

## In memoriam to Associate Professor Ján Gulička

In December 2009 Ass. Prof. Ján Gulička, one of the leading Slovak zoologists and ecologists and a honored member of the editorial board at the *Oecologia Montana* journal has left us forever.

He was born on April 8, 1925 in Ružomberok, Slovakia. After completing the elementary school in 1937-1938 he studied at the grammar school in Ružomberok. As many other renowned biologists, Ján Gulička also was a proof that famed biologists are simply born for their endeavor. His affection for collecting insects and plants brought to him the values of mountain and alpine nature already in his school years. After the grammar school between 1945 and 1950, he attended the Faculty of Natural Sciences at the SU in Bratislava and in 1951 he graduated as the "Doctor of Natural Science". In 1948 as an assistant researcher at the former Zoological Institute, he was already an established scientist. Ján Gulička reached the degree of the "Candidate of Sciences" in 1961 and in 1962 he was promoted to Associate Professor in the field of systematic and ecological zoology. It should be noted that he never became a member of any political party.

Although the core of his professional occupation revolved around the taxonomy and faunistics of Diplopods, he also worked on the faunistics of other animal groups. He belonged to the pioneers of the Slovak ecology and high mountain biology. As a teacher he educated generations of zoologists and ecologists and he deeply influenced their future professions. From his fruitful academic work we only mention a few lectures that were associated with ecology: Animal ecology, Zoocenology, Zoogeography, Basic animal taxonomy for teachers, Animal Phylogeny, Animal Adaptations.

The wide spectrum of his lectures gives an example of how the broad knowledge can be coupled with specialized research. In spite of his extensive lecturing activity, he did not feel the necessity to emphasize his own efforts through presenting "new trends" in biology, unless he was very sure of their deep significance. He never emphasized the form and social necessity over the pure core of the science. Thus he was one of the few great figures with such a modesty in both the past and present community of ecologists and zoologists in Slovakia.

Ján Gulička devoted his first works to the description of the distribution of several amphibian and reptile species. He committed himself to solving ecological problems of soil fauna, where his work became a model for many of his followers. Ján Gulička was equally committed to the study of cave fauna and classification of cave animal communities. In 1975 he published a summary of Slovak cave fauna, describing a number of new true troglobitic species from the Balkan caves. He gathered his knowledge of biospe-

leology in the book "Practical speleology", compiled by J. Jákal (1982). Among his other works we must mention at least the publication of two textbooks of "Ekológia živočíchov" (Animal Ecology) and significant contribution to the extensive Czechoslovak textbook "Ekologie živočichů" (Animal Ecology, 1985).

Ján Gulička published around 60 original scientific articles. His works are devoted to the ecology of Blephariceridea, Diplopoda, Chilopoda, Symphyla, Oniscoidea, Blattodea, Mantodea, Dermaptera etc. Well known are his works about the impact of water regime oscillation on the soil macrofauna at Svätajurský šúr and a series of works on Diplopods. He described more than 50 taxons new to science and he was very curious about the evolution of endemic species and speciation in high mountain ranges of Europe, Central and East Asia. Ján Gulička described the systematics and taxonomy of a great number of taxons from Bulgaria, former Soviet Union and Montenegro.

Among his many organizational activities we have to mention his work as the head of the Slovak Zoological Society at the Slovak Academy of Sciences, vice-chairman of the Czechoslovak Zoological Society at the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences (1969-1972), his work in the Council for Speleology and Karst at the Slovak Ministry of Culture. Together with Ass.Prof. Futák and other significant Slovak ecologists he shared the work of the Research Coordination Council for the Carpathian Biocenoses. He was a member of the editorial boards at several science journals and one of the editors of the international journal *Oecologia Montana*.

If we were to compare the extent and significance of his work with the works of the acclaimed American and European ecologists, we must express the opinion that his true scientific value was not fully acknowledged by the Slovak scientific community. All of us who have had the privilege to work at his side in the field are true to this claim.

In 1998, Ass. Prof. Gulička joined with his typical energy of a young man the effort of raising the new Pedagogical Faculty at the University of Žilina in Ružomberok. Although he lived in Bratislava, it was quite unbelievable how he always used every stay in his hometown for a field monitoring of the nature in the mountains around.

In 1999 the first study program specialized in biology was established at Ružomberok and Ass. Prof. Gulička most naturally became the first head of the Department of Biology. He was also the member of the Scientific Council at the Faculty. In 2004 he finally retired from his work at the university.

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