

Editorial

Erna AESCHT & Helmut BERGER

We have commenced as first students of Wilhelm (“Willi”) FOISSNER, few weeks apart from each other in 1980, sharing one room in the former Zoological Institute (Akademiestraße 26) of the University of Salzburg. At close range, we have experienced bright-eyed discoveries of strange species, the ups and downs of preparation, the pitfalls of morphometry and severe discussions, word by word and sentence by sentence of the first (and later) of our manuscripts. Although nearly all students of “Willi” intended to become ecologists at this time, everybody has become convinced that the knowledge of species – checked by an identification exam – and the developing of techniques are essential prerequisites for such a profession. Likewise, the force to publish results portion by portion in English before tackling the diploma or doctoral theses contributed to our becoming a clue what scientific works means.

Despite his productivity, Willi has got a fixed position as protozoologist at the Salzburg University only in 1987, that is, in his early forties, it was and is the first and singular professorship for free-living protists in Austria. So we had to take quite different occupational histories after being assistants limited in time: One of us (HB) as self-employed person in his Consulting Engineering Office for Ecology and the other (EA) became the curator of the collections of all invertebrates (except insects) at the Upper Austrian Museum in Linz. However, Willi continuously acted as mentor and friend (further factual reasons will become evident in the present issue) and therefore we decided to organise a tribute to this outstanding protistologist on the occasion of his 60th birthday.

This enterprise has rendered every assistance by the Upper Austrian federal state government, particularly Mag. Dr. Peter ASSMANN, director of the Upper Austrian Museum, and Dr. Gerhard AUBRECHT, divisional head of the Biology Centre, for assuring the finances and work schedule necessary for this Festschrift. Financial support was further provided by Dipl.-Ing. Reinhold HAIDER from the Hydrologische Untersuchungsstelle Salzburg (Austria) for whom Wilhelm FOISSNER made saprobiological investigations for many years. Many thanks to them.

Further, we are indebted to 42 authors from eight countries, namely 13 from Austria (not including us), two from Canada, three from China, 12 from Germany, one from Russia, one from Saudi Arabia, six from the United Kingdom, and four from the USA. In total we prepared 29 highly interesting contributions to the Festschrift. Most of the individual papers reflect, of course, the main and interdisciplinary topics of interest in FOISSNER’S scientific career, namely, taxonomy, nomenclature, phylogeny, and ecology. Due to the international coverage it may be apologised that most articles are written not in German, but in English. In addition, more than 200 relatives, friends and/or colleagues from 27 countries, viz. Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Italy, Korea, Mexico, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Taiwan, Turkey, United Kingdom, USA, have signed in the tabula gratulatoria documenting the prominence and popularity of Wilhelm Foissner. All of us congratulate the jubilee on his 60th birthday on August 18, 2008.

Happy Birthday, dear Professor Wilhelm FOISSNER!

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