

Dimitrios Phitos

Pierre Broussalis (1913-2006)

Pierre Broussalis, one of the senior members of OPTIMA and Honorary President of the “Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature” sadly departed on August 2006, staying in memory as a genuine adorer of nature and a particularly dear friend.

He was born on 1913 in Smyrni (Turkey) where from his family left home and settled in Athens, after the Greeks were expelled by the Turks (1922).

Broussalis, from a professional point of view, worked in maritime enterprises, yet he started very soon occupying himself as amateur with various nature-related topics e.g. Speleology, Zoology, Botany etc. He was multilingual and mainly multi-talented, and in subjects that interested him, he devoted himself with such zeal, that his knowledge surpassed the amateurish level. He was a founding member of the “Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature” and since its foundation (1951) he offered, as member of its Executive Committee, his invaluable knowledge and vigorousness, up until his death. For his overall contribution, the Society honored him with the title of Honorary President.

His keen interest on speleology led him to the exploration of many caves of Greece. He served as President of the Speleologic Team of the Mountaineering Association of Athens and permanent member of the American Speleological Society. Being meddlesome, he was also occupied with mountaineering and photography. He received many distinctions in numerous photography exhibitions both abroad and in Greece. Combining photography with Botany, he created a collection of hundreds of color photographs of plants, belonging to the Greek flora from all over the country.

Among all of his various extracurricular activities, the Greek flora was the one to win the largest portion of Pierre Broussalis’ interest. This interest and enthusiasm found response in the face of a notable amateur botanist, known in the scientific society, Leonidas Pinatzis. Pinatzis, despite his very good studies in Biology and especially in Botany, also worked in maritime enterprises for a living, just like Broussalis did. The following excerpt from the autobiographical book of Broussalis “90 years of cloudiness and sunshine” (2005) is characteristic: “In the beginning of my botanical quest, the help of Leonidas Pinatzis in plant identification was decisive. During excursions and mountaineering, but often in my house too, I learned to identify plants and their scientific, Latin names. I remember with particular nostalgia the Monday mornings in Piraeus, when after leaving work, I walked to the other, neighbouring agency, where my teacher worked. We would lock the doors, and leaving behind the ships and their troubles, we would examine the plants that I had collected on Sunday from the mountain. With time, this investigation



Fig. 1. Pierre Broussalis at work.

turned into passion and in the end, I became one of the few existing then connoisseurs of the Greek flora.”

He published more than fifty articles, concerning his findings during the exploration of the Greek flora, mainly in the journal “I Fysis” of the Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature. A special note should be made for his book “The nature around us”, containing general information, related to the flora, the vegetation, the fauna etc. of Greece, with particularly beautiful photographs (1987, published by the Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature). Nevertheless, his main interest focused on the Orchids of Greece. His research and relevant publications on locating *Comperia comperiana* mainly on Lesbos island, are known, as well as his efforts for the protection of this species. He gave numerous lectures in Greece and abroad on topics relevant to the flora of Greece and its protection. For his important contribution in matters of the Greek nature, the Academy of Athens, presented him with a special award.

The numerous friends that he had gained, Botanists and others, both inland and abroad, constituted for himself the best recognition and satisfaction, for everything that he offered, mainly in the knowledge of the Greek flora and its protection.

We will always remember Pierre, not only as a charismatic and multi-talented friend, but also for his kindness, gentleness and disposition to help those in need of his knowledge and experience.

He was fortunate to always have on his side and in all his activities, his beloved wife, Maro.

Address of the author:

Phitos D., Botanical Institute, Section of Plant Biology, Department of Biology,
University of Patras, GR 265 00 Patras, Greece (Hellas). e-mail: dphitos@upatras.gr

