



PROF. DR. BOŽIDAR ĆURČIĆ

(1946-2015)

Professor Dr. Božidar Ćurčić was born on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1946 in Belgrade. After graduating at the Faculty of Science (Biology), University of Belgrade, in 1969, his career at the university began where he spent 44 years teaching and conducting scientific research.

It is a difficult task to encapsulate almost five decades of a person's fruitful scientific research and teaching activity. Professor Ćurčić succeeded in both areas, leaving behind a vast opus of scientific achievements, and several younger colleagues, who under his guidance became experts in various arthropod groups. Well aware of the fact that many arthropod taxa had not been scientifically researched in Serbia, he encouraged his younger colleagues to devote themselves to the study of myriapod, springtail, spider and coleopteran

taxa. Indeed, these colleagues will continue to carry out their scientific investigations of these groups and thereby broaden our knowledge of the fauna of Serbia and the Balkan region.

Arachnology, and in particular pseudoscorpions, was the main focus of his scientific research, and he studied different aspects of these taxa (systematics, taxonomy, developmental biology, evolutionary biology, teratology and biospeleology). His many field and cave investigations resulted in the erecting of more than 160 species and genera that were new to science, from Yugoslavia (Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina), Albania, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, France, to the USSR, China, Afghanistan, Israel, USA, etc. His contribution to expanding the knowledge of both epigean and cavernicolous pseudoscorpions is immense, especially from the Balkan region. Many of these taxa are endemics and relics to Serbia (Yugoslavia) or the Balkan region. His exhaustive study of this group of animals resulted in five monographs that were published during his working life.

Apart from pseudoscorpions, Prof. Ćurčić devoted his time to the study of other arthropod groups, such as spiders, scorpions, myriapods, springtails and coleopterans. This resulted in the publishing of three important monographs for the fauna of Serbia and the Balkan Peninsula (*The Spiders of Serbia*, *The Carabids of Serbia*, *The Diplopods of Serbia, Montenegro and the Republic of Macedonia*).

Prof. Ćurčić was a fellow and member of numerous foreign and domestic scientific societies: the Royal Entomological Society, the Japanese Arachnological Society, the Russian Arachnological Society, the American Arachnological Society, the British Arachnological Society, the Serbian Biological Society (former President), the Entomological Society of Serbia (former President), etc. He was also a member of the Committee on Karst and Speleology of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SASA), and the Executive Council of the Serbian Biological Society. He was elected as a foreign member to the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in Sofia, and was a chairman of the MAB (Man and the Biosphere) Committee, Commission of Serbia for UNESCO.

For several years Prof. Ćurčić was Editor-in-Chief of the Archives of Biological Sciences and of the Monographs of the Institute of Zoology. As an expert, he was a member of the editorial boards of several domestic and foreign scientific journals (*Acta Zoologica Bulgarica*, *Journal of Science* (Sofia), *Acta Entomologica Serbica* and *Proceedings of the Geographic Institute "Jovan Cvijić"* (SASA).

Over the past 35 years, Prof. Ćurčić was the leader of several domestic and foreign scientific projects financed by the Serbian Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, the Macedonian Ministries of Culture and Ecology, the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and SASA.

As an expert in the field of arachnology, Prof. Ćurčić had close contacts with numerous institutions and researchers in many countries. He was a visiting professor and lectured at a number of universities and institutions (in Ljubljana, Skopje, Sofia, Bucharest, Athens, Paris, Moulis, Frankfurt am Main, Moscow, St. Petersburg).

Prof. Ćurčić mentored (supervised) 23 MSc and PhD students.

His long professional career resulted in more than 610 scientific papers, 18 monographs and 28 textbooks, and he was the editor of 20 monographs.

As a keen biospeleologist, Prof. Ćurčić founded the Center for Biospeleology, Faculty of Biology, and the NGO, Center for Biospeleology of SE Europe. His many years of cave explorations resulted in a significant monograph, "Cave Fauna of Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia".

Besides scientific and teaching activities at the Institute of Zoology, Faculty of Biology, University of Belgrade, Prof. Ćurčić undertook many other official duties. He was Director of the Institute of Zoology and Head of the Department of Animal Development, President of the Council of the Biology Faculty, Vice President of the Academic Council, Vice-Dean, President of the Executive Council of the Biology Faculty, member of the Council on Biology and Genetics (Serbian Ministry of Science and Environment), President of the Council of Biological Sciences (University of Belgrade), expert-advisor to the Federal Ministry of Development, Science and Environment, to name just a few.

Alongside his scientific work, Prof. Ćurčić had wide sphere of interests and knowledge of many other topics, such as art and literature. He was well versed in ancient mythology, and in addition to Greek and Roman, he was especially interested in Slavic mythology. Many of the pseudoscorpion species that he erected during the years of his fruitful scientific career were named after mythological deities and gods.

In the years to come, Prof. Božidar Ćurčić will be remembered by his colleagues and close collaborators as a conscientious hard-working scientist, a multifaceted person of broad interests and a trustful friend.

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