

Entrevista

Dr. Andrey Ivanovich Khalaim

El Dr. Khalaim es entomólogo de la Facultad de Ingeniería y Ciencias de la Universidad Autónoma de Tamaulipas (UAT), miembro del Cuerpo Académico Consolidado Entomología Aplicada y de la Red de Cuerpos Académicos junto con la Universidad Autónoma de Nayarit y el Instituto Zoológico de San Petersburgo, Rusia. Su línea de investigación es la taxonomía de Ichneumonidae, ha descrito géneros y especies mexicanas de esta familia.



Dra. Juana María CORONADO-BLANCO*

¿Cómo surgió tu interés por el estudio de los ichneumonidos? ¿En qué subfamilias tienes más experiencia?

How was originated your interest in the study of ichneumonids? What subfamilies do you have more experience?

I decided to be biologist at about 12 years old after reading books of Gerald Durrell (1925–1995), a well-known British naturalist and author of many popular books about animals. Later, being a first-year student of the Biological Faculty of the Kaliningrad State University, I met my first supervisor, expert in Ichneumonidae, Andranik Manukyan, and under his leadership started my diploma project on parasitoid wasps (primarily Ichneumonidae) associated with willows (*Salix* spp., Salicaceae). After the University, I continued my study of Ichneumonidae as a PhD student at the Zoological Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg.

¿Cómo es que llegaste a México a la Universidad Autónoma de Tamaulipas?

How did you come to Mexico at the Autonomous University of Tamaulipas?

When my supervisor and colleague, Russian entomologist Dmitry Kasparyan, finished his work in Mexico, he asked me if I want to study Mexican Ichneumonidae, and recommended my candidature to Enrique Ruiz-Cancino, chef of the UAT team (Cuerpo Academico), and to direction of the UAT. Of course, I was very glad to continue my work in Mexico, a nice and extremely interesting tropical country, where I have so many opportunities in realization of researches in entomology.

¿Cuántas nuevas especies y géneros de Ichneumonidae has descrito de México?
How many new species and genera of Ichneumonidae you described of Mexico?

We have described two new genera and over 30 species in 10 subfamilies of Ichneumonidae from Mexico. Moreover, currently we work on a monograph where 20 more new species from Mexico will be described.

¿En qué estado de la República Mexicana se han reportado más especies de ichneumonidos?
What state of Mexico have been reported more species of ichneumonids?

I believe that following three Mexican states are leading in number of recorded ichneumonid taxa. Of course, ichneumonid fauna of the State of Tamaulipas is one of the best known in Mexico. This is result of extensive investigation in past 30 years by team of the UAT entomologists. Also, an important contribution to the study of Mexican Ichneumonidae was made by Alejandra Gonzalez-Moreno and her supervisor, Spanish entomologist Santiago Bordera. They recorded many ichneumonid taxa from the State of Yucatan, and this state is also one of the best studied in Mexico. Many ichneumonid species were described or recorded from the State of Veracruz over a century ago by E.T. Cresson.

A nivel mundial ¿En qué posición se encuentra México en cuanto a número de especies de Ichneumonidae?

Worldwide. What position is Mexico in terms of number of species of Ichneumonidae?

Mexico is extremely interesting region in zoogeographic aspect as it is intermediate between the Nearctic and Neotropical regions – so many Nearctic taxa extend to north and central Mexico along mountain ranges, and many Neotropical taxa occur in Mexico south. Moreover, Mexico possesses its own endemic elements. Ichneumonid fauna of Mexico is rather rich, being represented by about 1,300 described species. It is 5.3% of the known world fauna. Many ichneumonid species occurring in Mexico are still undescribed, and estimated real species diversity for Mexico is 3,200 to 4,500 species.

¿Cuál es tu estimación sobre el número de especies mexicanas de Ichneumonidae?

What is your estimate of the number of Mexican species of Ichneumonidae?

In 2013, E. Ruiz-Cancino and co-authors have published a paper with analysis of Mexican ichneumonid fauna in general, with estimations of 3,200 to 4,500 species for the country. In my opinion, 3,200 species are more realistic than 4,500.

Hasta el momento, ¿Cuál consideras que es la publicación o contribución más importante sobre la taxonomía y biología de Ichneumonidae de México?

So far, what think is the most important publication or contribution on the taxonomy and biology of Ichneumonidae of Mexico?

I think that two monographs published in 2005 and 2008 by Dmitri R. Kasparyan and Enrique Ruiz-Cancino on Mexican Cryptinae, a large and taxonomically very difficult group of Ichneumonidae, are most important publications at present day.



¿Qué falta hacer en México para llegar al nivel que tiene Rusia en conocimiento de la biodiversidad?

What needs to be done in Mexico to reach the level that Russia has knowledge of biodiversity?

I think that Mexico has all necessary opportunities for extensive development of its national investigations in entomology. In my opinion, all that Mexico needs is to continue its support of researchers and scientific projects at modern level. Of course, extra money for equipment and reduction of bureaucratic press are welcomed. Scientific publications in peer reviewed journals must be principal criteria in evaluation of scientific result. I would also recommend to support fundamental investigations as well as applied ones. Unfortunately, many administrators and politics do not understand importance of fundamental researches.

De todos los entomólogos que conoces. ¿A quién admiras y por qué razón?

Entomologists all you know. Who do you admire and why?

I respect a great entomologist of the “old school”, such as Henry Townes (USA), Ian Gauld (UK), Klaus Horstmann (Germany) and my chief Dmitri Kasparyan (Russia). They are excellent taxonomists who devoted their entire life on hard work in entomology and all made a great contribution to taxonomy of Ichneumonidae. I respect my colleague Enrique Ruiz-Cancino, expert in Ichneumonidae and creator and organizer of the largest collection of Ichneumonidae in Mexico.

Como Editor de algunas publicaciones. ¿Qué sugerencias podrías hacer a la Revista Folia Entomológica Mexicana de la Sociedad Mexicana de Entomología?

As Editor of some publications. What suggestions could you make the Entomological Folia Mexican Magazine of the Mexican Society of Entomology?

Speed up publication process; normally 3 to 4 months between submission and publication must be. All manuscripts must be sent at least to two anonymous referees. Authors must be informed in time about each publication step.

Como investigador y taxónomo has visitado en diferentes países varios museos de insectos. ¿Cuál de esos museos es el que más te ha gustado? Y ¿Por qué?

As a researcher and taxonomist in different countries you have visited several museums insects. Which of these museums is the one you like best? Why?

I like modern insect collections such as Natural History Museum (London, UK), Zoologische Staatssammlung (Munich, Germany), Naturalis (Leiden, the Netherlands) and others. In Mexico, insect collection of the Instituto de Biología, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) is quite good. Modern museum must include isolated collection room(s) with climate control, high quality cabinets and boxes, and (for big collections) special staff for permanent care and routine works. In universities, student collection must be separated from scientific collection.

¿Podrías dar algunos consejos para los jóvenes entomólogos?

Could you give some advice for young entomologists?

Be sincerely interested in your research and feel high responsibility for scientific results. Try to publish in international peer-reviewed journals. Study all the time – read articles, improve your English, study new methods, do not afraid to say “I do not know” and to ask.

Te doy las gracias por la entrevista, te admiro por haber llegado tan lejos profesionalmente a una edad temprana.

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