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SHORT BIOSKETCH: HERWIG LEIRS



Date of birth : 22 May 1963
Family status : Married to Ann Vrancken, four children
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Prof.dr.Herwig Leirs graduated in 1985 with a degree in Zoology from the University of Antwerp, and obtained his Ph.D. there in 1992 with a dissertation on the population ecology of African *Mastomys* rats and its implications for rodent control. Since 1985, he has been studying the biology, (applied) ecology, epidemiology, and integrated management of rodents in various countries in Europe, Africa, and Asia.

Until 1996, he worked as a researcher at the University of Antwerp. In December 1996, he became a head of department at the Danish Pest Infestation Laboratory (DPIL) near Copenhagen. From 1999, he combined this with a part-time lecturing position at the University of Antwerp, and in 2001, he returned to Antwerp as a full-time professor, becoming a full professor in 2008 (but still maintaining a part-time connection to DPIL until 2012). He teaches various zoological courses, Population Ecology, and Ecology of Infections, and organizes the Tropical Field Course.

At the University of Antwerp, he gained policy experience as a student representative and later in various councils and committees. From 2009 to 2015, he served as the Dean of the Faculty of Sciences, and from 2016 to 2023, he was the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the University of Antwerp. He is also the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Royal Society of Zoology of Antwerp (Zoo Antwerp, Planckendael, Queen Elisabeth Hall), Vice-Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Institute of Tropical Medicine, and Chairman of the NGO APOPO vzw.

Herwig Leirs coordinates, partners, or advises in numerous research projects focusing on ecology, biodiversity, and management of rodents and other small mammals, supported by Flemish or international funds. A significant portion of these projects takes place in Africa (especially Tanzania, DR Congo, Ethiopia) and in Europe, sometimes elsewhere. Although the research itself is often population biology-oriented, it frequently deals with systems where rodents cause damage in agriculture or where small mammals serve as reservoirs for infections. He leads ecological research on diseases such as bubonic plague, Ebola, and poxviruses, as well as coronaviruses, mammarenaviruses, and hantaviruses. Additionally, he supervises various research projects on the ecology and conservation of mammals, both in Flanders and in the tropics. He is a member of the Belgian Royal Academy for Overseas Sciences.

He (co-)authored around 300 scientific publications. He has participated in numerous international scientific meetings, regularly convened symposia, chaired several international scientific conferences, and was a member of the scientific or organizing committee of several others. He supervises Ph.D. and master's students (33 defended Ph.D.'s, about ten ongoing). He regularly acts as an expert or reviewer for scientific journals and in advisory boards or selection committees both nationally and internationally. He is fluent in Dutch, English, Danish, and French, to a lesser extent in German, and can manage in Swahili.