

Editorial

On the last day of 2005, quietly, but all the same far too suddenly for our editorial board, Dr Josip Balabanić stepped down from the position of editor in chief of the first natural history museum journal in Croatia. Not long after the unification of the Zagreb natural history museums, successors to the National Museum, into one, the Croatian Natural History Museum, one of the aims of the new institution was to launch a scientific and scholarly journal in English, to be a kind of bridge between the museum with the natural history discipline in the world at large, to underpin the attempts of the Museum to push ahead with its work in science and at the same time to constitute a new opportunity for young Croatian natural historians to publish their works and to make possible exchange of publications between our Museum and other institutions at home and abroad.

Immediately before coming to the Museum to help out with the newly founded institution, Josip Balabanić had worked in the scientific section of JAZU (today the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts), being one of the few Croatian experts in the theory of evolution and the writer of scientific disquisitions and books concerning the origin and development of natural history, and a recognised expert in and translator of the works of Charles Darwin. In the dark days of the war in Croatia, in autumn 1992, with the selfless commitment of Josip Balabanić, we managed, in spite of all the financial troubles and organisational problems to issue the first number of the journal, *Natura Croatica*, which came out for the next two years twice annually, and then from 1995 in four numbers a year. From the very beginning, the editorial board established strict criteria – the main text of the paper had to be in English, with at least two reviewers' reports, one of which had to be from a recognised foreign expert, and regular publication dates. The chief editor, often without real help from the board and any major editorial advice, had to cope on his own with the problems, on the one hand of the shortage of suitable papers, and on the other of the often substandard quality of the works that did come in from junior scientists, which necessitated extra work from the editor, particularly because of the endeavours that the individual numbers of the journal should come out on time. From the first days, our journal, like other Croatian journals in this area, has been in an unsatisfying position: scientists are not motivated to send important papers to journals that are not indexed in prestigious secondary and tertiary publications, because it will not contribute to their academic promotion and even survival, while then again, only quality, along with references and with regular publication, brings the possibility of getting into the higher circle of journals that are referenced in these bases. Until 1996 when he managed to get the position of editorial secretary put onto the establishment, he did his editorial jobs related to the preparation of the text and the printing without anyone's help.

Josip Balabanić stepped down from the position of editor in chief of his own accord when he retired, somewhat disenchanted with the fluid state in the institution, at a time of re-examination of the purposes and objects of the natural history museum, complex in its organisation, which nevertheless still lies at the periphery of the city and the state, in terms of both culture and science. However, he left a well-running editorial machine, together with established and unquestioned funding from three main sources, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport; the Ministry of Culture; and the City Office for Culture, Education and Sport of the City of Zagreb. In the fourteen years in which he held the office of editor, 213 original papers were published, 26 review articles, 66 short communications, as well as 13 supplements concerning the fauna and flora of Croatia. The periodical is sent to over 260 addresses in 42 countries and 70 more addresses in Croatia, in return for which the Museum receives over 200 titles for its own specialised library. Thanks to Josip Balabanić for having put his shoulder to the wheel in the most difficult period of the journal, helped in its profiling and maintained the regularity of publication. We wish him the writing of many more books and excellent translations of works important in the area of natural history, while his links with the journal will certainly continue, since he is still a member of the editorial board.

Editor in chief
Dr. sc. Nikola Torković