

BOTANIST DR. ION SÂRBU (17.09.1933-26.07.2022)



Dr. Ion Sârbu was one of those scientists who, throughout his entire professional career, was concerned with the study of life sciences, especially the world of plants, a field in which he obtained remarkable, indisputable, extensive and of great depth results.

Born at the beginning of autumn of the year of 1933, in Suceveni village, Tudor Vladimirescu commune, the county of Galați, he attended the primary school in his native village, the secondary school and College/Normal School of Teachers “Costache Negri” in Galați, in order to complete his higher education in Iași, at the Faculty of Natural Sciences-Geography, Biology-Geography section, of the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University, which he graduated in 1963. He took his state exam in February 1964, being declared “Diplomat University”, mainly in Biology, but secondary in Geography.

As a result, he became a professor of biology and geography in his native commune; between 1964 and 1967 he was also a specialist inspector in Biology and Geography, in the Bujor district, Galați Region.

In 1967, at the insistence of his Professor Constantin Burduja, Mr. Ion Sârbu transferred with his job (and moved with his family) to Iași, working as a biologist at the Herbarium of the Botany Department, Faculty of Biology. Later on, in 1975, he was transferred to the Botanical Garden “Anastasiu Fătu” in Iași, where he would work until his retirement in 2003.

Here, he laid the foundations and coordinated the works of the “Flora and Vegetation of Romania” section, took care of the institution's herbarium and coordinated the scientific periodicals “Collection of Studies and Articles of Biology” / “Bulletin of the Iași Botanical Gardens”, “Catalog of Seeds and Spores”, but also the aperiodic publication “Flora Exsiccata Moldaviae et Dobrogeae”.

Starting from 1973, he studied his native region from a botanical point of view, in order to defend his doctoral thesis in 1978, *Flora and Vegetation of the Chinejii and Prut Basins between Rogojeni-Mastacani*. Thus, he gained the title of PhD in Biology at the University “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” Iași, in 1978, under the direction of the same Professor and mentor, Constantin Burduja.

Professionally, Ion Sârbu followed a path that was not exactly easy, but which with a lot of work, perseverance, giving up and sacrifices in his personal life, highlighted his tenacity and native intelligence. Thus, he followed an upward path, full of professional achievements, from biologist to scientific researcher, the 1st degree, with his first studies on the taxonomy and chorology of *Galanthus* spp. or *Fagus* spp. in Romania, to the last ones, such as some critical analysis and synthesis works on the vascular flora, natural vegetation, terrestrial or aquatic habitats of Romania.

Active spirit, devoted to his profession, being endowed with special physical and intellectual abilities, a fine and attentive observer of life in nature, he materialized his own observations by publishing more than 120 scientific works and 22 books and book chapters, in

Romania or abroad, which will preserve his memory in posterity as one of the most prominent personalities of contemporary botany in Romania and beyond.

Throughout his scientific activity as a botanist, Dr. Ion Sârbu was involved as a collaborator in 38 national or international projects, thus publishing 128 scientific works and 22 books and chapters of books, alone or in collaboration with Romanian or foreign botanists.

The significant contributions of Dr. Ion Sârbu in approaching the taxonomic research, both at national and international level, are supported by the collaboration of some fundamental works, such as: *Vascular Plants of Romania. Illustrated Field Identification Book* (Bucharest, 2013), *The Map and The Red List of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve* (Tulcea, 1994 and 2000), *Les Associations Végétales de Roumanie. Les Associations Anthropogènes* (Cluj-Napoca, 2012), *Atlas Florae Europaeae* (Helsinki, 1990-2018), and the electronic *Data Base of the Flora Europaea* (1994-2021), and many other botanical operas.

As recognition of his important scientific activity, Mr. Ion Sârbu was granted with “Emanoil Teodorescu” Prize of the Romanian Academy, in 2006.

He activated also as a member of some professional associations in Romania, such as the Romanian Phytosociology Society, the “Anastasie Fătu” Dendro-Ornamental Association, or the Romanian Society of Biology.

Sensitive soul, communicative, friendly, open to dialogue, reliable, always ready to help anyone in difficult moments, he was fully appreciated with respect and considerations by his collaborators, both for his professional qualities and for his spirit of humanity, fairness and understanding.

It is obvious that I cannot express in sufficiently, comprehensive words, how much meant Mr. Ion Sârbu, both for me personally and for us, the younger generation of Romanian botanists. By his calm and warm way of speaking, by the kindness and competence with which he supported us every time we asked him for advices, books, botanical references, scientific works, maps or unraveling the secrets of any mountain or forest in our country, and many others, he will remain a great, dear and good MAN, for most of us.

By his achievements, Mr. Ion Sârbu was and will be a model of human, moral and intellectual conduct, a worthy model to follow for us, aspiring botanists, not only from Iași, but even from Romania.

For everything he did for Romanian botany, as well as for the support given to each of us, I thank him from the bottom of my heart, both personally and on behalf of my colleagues from the Botanical Garden “Anastasie Fătu”, University “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” of Iași.

Personally, I met Mr. Ion Sârbu on an early autumn day in the somewhat distant year of 1990. Then he took me with him on my first field trip as a new employee of the Botanical Garden, a trip to the Danube Delta in Romania, collecting numerous plant specimens and seed samples. This is how I met the man who was to become a true mentor and model of scientific professionalism in my later work as a botanist. In the years that followed, we went many field trips, where, in addition to the originally proposed goals, we made countless plant identifications, had many botanical discussions or he showed me some of the protected natural areas or important points of botanical interests of Romania.

My colleagues and I have lost not only a special colleague, a close collaborator and an imposing researcher, but also a honorable friend, a man full of humanity and compassion for the troubles of others, a man around whom we all always felt relaxed and eager to ask him more and more about our botanical concerns.

The grieving family, his wife, children and grandchildren, have lost a good and devoted husband, a family man and a wise grandfather. He loved them all very much, surrounding them with parental love and care (sometimes he would tell us about the vacations he took with his

family, into the Danube Delta or on the coast of the Black Sea, lodging everyone in tents, with all the nostalgic memories that remain in such moments; or he would tell us other episodes from the lives of his loved ones, which he told us in the tone of wise father or grandfather ...). The disappearance of him from his family leaves a void that is hard to replace as moral support permanently given to those close to him.

Let us pray to God to rest him in peace, and let us keep him in our memory until the day when we follow the same path.

Adrian OPREA

“Anastasic Fătu” Botanic Garden, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași