

## Professor Dawud M H. Al-Eisawi (1946-2020)

It is with great regret that we learned of the untimely death of Professor Dawud Al-Eisawi, on the morning of 24<sup>th</sup> December 2020, after losing his battle against the Corona virus. He was the founder of the Jordan Journal of Natural History and closely supervised every volume for the past seven years. All those involved with the Journal, as represented by its Editorial, Associate and International Boards, were shocked and saddened by the news of his death.

Born in 1946, Al-Eisawi grew up in a busy working family in Kufor Aana in Palestine. He developed a love of the natural world early on and became ever more interested in the land and its plants as he grew older. His family supported his scientific curiosity and, in the late 60s, sent him to study agricultural science at Alexandria University in Egypt. Here he met Professor Lutfi Bolus (1932 - 2015), the author of *The Flora of Egypt*. Bolus noticed Al-Eisawi's passion for plants and his excellent memory and skills, especially in plant taxonomy. Bolus provided much needed encouragement during Al-Eisawi's studies and formative years. After his graduation in 1971, Al-Eisawi returned to Jordan where he joined the staff of Jordan University in the Department of Biology (Faculty of Science) as a lecturer.

In 1977, he secured a place at the University of Reading in the United Kingdom, where he finished his PhD in the systematic study of Umbelliferae (Apiaceae plant family) in Jordan and reviewed the Genera *Tordylium* L. and *Turgenia* Hoffm.

After receiving his doctorate in 1977, El-Aisawi re-joined the Biology Department at the University of Jordan as an Assistant Professor. By 1988 he had advanced along his academic path to become Professor of Botany. While he was teaching at the University, Al-Eisawi started to explore the flora of Jordan, inspired by the knowledge gained from his PhD. He was also enthusiastic about establishing a new niche in botanical science, linking plant taxonomy to ecology.



**Professor Al-Eisawi (2019)**

As a teacher, he was well known for his superior capabilities in transferring knowledge to his students, which he did with a delightful and passionate spirit that conveyed his own love of the plant kingdom above all else. For example, when teaching plant anatomy, he used to teach each individual BSc student to produce their own slides in a proficient way, rather than use pre-prepared slides.



**Field Trip in Dana Biosphere Reserve (2016)**



**Professor Al-Eisawi** in the eastern desert of Jordan in Al-Wesad area while pressing the plants specimens for further identification. This photo is taken by John E. Clarke in 1978.

He was one of the scientific founders of the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) and he joined the mission led by John E. Clarke in 1978 to collect the plants of Jordan and describe the vegetation of proposed protected sites. The output of this mission became the basis of the road map for the establishment of protected areas in Jordan.

He supported RSCN over many years and his involvement continued to the end of his life. After retirement, he devoted much of his time to the Conservation Monitoring Centre at RSCN, and re-created the floral research programme in terms of objectivity, field methodology, conceptual design and taxonomy. He used to arrive very early in the morning to start working in the Herbarium, looking at the plant taxonomy of its collections in great detail. He helped to build the capacity of RSCN's research team, joining them in the field and documenting all their specimens. His companionship in the lab and in the field was of great value to all

staff. His continuous advice and supervision were exceptional and he left this life assured that the Herbarium of RSCN was up to international standards.

His scientific legacy, which exceeded 200 publications, included a published list of the plants of Jordan in 1982. This was updated several times until the last publication in 2013. His lasting legacy also includes unique publications on the vegetation of Jordan, wildflowers of Jordan and the flora and vegetation of Hawar Island in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

In his academic life he supervised many Masters and PhD students and directed their studies in the fields of plant taxonomy, anatomy and palynology, as well as in the skills of writing, identification and preparation of specimens and proper documentation.

He would use his summer semesters to visit regional or overseas herbaria and botanic gardens so as to catch up with the latest knowledge in his field and to do specimen comparisons and taxonomical revisions. He





Professor Al-Eisawi examining floral specimens in the laboratory of the Conservation Monitoring Centre at the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature.

was well-known to international and highly esteemed botanical organisations such as Kew Botanic Gardens, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, Missouri Botanical Garden and many more.

The family of the Jordan Journal of Natural History sends its deepest condolences to Professor Al-Eisawi's family for their loss. Professor Al-Eisawi will never be forgotten

by his colleagues, his students and the scientific community. We will treasure our memories of him and he will stay connected to our heart strings forever.

**Nashat A. Hamidan**