also dedicated his time to study Chrysopidae populations with the use of molecular markers. His first publication dealing with Chrysopidae, entitled A preliminary statement on green lacewing in citrus in the Jaboticabal region of Brazil (Insecta: Neuroptera: Chrysopidae), was published in 1992 in collaboration with Prof. Dr. Odair A. Fernandes (FCAV/UNESP).

In order to conduct an inventory as complete as possible of the Chrysopidae fauna during his scientific career, he made several field trips to forest and agricultural environments. The Chrysopidae collected on those occasions, together with the ones obtained by his students, comprise one of the most important Neotropical Chrysopidae collections in the world.

This collection, as well as his countless and excellent illustrations, has been serving as an important reference in the study of Neotropical Chrysopidae, in addition to its support as a source of data for future researchers working with this group of insects.

Sérgio de Freitas was one of the pioneers in the study of this group of insects in Brazil and the importance of his work to the systematic and taxonomy study of the Neotropical Chrysopidae is immeasurable. He described many new species and some of them are still to be published. In 2001, he published in collaboration with Dr. Norman D. Penny, an important paper entitled *The green lacewing (Neuroptera: Chrysopidae) of Brazilian agro-ecosystems*. This was the first large study focused on the association between predator groups and Brazilian ecosystems, and it was essential for more comprehensive taxonomic studies that followed, such as the one published by Sosa, in 2011, entitled *Espécies de crisopídeos (Neuroptera, Chrysopidae) da Venezuela*.

Sérgio had numerous publications, including two books, three book chapters, 64 scientific papers, and 172 presentations at scientific events. His studies fostered the develop-

ment of similar researches in several teaching and research institutions. In some of these researches, he acted as a collaborator.

Equally important were his contributions in the advising and training of students, through the study of Chrysopidae or other neuropteran groups, which resulted in 44 undergraduate dissertations, 18 Masters dissertations and eight Doctorate theses. He also supervised one post-doc fellow and 26 students under short-term training programs.

On a first impression, Sérgio could look stern, but that impression would soon be dissolved and substituted by admiration for his attention, prodigious memory, and capacity to talk for hours about the most diverse subjects, not only Entomology. With his passing, FCAV/UNESP lost a great researcher and the greatest expert in the systematics and taxonomy of Neotropical Chrysopidae.

The unexpected and premature departure of this brilliant Chrysopidae scholar leaves a great void and sadness in the hearts of those who were fortunate to have had the opportunity to witness his dedication to teaching and research, even in the most difficult moments of his life.