

IN MEMORIAM**Vladimir Stevanović
(1947 – 2024)**

Professor Dr Vladimir Stevanović from the Faculty of Biology, University of Belgrade passed away on 19th March 2024, aged 77. Seven years ago a special issue of *Botanica Serbica* was dedicated to him. It celebrated his 70th birthday and at the same time commemorated more than 45 years of his scientific research on the Balkan Peninsula. Even after retirement Professor Stevanović had continued to pursue his many active research interests. They include phytogeographical investigations on floristic elements of

the central and western Balkans and the continuation of *Flora of Serbia*, now in its fourth volume. We have thanked him for all he has done for science, congratulated him on everything he has achieved, and affectionately wished him well.

At the university Professor Stevanović taught Plant Ecology and Geography, Principles of Ecology, and Vegetation Ecology at various academic levels. He introduced new courses on Flora and Vegetation of the Balkan Peninsula, and Biodiversity and Conservation.



Fig. 1. On Mt Athos with Stylianos Charalampidis (biology teacher) and *Osmunda regalis*.



Fig. 2. On Mt Athos with Arne Strid and *Campanula lavrensis*.



Fig. 3. With Kit Tan, after digging for *Paeonia tenuifolia* at Deliblato Sands.

He also taught courses on Ecology and Biogeography at the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics in Banja Luka as well as at Novi Sad. From 1989 to 2011, he was Head of the Department of Plant Ecology and Geography and inaugurated the Belgrade school of Geobotany. He reorganized the University Herbarium (BEOU) containing more than 180,000 documented specimens and curated the historical Herbarium Pancinianum. He supervised more than 40 MSc and graduate students, and mentored or co-mentored over 45 PhD candidates. National scientific projects carried out include those involving Serbia's flora and vegetation, those treating significant and rare plants of the central Balkans, and those relating to *The Red Data Book of the Flora of Serbia*. His international activities were many. He was regional advisor for Serbia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Bosnia & Herzegovina for *Atlas Florae Europaeae* (Helsinki, Finland) and he was also a member of the International Committee for Mapping the Flora of Europe. The *Flora and Vegetation of the Durmitor National Park* (SASA, UNESCO, 1990–1998) was accomplished under his guidance. His academic output comprises over 450 publications, including works and chapters

published in international and national monographs, peer-reviewed scientific papers, proceedings, transactions, invited and plenary lectures. As the main author or co-author of scientific papers, more than 700 citations were ascribed to him by scientists worldwide. He was editor/co-editor of the books *Biodiversity of Yugoslavia* (Biodiverzitet Jugoslavije), *Red Data Book of the Flora of Serbia 1* (Crvena knjiga flore Srbije 1), and *The Flora of Serbia* volumes 2 & 3 (Flora Srbije 2 & 3). Since 2006 he has been affiliated with the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SASA), at that time probably the youngest of its members. From 2011 he chaired the SASA Committee for Flora and Vegetation. He was also a member of the SASA Committee for Environmental Protection. From 2015 he served as Deputy Secretary of the SASA Department of Chemical and Biological Sciences. He was leader of the SASA project 'Chorological and ecological factors of taxonomic differentiation in the orophytic Flora of Serbia and surrounding areas of the central Balkans'. As a member of various SASA delegations, he spoke in Kishinev (Moldova) in 2007, in Paris in 2007, and in London in 2010. He also presented papers at conferences in Alexandria, Egypt (2010), Budapest (2013),

Bucharest (2014), and Ljubljana (2016). In 2004, he received the Award of the First Order from the Ministry of Science and Technological Development for his research. His scientific and administrative achievements have been comprehensively presented in *Botanica Serbica* 41(2): 109-121 (2017) which please read.

When asked what food he would like when in Greece, he said that he looked forward to trying octopus. A large succulent tentacle grilled to perfection was ordered and duly arrived at table, accompanied by ouzo. He ate it with evident enjoyment. Mmmm it's wonderful, the taste and texture it could easily be a favourite food, except that it was rarely encountered in Belgrade.

He loved Chinese cooking. Sweet and sour dishes were among his favourites in a Chinese restaurant.

Over a lunch with Niki Goulondris at her home in the Goulondris Natural History Museum, Kifissia, north of Athens, she was quite charmed by him and his eloquent eyes. He is so knowledgeable and speaks so well on art, music, botany, ornithology. It is a pleasure to converse with him. I hope he will visit us again.

He loved spending time at open-air fish and vegetable markets and tries to go to them whenever he was in a new place. The different fruits and vegetables he found very interesting, plus the people and the conversation. He often buys a large quantity of sweet Hungarian peppers, dries them and makes his own paprika flakes.

What should one avoid doing? Writing Red Data Books to a deadline. He had a massive heart attack from the last one.

Should you cut down on so much smoking? You know, it is not good for your health. He has tried several times but has given up. There are worse things than smoking.

Are you afraid of death? No, many have died before me. I have no regrets. However, there are so many things I wish to finish first. I cannot do all that I would like to do, but I try my best to do as much as I am able. I would like the *Flora of Serbia* completed. I believe that nothing has failed if I have sincerely tried my best.

What are the happiest times of your life? When I was young, I went often to Deliblato Sands, for bird-watching and bird-ringing. Even now, when I am sad

or stressed, I would go there. The peace and quiet of this place heals me and I could face the problems again.

Branka is my best friend and companion, not only my wife. But she is a worrier, she worries about me constantly. I do not tell her all problems because I know she will start to worry, and that is not good for her health.

He relaxes with a cigarette in front of the old department, beside the twining *Dioscorea balcanica* in full fruit. The cat came and rubbed against his legs. Ah, feeding time. He likes cats, they are so human. He opened a tin of Whiskas and placed a generous helping on the dish. He smiled, you know, it is true, cats prefer Whiskas. I was surprised. Do they have this TV commercial in Serbia?

Small remembrances, small events, yes, memories are made of these. And only love can make a memory. To all who hold his memory dear, he says to us, do not be sad. I am now in a beautiful place. We meet again. I will wait for you.

Perhaps his beautiful place would be a shady sheltered river canyon whose steep rock walls are covered with *Ramonda*, each flowering rosette more perfect than the other. Perhaps some are unknown to science. It is a happy thought. He and Branka had always considered *Ramonda* the rare *resurrection* and relict plants of the northern hemisphere.

His friendship was warm and sincere. That was why so many came to bid farewell, to show their love and respect, and to remember him. We leave him but temporarily. It is a comforting thought, to have a friendly face waiting on the other side when we cross over.

What I write is only partial, not comprehensive. But by referring to my own contacts with him, one can understand why as an educator and teacher, as a companion and friend, as an international botanist of the highest standing, he had inspired loyalty and deep respect from many people. His spirit endures and remains with us forever.

Kit Tan

Institute of Biology, University of Copenhagen,
Universitetsparken 15, 2100 Copenhagen Ø,
Denmark

