

FAREWELL TO MIRJANA LEGAC – MARINE BIOLOGIST AND MUSEUM CURATOR

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INTRODUCTION

Our dear friend and colleague, Mirjana Legac, left us forever on November 3, 2018. She was born in 1929, in the picturesque village of Baška located on hilly north-eastern Krk Island. Her birthplace determined her love of the natural beauties of the sea, islands, and the north Adriatic highlands (VILIČIĆ, 2015). From the early youth she showed a keen interest in natural sciences. She was a professional marine biologist and active field researcher, with a BSc degree in biology from the University of Zagreb. She was employed in 1958 as a museum curator at the Natural History Museum Rijeka (ARKO-PIJEVAC, 2001). Her museum task was to care for various zoological collections, inventorying museum specimens and putting up museum exhibitions as well as workshops, teaching students (KOVAČIĆ, 2006; LEGAC, 2012; VILIČIĆ, 2015). From 1970 Mrs Legac was engaged in the duties of senior museum curator and from 1980 those of museum advisor. In two periods she was also an acting director of the Natural History Museum Rijeka (1963 – 1964, 1992 – 1995). She held the position of museum advisor when she retired. From 1961 she collected and worked on the malacofauna of the northern Adriatic and in 1965 she founded the Malacological Collection of the Northern Adriatic. In 2012 she published a valuable catalogue of her museum collection (LEGAC, 2012).

In this farewell only original scientific papers, reviews, and professional papers by Mrs Legac concerning the marine issues of the eastern Adriatic are

cited. Another of Mirjana's interests was adventures in the shallow Adriatic north-eastern coastal waters, skin diving, and in the inland areas, skiing, hiking and mountain climbing (LEGAC, 1974 a, b, 2018; ZAVODNIK *et al.*, 2005; HEMAR, 2018). She was an active member of the hiking, mountaineering and speleological community in Croatia from as early as 1948, when she became a member of the Platak Croatian Mountaineering Club (subsequently renamed the Rijeka Club). She participated in organizing excursions, teaching in mountaineering courses, building mountain huts; she climbed the Dolomites, Mt Triglav, Mt Vesuvius, Mt Etna, Mt Olympus, the High Tatras, the High Atlas Mountains in Africa, visited Lake Titicaca in South America (HEMAR, 2018). During the Croatian Homeland war she organized the collection of humanitarian help for refugee children.

Mrs. Legac was equally successful in her professional career, both in biology and in the museum fields. She was an esteemed expert in the shellfish and cephalopods of the Adriatic Sea fauna, with emphasis on biocoenological studies within island and channel ecosystems. In addition, one of her most interesting and complicated engagements was research into the habitat and behaviour of the decapod crustacean the Norwegian lobster (*Nephrops norvegicus*) well studied in the Adriatic a century ago (GAUSS-GARRADY, 1912; PESTA, 1918). Distribution of this species in the northern part of Croatian Adriatic area was discussed later by ALFIREVIĆ *et al.* (1969), GAMULIN-BRIDA *et al.* (1971), PÉRÈS & GAMULIN-BRIDA, 1973; ŠTEVČIĆ, 1979, 1990, 1998, and ALFIREVIĆ (1980). Special field surveys were carried out in 1967-1971 by the research vessel *Bios* of the Institute for Oceanography and Fisheries Split (Fig. 1). The task concerning benthos communities was supervised by Helena Gamulin-Brida. Besides bottom trawl collections at 6 sites, Petersen grab

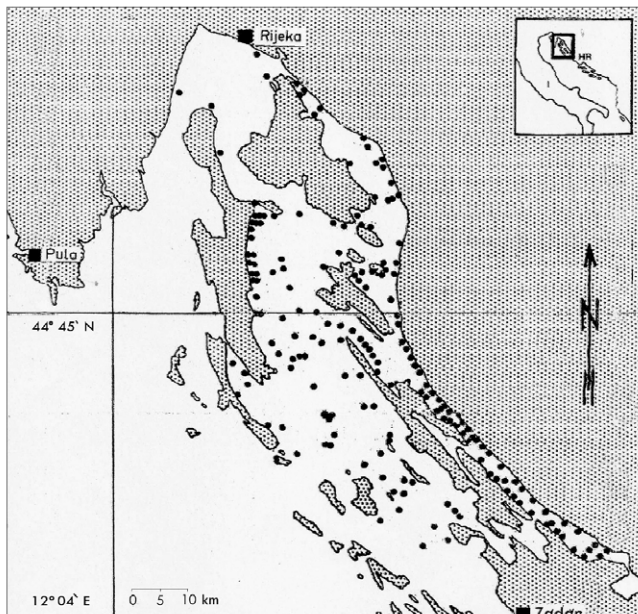


Fig. 1. Surveys for scampi or Norway lobster (*Nephrops norvegicus*) distribution in the north-eastern Adriatic Sea (1967-1971, by the RV 'Bios'). Sites of grab sampling are displayed.

0.2 m² sampling was accomplished along 73 transects at 188 stations, about 500 m apart, at 36-105 metres depth (Fig. 2) (ALFIREVIĆ, 1968; LEGAC & HRS-BRENKO, 1982; VILIČIĆ, 2015). This was an enormous task extending to the area of Novigradsko more (Novigrad Bay), not repeated in the area until present time. Meanwhile, for various reasons, apart from the bivalve molluscs, rather few accounts on grab sampling results were presented in scientific literature sources (Mollusca Polyplacophora and Scaphopoda: LEGAC, 2012 a, b; Gastropoda: LEGAC & JAKLIN, 2012; Polychaeta: BELLAN, 1976 and AMOUREUX, 1979; Crustacea Decapoda: ŠTEVČIĆ, 1979, 1990, 1998; Sipuncula (MURINA & ZAVODNIK, 1979, 1985/86); Brachiopoda: LEGAC, 2012 d; Echinodermata (ZAVODNIK, 1979).



Fig. 2. Field team engaged in marine invertebrate studies. From left to right: museum curator Mirjana Legac, Dr. sc. Dušan Zavodnik and Prof. Dr. sc. Helena Gamulin-Brida. Photographed in Novigradsko more (Novigrad Bay) on RV 'Bios', on August 31st, 1971 (author unknown).

One can consider the engagements of Mirjana Legac in biological studies of benthos on Rab Island (LEGAC, 1987) to be the groundwork for modern field research methods applied in the north Adriatic insular region. Subsequently, many localities were surveyed at Lošinj, Krk, and Pag Islands, and nearby islets and cliffs (LEGAC & ŽUTIĆ-MALOSEJA, 1980; LEGAC & LEGAC, 1989; LEGAC & MIENIS, 2010; NOVOSIĆ *et al.*, 2002; ZAVODNIK *et al.*, 2005, 2006; ZAVODNIK & LEGAC, 2017). The research results of Mirjana Legac and colleagues were classified and published as original scientific and review papers, or they were presented at professional meetings.

The scientific bibliography on marine issues by the zoological curator Mirjana Legac is presented below. Moreover, her legacy includes some incomplete manuscripts on eastern Adriatic sea fauna. We hope they will be continued shortly. As a marine biology expert, she collaborated in many radio and TV programmes. Besides many scientific and professional papers, many of which were published in *Natura Croatica*, Mirjana published numerous popular articles about marine biology and protection of nature. For her exceptional museum work in collecting, protecting, her scientific work and museum presentation in natural history, in 1991 she was awarded the Pavao Ritter Vitezović Lifetime Achievement Prize from the Croatian Museum Society.

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SUMMARY

Farewell to Mirjana Legac, marine biologist and museum curator
D. Zavodnik

Our colleague and dear friend, Mrs. Mirjana Legac, retired museum advisor of the Natural History Museum in Rijeka, left us forever on November 3, 2018. She was born in 1929, in the picturesque village Baška located on the hilly northeastern Krk Island. Her birthplace determined her love to the natural beauties of the sea, islands, and the north Adriatic highlands (VILIČIĆ, 2015). From the early youth she showed a keen interest in natural sciences. With B.Sc. degree in biology, acquired from the University of Zagreb in 1951, Mrs. Mirjana Legac was in 1958 employed as a museum curator in the Natural History Museum in Rijeka, where she worked until her retirement.

She devoted herself to a life-long study of littoral and shallow-water Adriatic ecosystems, with a special interest on shellfish and cephalopod fauna. The publications resulting from these studies are numerous and present an outstanding contribution to our knowledge on marine life in the Adriatic Sea. Research on the biology and distribution of the Norwegian lobster (*Nephrops norvegicus*) in the northern part of Croatian Adriatic are example of field work of high quality. Likewise, benthos studies in the insular region of the northeastern

Adriatic remain a model for meticulous application of field research methodology in the area surveyed. A couple of published results were reviewed in part by the index of Rijeka Bay marine fauna (ZAVODNIK & KOVAČIĆ, 2000). Engagements in shellfish research have been crowned by a monography on Rijeka Natural History Museum collections (LEGAC, 2012).

SAŽETAK

Oproštaj od Mirjane Legac, morske biologinje i muzealke D. Zavodnik

Naša kolegica i draga prijateljica gđa Mirjana Legac, umirovljena muzejska savjetnica Prirodoslovnog muzeja u Rijeci, zauvijek nas je napustila 3. studenog 2018. godine. Rođena je godine 1929. u slikovitom mjestu Baški na sjeveroistočnom dijelu brdovitog otoka Krka (VILIČIĆ, 2015). Već od ranog djetinjstva su je privlačile prirodne ljepote mora, otoka i brda njezina zavičaja. Bavila se odgonetanjem tajni prirodnih znanosti, naročito biologije. Nakon stjecanja diplome na Prirodoslovno-matematičkom fakultetu Sveučilišta u Zagrebu godine 1951. godine, zaposlila se 1958. kao kustos u riječkom Prirodoslovnom muzeju kojemu je ostala vjerna cijeloga života.

Uz redovna kustoska zaduženja, kolegica Legac se bavila proučavanjem obalnih ekosustava sjevernog Jadrana, posebno školjkaša i glavonožaca te rasprostranjenosti škampa (*Nephtys norvegicus*). Rezultate svoga rada prikazala je u brojnim znanstvenim izvornim i preglednim te stručnim raspravama. Dio rezultata prikazan je popisom morske faune Riječkog zaljeva (ZAVODNIK & KOVAČIĆ, 2000). Životna iskustva Mirjaninih istraživanja školjkaša objavljena su u monografskom izdanju Prirodoslovnog muzeja Rijeka (LEGAC, 2012).