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## Tribute: In Memoriam, Jeheskel "Hezy" Shoshani

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## TRIBUTE: In Memoriam, Jeheskel “Hezy” Shoshani

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The elephant community has lost one of its great ambassadors, Dr. Jeheskel “Hezy” Shoshani, at the age of 65. A wave of condolences and testimonials from colleagues and friends around the world followed his death on May 21, 2008. Dr. Shoshani died from injuries suffered in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia when a bomb destroyed the public minibus in which he was traveling. Dr. Shoshani had taught at the University of Addis Ababa since 2007, after teaching for 9 years at the University of Asmara in Eritrea. It is cruelly ironic that he moved from Eritrea to Addis Ababa, in part, because he considered the Eritrea-Ethiopia border region too dangerous (Ilani, 2008a).

Dr. Shoshani was a U.S. citizen born in what is now Tel Aviv, Israel. Prior to moving to the Horn of Africa, he taught at Wayne State University in Michigan for about 25 years. Among his numerous publications, Dr. Shoshani edited both an imposing professional volume entitled *The Proboscidea* (Shoshani and Tassy, 1993) and a “coffee-table” book entitled *Elephants: Majestic Creatures of the Wild* intended for a general audience that was both current and scientifically accurate (Shoshani, 1992). He founded the Elephant Research Foundation, initially called the Elephant Interest Group, in June 1977, and edited its official publication, *Elephant*. He is survived by his spouse and colleague, Sandra Lash Shoshani.

Dr. Shoshani’s own research emphasized the evolutionary biology of elephants, with emphases on anatomy and taxonomy, although he also studied other taxa, for example, primates (Shoshani, Groves, Simons and Gunnell, 1996). He made numerous and diverse contributions to our knowledge of all aspects of elephants. For example, he studied the morphology of the elephant brain (Shoshani, Kupsy and Marchant, 2006), analyzed the frozen carcass of the Yukagir Mammoth (Mol, Shoshani, Tikhonov, van Geel, Sano, Lazarev, Boeskorov and Agenbroad, 2006), and compared the visual pigments of elephants and color-blind humans (Yokoyama, Takenaka, Agnew and Shoshani, 2005). This latter work suggests that both Asian and African elephants see red, yellow and green as various shades of yellow, much like humans who are red-green color-blind (<http://colorvisiontesting.com/color2.htm>).

As if this wide range of contributions to the biology of elephants were not enough, Dr. Shoshani conducted behavioral fieldwork in several countries. He was excited to document the remnant population of perhaps 100 elephants in the Gash Barka region of Eritrea, where few elephants had been sighted during the previous 45 years and many worried that the Eritrean elephants had been extinguished (Nicholson-Lord, 2008).

Despite Dr. Shoshani’s long list of accomplishments, his most lasting contribution will likely be the way he has inspired other scientists and conservationists. As an example of this, his dream of protecting the small elephant population in Ethiopia’s recently established Kafta-Shiraro National Park (Ilani, 2008b; Shewareged, 2007) will be pursued by an international team of scientists under the direction of Dr. Yirmed Demeke of Addis Ababa. The Born Free Foundation (UK), the Frankfurt Zoological Society and Pro Wildlife (both based in Germany) and the Chicago Zoological Society (US) all support this fieldwork.

Hezy was indefatigable. Exposed to an idea, he became fascinated; faced with a challenge, he seized it. On the second day of one conference in 2005, he planned to attend presentations throughout the second day AND to obtain the answers to his long list of questions about the first day’s talks. Being Hezy, he accomplished both goals – then went out for a relaxing dinner with friends.



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