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Deep mourning with the loss of Professor Jun-Feng Zhang

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Professor Jun-Feng Zhang

22.11.1945–02.10.2022

Professor Jun-Feng Zhang, a distinguished Chinese palaeontologist, passed away in Nanjing on October 2, 2022, at the age of 76.

Professor Zhang was born on November 22, 1945 in Beijing, China. He studied palaeontology and stratigraphy at the Beijing College of Geology (now China University of Geosciences) from September 1963 and got his bachelor's degree in December 1968. After his graduation, he worked at the Bureau of Geology and

Mineral Resources of Anhui Province, China for 7 years and then at other public institutions in Anhui Province for 3 years. In October 1978, he started his master's studies in palaeontology at the Nanjing Institute of Geology and Palaeontology, Chinese Academy of Sciences (NIGPAS), under the supervision of Prof. Zhi-Wei Gu, a well-known Chinese palaeontologist, and Prof. Qi-Bin Lin, a pioneer Chinese palaeontologist. In February 1982, he got his master's degree, and since then he had studied insect



FIGURE 1. Prof. Jun-Feng Zhang working at NIGPAS. **A.** Prof. Zhang walking with other palaeontologists; Irina Goncharova, Alexandr Rasnitsyn, Jun-Feng Zhang, Alexandr Ponomarenko and Hai-Chun Zhang (from left to right) (photographed in 2008). **B.** Prof. Zhang showing his hand-drawn reconstruction of a fossil insect (photographed in May 2019). **C.** Prof. Zhang and Dr Qing-Qing Zhang at his office (photographed in May 2019).



FIGURE 2. Prof. Jun-Feng Zhang in his last years. **A**, Prof. Zhang as a member of the thesis defense committee for doctoral degree; Yi Wang, Hai-Lu You, Jun-Feng Zhang, Ting-Ting Yu, Hai-Chun Zhang, Jin-Geng Sha, Bao-Yu Jiang, and Bo Wang (from left to right) (photographed in May 2021). **B**, Prof. Zhang at his office (photographed in August 2021). **C**, Prof. Zhang video chatted with Qing-Qing Zhang (screenshot in November 2021).

fossils at the Shandong Provincial Museum (Jinan) for 15 years. Since 1997, he had been working at NIGPAS till he passed away (Fig. 1A).

Professor Zhang's research was focused on Mesozoic-Cenozoic arthropods throughout China. In particular, he made great contributions to the study of fossil insects and arachnids in Shandong Province, China, including the Laiyang entomofauna (from the Lower Cretaceous Laiyang Formation of the Laiyang Basin, Laiyang) and the Shanwang fauna (from the Miocene

Shanwang Formation of the Shanwang Basin, Linju, Weifang), during his working in Shandong province and the following years. In his two books about the Shanwang fauna, 410 species (311 new species) of insects and 23 species (16 new species) of spiders were described (Zhang, 1989; Zhang *et al.*, 1994), greatly improving our understanding of the Miocene biota and its biodiversity. He reported and described numerous insects from the Laiyang Formation, and made great achievements in the study of this formation in biostratigraphy, geological age

and palaeoecology (e.g., Zhang, 1992; Zhang *et al.*, 1993). In the last 20 years of his career, Prof. Zhang focused his research on Mesozoic brachyceran flies, especially from the Jurassic Daohugou and Cretaceous Jehol biotas, and he also studied Cretaceous amber inclusions in the last decade of his life.

Prof. Zhang is one of the most respected palaeoentomologists, and he donated most of his time and energy to collecting and studying fossils, despite long-term lack of funds. He was addicted to fossils, and had drawn thousands of elegant line drawings of fossil insects (Fig. 1B).

Prof. Zhang was the leading scientist in palaeoentomology at NIGPAS, and even worked as a co-supervisor of two PhD candidates (Hai-Chun Zhang and Qing-Qing Zhang). He spared no efforts to help younger palaeoentomologists and always provided them with valuable advice, which greatly improved their theses and scientific success (Figs 1C, 2A).

During his fighting cancer in the last two years of his life, Prof. Zhang remained optimistic (Fig. 2B, C), and he donated all of his publications and collections to NIGPAS and the younger colleagues. His legacy and

spirit will continuously enlighten the younger generation on palaeoentomological students.

Prof. Zhang was righteous, fearless, enthusiastic and kind. His sudden death was unexpected and a huge loss for us all. However, despite his loss, his strong spirit of scientific inquiry will remain with us forever.

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