

Professor Dr. Neculai ȘTEFAN (1943–2020)



In the middle of this summer (July 2020) one of the contemporary Romanian botanists, Professor dr. Neculai Ștefan, left this world for ever. Neculai Ștefan was connected professionally with the university center in Iași, where he began his studies, and consolidated his career. Iași is the place where he founded his family, being permanently connected with his numerous friends, colleagues of department, students and graduates, etc.

He was born in Râmnicu Sărat (Buzău), in March, 8th, 1943, being the 3rd son of Dumitru and Dumitra Ștefan. He attended primary and secondary school in his native town, graduating them in 1960. Then, between 1960 and 1963 he studied in Buzău city, attending the courses at the Sanitary Technical School,

and in 1963 he began his university studies, at Biology-Geography Faculty, having as his speciality Biology-Botany at the University “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” Iași.

After graduation in 1968 he began his instruction research at the Biological Research Center, which belongs to the Romanian Academy Iași Subsidiary.

In 1972, after he had finished his instruction research he continued his career as a Biologist in the same institution until 1977, when he was promoted as a scientific researcher I, taking all the exams in the scientific hierarchy.

In 1980 he took his scientific title as a Doctor in Biology, in Vegetal Biology Department, with his doctoral thesis “Research of Flora and Vegetation in Superior and Middle Basin of Râmnicu Sărat River”, under the coordination of Professor Constantin Burduja.

In 1977 he participated at the competition for taking the lecturer degree at the Vegetal Biology Department and then, in 2001, he was promoted as a Professor at the same Faculty, until 2008, when he retired as a pensioner.

He taught the students, both in Biology and Geography, more lectures as: Systematical Botany (Cormobionta), Phytocoenology and the Romanian Vegetation, Nature Protection, Forestry Resources, Weeds and their Extirpation, The Theory and Practice of Durable Development and Forestry Resources, Principles of Ecology, Principles of Taxonomy, Medicinal and Aromatic Plants, General Botany and Geobotany.

He directed, yearly, laboratory practice and field works of the students in various locations, both at Systematical Botany and Phytocoenology.

His scientific activity, developed in 28 years as a researcher and then as a Professor, had as a result the publishing as a single author or in collaboration, of 214 original scientific articles in reviews, both in the country and abroad, 16 books and university teaching courses, to which are added 6 articles to popularize the science. These scientific works had the following principal directions: Systematical Botany (Cormobionta), Phytocoenology, Pratology, Herbology, Nature Protection, Ecology, The Study of the Drying Phenomenon of the Forests, The Influences of the Noxes upon the Vegetal Carpet, etc.

The Professor dr. Neculai Ștefan was connected more than affectively by the Romanian Danube Delta Biosphere Nature Reserve, where he had made numerous longer or shorter scientific trips, and the scientific results were published in collaboration of more synthesis works as: “Explanation to the Vegetation Map of the Romanian Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve” (Flevobericht, Lelystand, Netherlands, 1994); “Reconstrucție ecologică în Rezervația Biosferei Delta Dunării, Romania, Ostroavele Babina și Cernovca” / “Renaturierung im Biosphären reservat Donau-Delta, Romänien) Romania / (Tulcea-Omwelstiftung WWF, Deutschland”, 1997); “Delta Dunării - Rezervație a Biosferei” (Publishing House Dobrogea, 2006), etc.

In 1997 he participated at a workshop in Barcelona, within the International Project Eureed II, and in 1999 he was invited to the Research Station “Cocodrie” in Louisiana (USA), where he gave a lecture about floristical and phytocoenological biodiversity of the Danube Delta reeds and he made practical applications in “Barataria Preserve” and in Mississippi River Delta. He was invited to the 5th *Hieracium* workshop (Germany, 2000) and to the 6th *Hieracium* workshop (Austria and Germany, 2002).

In 2010, he was invited to the University of Fuzhou (China), within the Romanian-Chinese exchange project “Research on Landscape and Environment at Different Scales”, focused on urban sustainability scenarios, in collaboration with Fujian Normal University (2009-2010).

In his quality as a wellknown botanist, with a valuable experience along the years, he obtained and coordinated a number of over 40 scientific research projects with domestic financing, as: “Research on Floristical and Phytoceonological Diversity in Obcinele Bucovinei” (2001); “Floristical and Phytocoenological Studies on National Park Cheile Bicazului-Lacul Roșu-Hășmașul Mare Massive” (2003); “Terrestrial and Aquatical Peri-urban Ecosystems in Cîrșia River Basin, in the North of Iași” (2007); “Studies for Preservation of Endemic Species *Andryala levitomentosa* in Natural Habitats” (2007); “Project *Nardus* (Inventariation of the Grasslands in Romania) – Partnership with the National Institute of Research-Development Danube Delta Tulcea (2007).

Thanks to his professional competence, Neculai Ștefan was coopted in more teams in order to realize scientific programmes with international and national financing, as: the Project of the European Agency of Environment “CLC 2007 / GMES FTS Land Monitoring Romania”; Project PNCDI-2 “Strategies Agro-forestry for Valuation and Conservation of the Medicinal Plants Biodiversity in the Context of Rural Durable Development on the Mountain Valley of Bistrița River” (2007); Project Nucleus-Biostar 06-400-401 (2006-2007); Project “Identification and Obtaining of Bioactive Phytocomplexes from Medicinal Species, for Making some Formulas of Nutritional Supplements used as Antitoxin and Hepatoprotectors”; Project PCCD-BIOTCH “Ecological Reconstructions by Micoremediation Proceedings of Degraded Soils of Mining Activities” (2007).

In his quality as a Professor he supervised over 60 papers of taking degrees of dissertations, and he was a member in twelve committees for the title of Doctor in Biology.

Another aspect of his activity was the support given training to the teachers from the secondary schools, supervising more graduation papers of I degree from a scientific point of view and participating in committees of obtaining didactic degrees.

He was a member of more scientific societies, both in the country and abroad, as: Romanian Biological Society; Society of Phytocoenology in Romania; Amicale Internationale de Phytosociologie (France); International Association for Vegetation Science (IAVS); Society for Conservation Biology, etc.

His recognition as a specialist in Botany, both in Romania and abroad, had as a result to enlist his name in various catalogues, indexes, dictionaries of speciality, as: Experts

Register, first edition (1997), edited by the Romanian Academic Society; Membership List, IAVS (1998); Taxonomists Index of Romania, Publishing House “Pentru Viața” (1999); Romanian Biological Dictionary, vol. II, Publishing House of West University “Vasile Goldiș”, Arad (2000).

All these achievements and many others which were not mentioned in this necrology contribute to the commemoration of Neculai Ștefan, not only as a Professor, but also especially as a man, and represents a necessary giving at the knowledge of the Botanical science development in Romania. Besides these, he contributed essentially to the training and educating of several series of students, master students or doctoral students who will carry on the traditions of the Romanian biology.

Regarding me, I knew him as a man in 1990's of the last century and I can tell, being very convinced, that he was an example for me from a professional and a human point of view. I remember piously how vehement he was in those times when he wanted to defend a colleague or even unknown people in front of injustice, dishonesty, hypocrisy or in front of certain arbitrary decisions of certain temporary persons or leaders of some public institutions.

He also remains a veritable portrait of a man who had an authentic respect for the predecessors in Biology, Geology, and Geography – a world which was close not only to him, but also to us from a professional point of view.

We, as well as the next generations, should pay our homage, piously and gratefully to Professor Neculai Ștefan.

Adrian OPREA

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