

March 15, 2019

To:
CETAF, AISBL – General Secretariat

Re: Netta Dorchin – Personal statement (candidacy for Executive Committee)

Tel Aviv University
12 Klausner St., POB 39040
Tel Aviv, 6139001 · Israel
SMNH.TAU.AC.IL

I am a senior lecturer in the School of Zoology, Tel Aviv University (TAU) and chief curator of entomology at the Steinhardt Museum of Natural History (SMNH), Tel Aviv, Israel. I received my PhD degree from Tel Aviv University, followed by postdoctoral fellowships in the University of Cape Town, South Africa (where I am currently on a sabbatical leave), and in Bucknell University in Pennsylvania, USA. My postdoctoral research in Cape Town focused on gall-inducing wasps as weed biocontrol agents, whereas in Bucknell I focused on the systematics and evolutionary ecology of gall midges on goldenrods. In 2007 I moved to Bonn, Germany, where I accepted the position of the curator of Diptera and later the head of the Arthropod Department in the Zoologisches Forschungsmuseum Alexander Koenig. I returned to Tel Aviv University in 2011 to take my current positions.

My research focuses on insect systematics and ecology, in particular various aspects of insect-plant interactions. I am one of a handful of taxonomic experts for the family Cecidomyiidae (gall midges) and have been studying this group in different parts of the world for the past 25 years employing both morphological and molecular tools. I also supervised studies on a diversity of other insect groups, including fruit flies, gall wasps, bees, parasitic wasps, and mayflies. I am proud to be the first insect taxonomist hired in the higher education system of Israel in the past 40 years. As the only systematic entomologist in the school of Zoology at TAU, a major part of my time is dedicated to training graduate students and post-doctoral fellows as the next generation of Israeli taxonomists, with support from the Israel Taxonomy Initiative (ITI) and the Planning and Budgeting Committee of the Council for Higher Education in Israel.

My professional career includes work in both national and university-based museums as well as professional visits and collaborations with colleagues from natural history museum all over the world, including the USA, Europe, Africa and Australia. Given my expertise in insects that are closely associated with plants, I also have a significant experience in working in herbaria and botanical gardens. In the Steinhardt Museum I am the chief curator of a collection that hold over 3 million specimens and lead a team of several academic taxonomists as well as over 20 expert collection managers caring for and studying our collections. The entomology team at the SMNH also provides taxonomic support to the Ministries of Agriculture, Environmental Protection, and Health, to Israel Nature and Parks Authority, and other organizations that require our unique expertise.

I serve on the editorial boards of several taxonomic journals, and am a member of the council for the International Congresses of Diptera and the advisory board for the Zoological Research Museum Alexander Koenig. I

organized several symposia in international conferences and was a member of the organizing committee of the 8th International Congress of Dipterology (Potsdam, 2014) and head of the scientific committee for that congress.

I regard it as my mission to train the next generation of insect taxonomists in Israel, to promote the field of taxonomy as a scientific discipline, to mainstream taxonomic research into ecological and evolutionary theory and practice, and to take an active part in the international community of natural-history museum scientists and professionals. In particular, I believe taxonomic research should be a major pillar of the global effort to protect biodiversity and functioning ecosystems. As insects are estimated to comprise about 80% of all terrestrial metazoan species – I believe insect taxonomists should play a particularly active scientific and professional role in promoting biodiversity research.

Natural history museums are my 'scientific home' and the Consortium of European Taxonomic Facilities is the natural professional organization where I feel I can help promote these goals, working with colleagues from other taxonomic facilities. As a member of the CETAF executive committee I would like to promote natural history collections of all types and collection-based research (particularly taxonomic) that is carried out within them. I plan to do so by advocating for infrastructure, taking part in and promoting international relationships, teaching programs, conferences, and collaborative research projects, and by developing best practices to meet the needs of the relevant scientific community. This is a particularly exciting period in time to be a museum researcher and taxonomist, and I will be honored to take an active part in shaping the future of taxonomic science as a member of CETAF's executive committee.

Netta Dorchin
School of Zoology
The Steinhardt Museum of Natural History
Tel Aviv University
Tel Aviv, Israel