

Wilhelm FOISSNER and the German Society for Protozoology

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Within his numerous research activities and services to the profession, Wilhelm FOISSNER had a major impact on the development and thriving of the German Society for Protozoology (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Protozoologie, DGP). He was among the 32 founding members of the DGP in Münster in June 1981 and attended each of the meanwhile 27 annual meetings of the DGP since then. His terrific scientific output is reflected by his numerous contributions to these annual meetings. During 1982 and 2008, he presented 27 oral contributions as first or single author and co-authored another 35 talks; his (co-)authored poster presentations at the DGP meetings amount to 52 (Willi, my apologies, if I have missed some more). In 1988, Wilhelm FOISSNER organized the 7th Annual Meeting of the DGP at St. Virgil in Salzburg, Austria. The fact that the DGP decided to come back to this venue during its 26th Annual Meeting, this time organized by Ulrike BERNINGER and her associates, indicates how well the first meeting in Salzburg was accepted by the members of the Society. From 1993 to 1996 Wilhelm FOISSNER served as vice president and from 1996 until 1999 as president of the DGP. Furthermore, together with his wife Ilse, he founded the “Wilhelm and Ilse FOISSNER Stiftung” in 1987. The goal of this foundation is to promote German-speaking protozoologists outside of the academic research and to stimulate classical, morphology-oriented alpha taxonomy. Four prizes of the Wilhelm and Ilse FOISSNER Stiftung were awarded during the annual DGP meetings to colleagues from Austria, Germany, Denmark, and even China. The last recipient, Weibo SONG, awarded with the Wilhelm and Ilse FOISSNER prize in 1992, had completed his Ph. D. thesis in German language at the University of Bonn. The fact that it has become increasingly difficult to find suitable candidates for this price illustrates a shift in protozoological research over the past three decades. Research on ultrastructure, cell physiology, symbiosis and parasitism that dominated the DGP meetings during the 1980s

was followed by a focus on ecology in the 1990s. Since the turn of the millennium, many contributions deal with primarily molecular research on biodiversity and phylogeny. Although Wilhelm FOISSNER will always remain a classical alpha taxonomist, i.e. a “species describer”, as he portrays himself, he takes advantage of the novel, molecular tools to complement his taxonomic research. This he achieves in cooperation with colleagues from Canada, USA, China, Taiwan, The Netherlands, Germany, Saudi Arabia, and, most recently, Jamaica. Similarly, he is open to cooperate with ecologists and provided generously his taxonomic expertise for many ecological case studies. These joint efforts are clearly reflected in his recent publications and contributions to the DGP meetings. Considering his occurrence, Wilhelm FOISSNER is a typical ‘moderate endemic’ (consult FOISSNER 2008 for an overview of the ‘Moderate endemism model’). Although solidly settled down in Salzburg, Austria, he may occasionally show up around the globe. While his location appears to be geographically restricted, his impact is certainly cosmopolitan. His immediate influence on the protozoological research in Austria and Germany is obvious from the contributions to this special volume of *Denisia*. His global significance was already recognized back in 1992, when John O. CORLISS listed him among the top six protistologists worldwide. Nothing has changed in this respect since then; this is evidenced by his outstanding, rapidly further increasing publication record, numerous invitations that he received for keynote presentations at international meetings, and his appointment as president of the International Society of Protistologists in 2006. The German Protozoological Society owes Wilhelm FOISSNER much more than can be touched in these short greetings. On behalf of the Society, I wish him happy birthday, and health and strength to continue his unique research for many years to come!

Reference

FOISSNER W. (2008): Protist diversity and distribution: some basic considerations. — *Biodiversity & Conservation* **17**: 235-242.

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