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Biography

The backbone of present-day water mite research in The Netherlands: A delayed congratulation to the 70th birthday of Harry Smit

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Born on 4 December 1951 in Alkmaar, The Netherlands, Harry Smit did his studies of Biology at the University of Amsterdam and worked from 1979 to 2014 as an ecologist at the Province of South-Holland, The Hague. In addition, from 2000 to 2012 he worked as an honorary staff member at the Zoological Museum of the University of Amsterdam, and since 2012 as an Associate Researcher at the Naturalis Biodiversity Center in Leiden. All over this time, he also did very active research in Ornithology.

Introduced by Kees Davids (1931–2004, University of Amsterdam), Harry Smit started his activities as a water mite specialist in the 1990s. His first papers were published in cooperation with his friend and colleague Henk Van der Hammen (1943–2002) and dealt mostly with aspects of the Dutch water mite fauna. In 1992, he published a critical review of the work of Antonius Johannes Besseling (1898–1968), his most important precursor and author of the first comprehensive survey of the Dutch water mite fauna. While Besseling's life work concentrated nearly exclusively on the fauna of his home country, Harry Smit's activities followed a double track line:



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On one hand, he did continuous faunistic work in The Netherlands, also in cooperation with numerous colleagues employed in public authorities or private institutions all over the country. He became an outstanding consultant for the taxonomy and ecology of water mites in The Netherlands and transferred his knowledge in students and training courses, as well as in comprehensive books on the water mites of the country[80, 122]. The Books listed 273 species of Dutch water mites with nearly 200,000 records, an impressive number for such a small country, which makes the Netherlands certainly the best studied part of Europe.

On the other hand, Harry Smit started early to widen his view to many other parts of the globe. His taxonomic and faunistic studies developed a particular focus on the Australasian region during 11 collecting trips to Australia, 5 to New Zealand, 2 to New Caledonia, and 2 to New Guinea. Moreover, he published numerous papers on water mites from Africa, and also worked on the fauna of South America, Pacific Islands, and a wide variety of European countries. In most cases, the material treated was collected by the author himself. Upon returning from a field trip, Harry Smit quickly sorts the specimens, evaluates their zoogeographical significance, and makes the results public with a breathtaking velocity—often alone, but on other occasions involving colleagues in various manners. Until 2021, the detection of a total number of 639 species new to science, and the description of 28 genera and subgenera, was the rich outcome of his activities.

In more than 200 papers (co)authored by Harry[1-209], he worked on a wide spectre of families, but gave a special focus to *Arrenurus*, the water mite genus most rich in species. Among others, arrenurid species were also the focus of his contribution[142] to the three chelicerata volumes in the series "Süßwasserfauna von Mitteleuropa", which provides a comprehensive overview of Central-Northern European aquatic mite fauna[131,138,142].

Harry is a member of the editorial board of two scientific journals, *Acarologia* and *Ecologica Montenegrina*, in which he has contributed as author and reviewer.

In a yet more impressive way, his wake sense and encyclopaedic memory allowed him to bring all the gained knowledge together in a new edition of Dave Cook's "Water mite genera and subgenera", since its publication in 1974, the leading book for all specialists in the group. "Water mites of the world, with keys to the families, subfamilies, genera and subgenera"[86] is, for this extremely interesting group of invertebrates, the complete, revised and updated survey of the global diversity above species level.

We are pleased to nominate Harry Smit as the recipient of the James McMurtry Award, an occasion to thank him for his outstanding contribution to the world of water mite studies, as well as for his unique enthusiasm and support given to many colleagues over the years.

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