

PROF. DR. TONE WRABER  
(1938–2010)



(Photo: B. Čušin)

Dr. Tone Wraber, a retired full-time professor of botany and phytosociology at the Biotechnical Faculty of the University of Ljubljana and one of the most distinguished Slovenian botanists, died on 6 July 2010 in Polhov Gradec. Born on 4 March 1938 in Ljubljana, he graduated at the Department of Biology at the University of Ljubljana in 1961 and received his PhD at the University of Trieste in 1972 (his mentor was Prof. Dr. Sandro Pignatti). His botanical undertakings began already in high school and his father, phytosociologist Dr. Maks Wraber, was his first teacher. The subjects of his graduate thesis (Scree Vegetation at Lake Črno jezero above Komarča) and doctoral thesis (Pioneer Vegetation of Scree and Rock Crevices in the Julian Alps) show his preoccupation with the study of subalpine-alpine vegetation, which continued during his years of service in the Natural History Museum of Slovenia (1960–1970) and when he worked as a custodian of the Alpine botanical garden Juliana in the Trenta valley. After completing his PhD he started to work first as an assistant and then as assistant professor, associate professor and finally as full-time professor at the Department of Biology at the University of Ljubljana, where he worked until his retirement in 2003. He was a long-term chair of botany and custodian of the LJU herbarium collection. In spring 2010, the University of Ljubljana awarded him the title Professor Emeritus for his achievements in educational work. He was a respected and prolific professor, a mentor to nearly 60 biologists, foresters and agronomists in their graduate, master and (or) doctoral theses. In addition to systematic botany he gave lectures on biogeography (with phytosociology) and the basics of Latin (he dedicated a series of articles in the popular science journal *Proteus* to the subject of Latin names in the natural sciences). With his scientific publications from the beginning of the 1970s in which he described, among other things, a number of syntaxa new to science, such as the associations *Papaveri keneri-Thlaspietum keneri*, *Papaveri julici-Thlaspietum ro-*



(Photo: J. Kurillo)

mountains of Southeastern Europe (the Dinaric mountains, the Prokletije, other mountains in the Balkans), which he visited on several excursions and described the characteristics of their flora in scientific and popular science journals (e.g. the description of the new species *Cynoglossum krasnikui*, 1986 and *Crepis dinarica*, with co-authors, 1988). Among the peaks of the Dinaric mountains he focused the most on Mt. Snežnik, a 1796 m high mountain in southwestern Slovenia, whose flora and vegetation he thoroughly studied and wrote about in several articles. His scientific restlessness and curiosity led him to discover mountains outside Europe, such as the Himalayas, mountain ranges in Central Africa and Sri Lanka. In addition to subalpine-alpine vegetation his lifelong interest extended to the flora of other Slovenian regions, from Prekmurje and the Pohorje mountains to the Karst and Istria and he published many valuable contributions from these parts.

A lot of his effort and expertise were dedicated to the history of botany in Slovenia. The culmination of his endeavours was the critical edition of Voss's Attempt at the history of botany in Carniola (Versuch einer Geschichte der Botanik in Krain, Poskus zgodovine botanike na Kranjskem, 2008), to which he contributed his editorial report and commentary. He had extensive knowledge of his botanical predecessors and often wrote about them (e.g. F. X. Wulfen, M. Tommasini, H. Freyer, A. Paulin, G. Tomažič, E. Mayer, M. Piskernik etc.).

One of his most remarkable qualities was his popular-science writing. He was a long-term editor of the Proteus journal and its faithful contributor from his high school years on. Similarly, he contributed articles for the Planinski vestnik journal throughout his life. In many respects, also through organisation of annual botanical meetings, he was the central and the most cohesive figure in Slovenian botany since the 1980s, so it is more than justified that we call this period Wraber's. He was an exceptional lecturer to both students and nature lovers, a respected guide on botanical journeys, a proud Slovenian as well as a cosmopolitan. He considered his activity not only as professional and scientific, but also as cultural. With his warm humanity and openness, his critical, but benevolent nature he made a number of friends and colleagues in and outside Slovenia – in Alpine countries (Italy, Austria, Germany, Switzerland) as well as in Dinaric and Balkan countries (Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Albania) and his premature death echoed among botanists in Central and Southeastern Europe. He left behind an exceptional scientific, professional and popular science body of work consisting of over 1000 units. In addition to his cogent scientific articles we should also mention some of his monographic and book editions, e.g.: The Red List of Vascular Plants of Slovenia (with P.

*tundifolii*, *Saxifraga sedoidis*-*Arabidetum caeruleae*, *Festucetum laxae*, *Festuco nitidae*-*Rumicetum nivale*, *Gentiano terglouensis*-*Caricetum firmae* and *Hyperico alpini*-*Caricetum ferrugineae*, and proposed a new alliance *Androsaco-Drabion tomentosae*, he became one of the leading researchers of vegetation in the Southeastern Alps, whereas his numerous publications from the same and later periods on the subject of taxonomy (e.g. the description of the new subspecies *Gentiana lutea* subsp. *vardijanii*, 1986) and floristics (finds of species new to the Slovenian flora, new localities) consolidated his reputation as a foremost expert on the flora and vegetation of the Julian Alps (the subject on which he gave several lectures also abroad, in Austria and Germany) and that of the Slovenian Alps in general. This reputation stuck with him until the end and he provided valuable guidance in major research studies and projects, such as the renowned Swiss publication of *Flora alpina* (2004). His scientific interest extended to the

Skoberne, 1989), Plants from the Karst to the Coast (Rastline od Krasa do morja, 1989), A hundred notable plants in Slovenia (Sto znamenitih rastlin na Slovenskem, 1990), Flowers in Slovenia (Rože na Slovenskem, 1990, author of the wordings in this photomonograph), 2 × A Hundred Alpine plants in Slovenia (2 × Sto alpskih rastlin na Slovenskem, 2006). He was the co-author of all four existing editions of the determination key The Little Flora of Slovenia (Mala flora Slovenije, 1969, 1984, 1999 and 2007), which is the reference work on the flora of Slovenia. He left behind an extensive herbarium (kept in the LJU collection) and a valuable manuscript collection (including numerous phytosociological relevés and floristic records that he had not been able to process and publish; he was also planning to process the flora and vegetation of Mts. Snežnik and Mangart, and probably much more). He was a proficient photographer and his photographic legacy holds considerable documentary value.

Throughout his professional activity he maintained friendly and professional ties with the Institute of Biology at the Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. He participated in several projects, mentored a considerable number of our junior associates in their graduate, master and doctoral theses, co-authored our publications and was a benevolent consultant and reviewer as well as a faithful reader of our journal *Hacquetia*, at times also a contributor (e.g. with his book reviews). We part from him with great gratitude. His restless research spirit, criticism and benevolence, extensive knowledge and responsiveness, which all made him so unique, remain with us as a precious memory and a shining example.

## LITERATURE

Bačič, T., N. Jogan, 2009: Bibliografija dr. Toneta Wraberja ob njegovi 70-letnici (Dr. Wraber's bibliography – on his 70th anniversary). *Hladnikia* (Ljubljana) 23: 3–52.

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