

Hans Staaland  
21<sup>st</sup> Nov 1938 – 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2009



Professor in Zoology Hans Staaland died in May 2009 after an incapacitating illness of several years duration. The Norwegian University of Life Sciences (formerly the Norwegian Agricultural University) has lost an excellent research scholar, and we have lost a dear colleague. Hans grew up in Numedal valley in south-central Norway, exposed to nature and farming life, a passion which he cultivated the rest of his life. Still 60 years later, we can find Hans' self-made bird boxes on the wall of the family barn in Rollag. His choice of zoology was therefore a natural one. Hans finished his Cand. Real. Degree at the University of Oslo in 1968 and defended his PhD in zoophysiology on a thesis on salt gland physiology in seabirds only four years later.

In 1972 Hans was appointed associate professor in zoology at the Department of Zoology, within the Agricultural University of Norway at Ås, where he later became full professor. He spent the rest of his working career at Ås, and became rapidly a prominent member of the academic staff. Hans was elected head of the Department of Biology and Nature Conservation in 1999. Shortly after he realised that his memory was fading. As a consequence, he decided to retire from the demanding position and in 2002 he retired as professor, and sadly, he gradually lost contact with the academic workplace and his colleagues.

At Ås, the research activities centred around reindeer, including both the wild and domesticated, and their physiological adaptations to the arctic environment. In this respect, Hans was inspired by the great physiologist Per F. Scholander. Especially, Hans' work on mineral metabolism is well renowned. Hans had close links to Alaska and the expansive lab headed by Jack Luick in the mid 1970s. Here he also met Dave Klein and Bob White. After a sabbatical year at University of Alaska, Fairbanks (UAF) in 1975, he visited UAF frequently. Jack, Bob, Dave and Hans made a strong cocktail as reflected in an array of joint works, many of them published in *Rangifer*. Especially Bob was Hans' close academic colleague and friend. Many of Hans' students in the late 1980s and early 1990s were introduced to the highly productive eco-physiology group at UAF then headed by Bob White. Hans also established a student exchange programme between Ås and UAF before buzz-words about internationalisation and student exchange were starting flying in the air. The program is still active. Hans attended all AUC and NOR conferences when active.

Indeed, he was a senior member of the reindeer research community.

Hans cared about people living “off the land”. After the Chernobyl accident in 1986, he was actively engaged together with Knut Hove, Torstein Garmo and Øivind Pedersen to mitigate the radioactive contamination of reindeer meat for the industry. He was broadly oriented and passionately interested in the reindeer industry. Especially the diverse adaptations, which include both the reindeer and their herders in this northern pastoral production system fascinated him, and he authored several review papers on reindeer husbandry, the most comprehensive one with Mauri Nieminen.

Hans Staaland loved to trigger discussions by taking radical stands. He was sceptical to normative and main stream stands about nature and science. In particular, he was sceptical to the “so called” concept of balance and harmony in nature, and to the one-sided and postulated negative human influence on nature. This was often an eye opener and made people think independently and critically about Science, and on the tension between use and conservation of nature.

We thank Hans for his friendship and inspiration - and for being Hans - a dedicated open minded scientist.

Colleagues at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences at Ås

*Torstein Garmo*

*Olav Hjeljord*

*Øystein Holand*

*Knut Hove*

*Ole Wiggo Røstad*