



## Margarita Metallinou (1985–2015)

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Margarita Metallinou was a promising young systematic herpetologist whose career was tragically cut short by a wildlife accident while doing fieldwork in Africa one year ago. We would like to take this opportunity to remember Margarita and to summarize her brief but intense and productive career. Born in Greece on the 20<sup>th</sup> of September 1985, she graduated in Biology from the National and Kapodostrian University of Athens having completed her undergraduate thesis on “The reliability of the Double Uniparental Inheritance of the mitochondrial DNA in *Mytilus galloprovincialis*” in 2008 and, in the same year, she moved to Barcelona to enroll in the MSc program in Biodiversity from the University of Barcelona. It was during her MSc that she joined the laboratory of Salvador Carranza at the Institute of Evolutionary Biology (IBE) in Barcelona to do her master’s thesis on the phylogeny, biogeography and evolution of the geckos of the genus *Stenodactylus*. As a result of this work, she had the opportunity to participate in a field expedition to Morocco in July 2009 and she immediately fell in love with aridland reptile faunas and the endless flat vistas of the Sahara desert. It was not, however, until she started her PhD in the same laboratory at IBE in November 2009 that she discovered one of her passions: taxonomy. From the beginning Margarita showed a great aptitude to carry out taxonomic revisions, happily diving through old literature making the most of her supreme language abilities (she mastered English, Catalan, Spanish, French and Portuguese in addition to her native Greek) to unravel nomenclatural problems (e.g., Metallinou & Crochet 2013). During her PhD Margarita was able to continue working on the systematics, biogeography and evolution of *Stenodactylus* (Metallinou *et al.* 2012; Metallinou & Carranza 2013; Metallinou *et al.* 2014) but at the same time she started working with the geckos of the genera *Ptyodactylus* and *Asaccus* (Metallinou *et al.* 2015). She visited Oman and the United Arab Emirates in spring and autumn 2013 (a total of two months) to collect tissue samples and vouchers for her taxonomic work and, as in her visit to North Africa, she was very impressed by the scenery and immensity of the Arabian deserts.

A few days after she obtained her PhD degree on the 17<sup>th</sup> of July 2014, Margarita moved to Villanova University in the United States to work on systematic aspects of climate-forced extinction of lizards in the laboratory of Aaron M. Bauer. She immediately became a mentor and friend to the many master’s students in the lab and shifted her research focus south of the Equator, working chiefly on African geckos of the genus *Hemidactylus* and skinks of the genus *Trachylepis*. During her time in America Margarita attended several workshops and conferences and expanded her already impressive phylogenetic toolkit. As always, she was drawn to the field and took every opportunity to explore the local herpetofauna, but she was especially excited by the opportunity to see sub-Saharan Africa and its reptiles. On 16 June 2015 Margarita departed with two colleagues to begin a month of field work. Her untimely death occurred on 2 July 2015 near Mumbwa in the Central Province of Zambia.

In her short career Margarita contributed significantly to the phylogenetics and taxonomy of the lizards of Africa and Arabia and she helped inspire other young systematic herpetologists, especially women. Moreover, she also participated in several public engagement activities in order to increase the awareness of science. For instance, she wrote articles for the general public in magazines (Metallinou *et al.* 2014) and gave talks to non-specialist audiences. Her laboratory, analytical and field skills as well as her outgoing, engaging, and nurturing personality ensured that Margarita made a positive impression on everyone she met. In the year since her passing, celebrations of her life have been held in Greece, Catalonia and the United States. An endowment in her name has been established to provide annual awards to support conference attendance by postdoctoral herpetologists to the

Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles (SSAR) meeting and travel grants to attend the European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO) Computational Molecular Evolution course in Crete. Margarita Metallinou is sorely missed by her partner, arachnologist Enric Planas i Figueras, by her friends and family and by the community of systematic herpetologists. We who are fortunate enough to have known her are grateful for the enrichment she brought to our lives and for her legacy to the discipline that she loved.



### Publications of Margarita Metallinou

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