Why are you so drawn to caves?

I was a cave explorer before becoming a biologist. I was attracted by the unique environment, the beauty of subterranean spaces and the challenge of exploration – we know more about the surface of the Moon. And caves, as islands, are truly laboratories of evolution. It’s the perfect combination of profession and hobby.

What is your most exciting discovery to date?

Probably the giant cave species from southern Portugal, including perhaps the world’s biggest pseudoscorpion Titanobochica magna (pictured) because its discovery was so unpredictable. More recently, we have described four species of fungi that parasitise cave millipedes – the inhabitants of cave inhabitants!

Isn’t it dangerous down there?

I feel very comfortable in caves, but getting lost, rockfalls and floods are always an issue. Most caves are extremely cold, wet and muddy, too, which is particularly hard when we are several days from the surface.

Is there anything that you dream of finding one day?

I’d like to know what makes an animal a cave animal. Is there any special predisposition to cave life that explains why only some groups of animals have evolved underground?