

IN MEMORIAM**Besnik Hallaçi (1956–2021)**

Besnik Hallaçi passed away on 2 January 2021 at Shefqet Ndroqi Hospital in Tirana, having lost his two-week battle with the COVID-19 virus. On 29th December 2020 he succumbed and could no longer speak. Only five months remained before his planned retirement and he had looked forward to being able to spend more time with family and friends.

Besnik was born in Kukës in Northeast Albania. He obtained his Masters' in 1983 from the Faculty of Natural Sciences, Tirana University, and took a post as biology teacher in Kukës immediately on graduation. Between 1984–1999 he also worked as a specialist on soil analysis and food safety standards in the Regional Laboratory of Kukës. In the period 1999–2005, he was Director of the Regional Environmental Agency, which had its central office in Kukës. Another ten years he spent as an independent biodiversity assessor and then returned as Director of the Regional Agency of Protected Areas for Northeast Albania in 2015. This post covered the three municipalities of Kukës, Has and Tropoja and he held it until his untimely death. His more than twenty years of experience on biodiversity matters in North Albania had fully qualified him to be acknowledged as the leading expert on the area and he became the main contact for Albanian and foreign scientists seeking botanical and zoological information on the region.

He was an excellent naturalist and researcher, with a focus on monitoring populations of endangered taxa, such as *Aconitum*, *Allium*, *Campanula*, *Tulipa*, etc. and their habitats. He recorded ten plant taxa as new for Albania. In June, we gazed together at the meadows of *Tulipa albanica* and *Centaurea vlachorum*, admired *Dioscorea balcanica* and reflected on the status of a new taxon, *Epimedium alpinum* subsp. *albanicum* Kit Tan, Shuka and Hallaçi. His collection of photographs includes more than 50 000 plant images and c. 20 000 images of animals. His hospitality knew no bounds.



Besnik Hallaçi in a *Fagus* forest on Mt Zeba, Northeast Albania.

*God has created a new day,
Silver and green and gold.
Live that the sunset may find us
Worthy His gifts to hold!*

Besnik was a simple and quiet man and this was his belief. He led a simple life guided by the old-fashioned virtues of sincerity, honesty, loyalty, respect, friendship, diligence and his own untiring work ethic. Academic awards and honours, long lists of scientific publications, these were not his style. A worthy man? Of that there is no doubt. He was much respected as the leader and manager of the Regional Agency in Northeast Albania. He will live on in the memories of all who have known him.

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