

Ewa Barycka (1979–2008)

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Ewa Barycka (1979–2008)

Ewa Barycka passed away on 1 February 2008. She died of cerebral hemorrhage during chemotherapy against acute leukemia, a cancer of the blood or bone marrow. She was 28 years old. The untimely death of one so young and eager for life has shocked all who knew her.



Ewa Barycka on the Baltic Sea shore in May 2007. The photograph was taken in Sopot by Dorota Majka.

Ewa was born on 21 March 1979 in Opole, Silesia, Poland. There she grew up with her parents and her older sister and younger brother. Since childhood, Ewa's dream has been to become a paleontologist. As she was particularly fascinated with dinosaurs, she wanted to attend a university where she could study vertebrate paleontology. But in March 1994, she was diagnosed acute leukemia. Ewa won that first battle with the cancer, but the long-term rehabilitation to recover from the disease precluded her dreamed paleontological studies in Warsaw. She instead entered the Faculty of Natural and Technical Sciences at the University of Opole. Fortunate for her, remains of late Triassic vertebrates were discovered near Opole, in Krasiejów, and the Institute of Paleobiology, Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw, started a series of large-scale excavations at this site in June 2000. Ewa enthusiastically took part in the field works as a volunteer and immensely helped in attracting and recruiting other volunteer participants from Opole University. Her both degrees received from this university, a Bachelor's degree in biology earned in July 2001 and a Master's degree in environmental conservation earned in June 2003, are based on her theses prepared in connection to the Krasiejów excavations.

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In October 2003, Ewa began her doctoral studies at the International Doctoral School of Biological Sciences at the Museum and Institute of Zoology, Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw. During these studies, she extended her interests to the feliform part of the mammalian clade Carnivora and eventually focused on Pleistocene felids and hyaenids. Cave Lion and Cave Hyaena played major roles in her Ph.D. thesis.

From an academic perspective, 2007 was Ewa's most successful year. Her review article on the evolution and systematics of the feliform Carnivora appeared in *Mammalian Biology* and also her two original research papers were issued. Furthermore, Ewa passed both preliminary exams for her doctoral degree in June and September and was preparing for the final exam. She completed the final version of her Ph.D. thesis early in September and still managed to translate the dissertation, in its entirety, into English and submitted the translated manuscript in mid-October. A few days later, Ewa learned that she had leukemia again. Still in October, she was admitted in a clinic of the Medical University of Wrocław. She died there three months later.

Ewa loved paleontology and pursued her research with great passion and intense enthusiasm. She once told me that her greatest dream as a child had been to someday become a paleontologist. Her dream has been realized. She became a paleontologist. It is sad that this has been given to her for only so short a period of time.

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