

Anniversary of prof. RNDr. Jiří Komárek, DrSc.

Jiří Komárek was born on 28 May 1931 in Brno. He started his studies at the Faculty of Science, Masaryk University in Brno (1949 - 1951) and then, during the years 1951 - 1957, he continued with his postgraduate studies at the Faculty of Science, Charles University under the guidance of another legend of world algology, professor Bohuslav Fott.

During the years 1956 -1960, Jiří Komárek worked at the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences (CSAV) in Prague. In 1961, he moved to South Bohemia where he still lives. Firstly, he worked at the Institute of Microbiology of CSAV in Třeboň, specifically at the Laboratory of Algology (CCALA) where he contributed to the creation of The Culture Collection of Algae. However, due to political reasons he was forced to leave the Institute of Microbiology in 1971 and transferred to Třeboň workplace at the Institute of Botany of CSAV. From 1985 to 1991, he was the head of the local Centre for Phycology where he still works. In 1991, Jiří Komárek was involved, together with other colleagues, in the establishment of the Faculty of Biology (nowadays Faculty of Science) of University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice. From 1991 to 1998, he worked here as a head of the department of botany, where is still acts as a professor emeritus. In 1993, Jiří Komárek received his habilitation in the field of botany at the Faculty of Science, Masaryk University in Brno.

He was also appointed as a professor in the same field at the Faculty of Biology, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice in 1997. Although he was not allowed to officially supervise students due to political reasons until the Velvet Revolution in 1989, the list of theses spanning across all university levels, to which he contributed with his advice, is respectable and many of his students have become professional algologists. Jiří Komárek was simply an excellent supervisor - he let us grow at our own pace, gave us a right direction from time to time, and was known for his endless patience. And when we contributed with a home-made cake for breakfast during any algological excursion, his satisfaction with life was obvious. The satisfaction was surely backed up even by his family life - with his wife Jarka (1938-2017), who was also a scientist, he has two sons and six grandchildren. His first scientific contribution - *A contribution to the knowledge of algae of Opava region* - which he composed with his friend and lifelong colleague Petr Marvan was published in Natural science collection of Ostrava region in 1951. At the moment of writing these words, his latest contribution is the chapter on blue-green algae in the book *Life at Rock Surfaces* as a part of edition *Life in Extreme Environments*, which was published this year at the end of May by De Gruyter publishing house. And there are more coming, for he does not intend to retire from science.

Actually, there have been so many contributions that no one has a complete knowledge of them - with the only exception of his own respectable self and his co-worker Dana Švehlová in Třeboň. Besides, as a result of his lifelong contributions, his name can be found in Stanford list of top 2% most-cited researchers in the world. Nevertheless, out of those hundreds of scientific publications, some do stand out. At the beginning of his carrier, Jiří Komárek, together with his colleague professor Fott, occupied himself with the research of coccal green algae which led to his first worldwide known book *Das Phytoplankton des Süßwassers. 7. Teil, 1. Hälfte, Chlorophyceae (Grünalgen), Ordnung: Chlorococcales* (Komárek & Fott, 1983) in the edition *Die Binnengewässer: Einzeldarstellungen aus der Limnologie und ihren Nachbargebieten*. Later, Jiří Komárek focused mainly on the study of blue-green algae and the results of his work in this field are virtually known to all algologists in the world. Firstly, as a prelude to his future influential work, he and his colleague Konstantin Anagnostidis published a five-volume series *Modern approach to the classification system of cyanophytes* in Algological Studies journal from 1985 to 1990, which



was followed by blue-green algae “opus magna” in the form of three-volume *Süßwasserflora von Mitteleuropa – Cyanoprokaryota*, published from 1998 to 2013.

The importance of Jiří Komárek for taxonomy is immense. AlgaeBase, a global algal database of taxonomic, nomenclatural, and distributional information states that Jiří Komárek is the author of more than 1200 taxons and, in addition, green alga *Komarekia*, blue-green alga *Komarekiella*, ten species of green algae, five species of blue-green algae, and even one grasshopper are all named after him.

He is also one of the founding members of the International Association of



Cyanophyte/Cyanobacteria Research - an amazing organization, which actually does not officially exist, does not have any registered members, no articles of association, and suchlike. However, that association is going to hold its 22nd international symposium in 2022. He is, or was until recently, a member of international nomenclatural boards International Association for Plant Taxonomy and International Union of Biological Sciences. Jiří Komárek is also a laureate of a number of scientific awards: J.E. Purkyně Gold Medal (Czechoslovak Academy of Science, 1989), G.J. Mendel Gold Medal (Czech Academy of Science, 2007), Holuby Medal (Slovak Botanical Society, 2001), G.W. Prescott Award (American Phycological Society, 2001), František Běhounek Award (2012), and since the year 2004 he is also a member of The Learned Society of the Czech Republic.

Jiří Komárek tends to be quite a traveller because he has been an invited guest to many universities all around the world (Japan, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Australia, and also many universities in Europe) and for that reason the list of his speeches at international conferences can no longer be fully compiled. Apart from those journeys, one has to add to the list also scientific expeditions to Antarctica and the Arctic, and also to tropical and subtropical regions (Cuba, Belize, Brazil, Guatemala).

The list of his scientific achievements is undoubtedly enormous, but it does not provide the picture of Jiří Komárek as a person. His colleagues also appreciate even his wide scope of interests besides science. Jiří Komárek is a philatelist, a numismatist, a collector of naïve art paintings, and he is also an owner of a large ornithological literature collection, not to mention his passion for classical music and an interest in mountain climbing and football. His substantial vitality is characterized even by, for example, the fact that he stopped playing his regular Friday football matches at the age of 73 only after he broke his ribs during one of the matches and, in that condition, he travelled to a conference in Mérida, Mexico in 2007.

He is practically a walking chronicle of recently passed decades and his stories almost resemble passages from a live history textbook. Everyone remembers his stories about giving advice to Che Guevara on partisan war, about leading a gypsy gun company in Janovice while in the technical auxiliary battalion, about his mountain climbing experiences from times when this sport was not yet widely practised by masses, about experiences from times of war and communists, and suchlike. Even though one has already heard some stories before, it always brings out its characteristic charm and everyone likes to listen to it even repeatedly. We all wish to listen to those stories for many more times.

Jan Kaštovský