



VLADIMIR PFEIFER

Ars Naturae Monumenta Croatica Fauna & Flora

– AN EXHIBITION OF NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY –

The Glyptothèque of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts,
Zagreb

18.12.2007 – 15.2.2008

Vladimir Pfeifer is a great lover of nature, of which he has a great and sensitive knowledge. For almost four decades he has been observing nature and using his camera to record, save from oblivion and bring it closer to the human eye. Through the whole of this period he has created a precious set of photographic documentation about nature, about the animals and plants of Croatia. The result of this dedicated creative work was his 75th solo exhibition of photographs at the Glyptothèque of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, which the author has entitled »Ars Naturae Monumenta Croatica Fauna & Flora«, the aim being to point out that nature, like art, has in our homeland created numerous examples of unrepeatable beauty. Croatian Natural History Museum was honoured to organise and set this particular exhibition to present wonderful vignettes of Croatia natural beauty to the public, not just in our country but worldwide.

Vladimir Pfeifer is one of those special people that do not just have an inherent awareness of nature but also do their best to make those who are a little less sensitive more conscious of it in a very effective and convincing way. He is a both, natural historian and master of photography – although gun master by profession – who has devoted his life to nature photography, particularly to the recording of animals in the wild. This is a task that requires a great deal of understanding of both nature and photography, great patience, and the ability to select. It is necessary to know, then, what to take, when and of course how. Some of the lovely photos that are shown here were created without any big preparations, quite spontaneously, at a moment of inspiration or fascination with landscape, plant or some unexpected encounter with animals. This is how some of the spectacular portraits were created. And yet the author made extensive preparations for most of the photographs, waiting for hours, weeks, months and even years for a given shot. All the photographs were created during the artist's eternal quest for the unique, the rare, the uncommon, the particularly lovely: he records with his camera parts of nature that are unknown to the majority, or at least hardly visible. These are scenes that we might ex-



Žumberak – Samoborsko gorje Nature Park

»Anyone who hasn't been on Lović Prekriški has not seen Croatia!«
(Davorin Trstenjak, Croatian pedagogue and writer)



Great Egret (*Casmerodius albus*)

Crna Mlaka Special Ornithological Reserve

A flock of great egrets, an almost unbelievable scene since they are a disappearing species.



Southern wood ant (*Formica rufa*)
Crna Mlaka Special Ornithological Reserve

These too are met increasingly seldom. Industrious little creatures, a mere 6 mm in length, look after their herd of aphids. The adult aphids are black, the young are green and grey.

pect in some other apparently exotic countries, and yet they are an integral part of our own Croatian nature. Photographs so taken convey the delight and sensitivity of the author to the viewers, giving them a one-of-a-kind experience.

All the shots were taken with classic cameras with interchangeable lenses. He takes landscapes with wide-angle and timid creatures with telephoto lenses, the truly tiny with a macro lens. He has a particular passion in taking the spectacular world below the surface of the water, often in dangerous and difficult situations. None of the photographs is retouched, reframed or altered in the processing. All of them are just the way the photographer saw them in nature, the way he opened the shutter. The immediacy of nature, one might say, shot in the most immediate way.



Seahorse (*Hippocampus ramulosus*)
northern Adriatic

A lovely inhabitant of the sea, this fish of unusual appearance was photographed in the shallows, at a depth of no more than a metre. It adapts to the environment in its hue, and its enemies find it hard to see.

Of the dozens of thousands of photographs that derive from his nature photography, the author has chosen approximately one hundred large format photographs for this exhibition. The subjects are plants, animals and landscapes in some, for the observer, fairly fairytale moments. Those photos very effectively introduce the observer to this bio- and landscape diversity, as they reflect author's fascination with our, Croatian nature beauty. All of the photographs were shot in Croatia and are a document and witness of the time and the condition of nature that is still here, around us, but that is vanishing in front of our eyes. From all this it can be understood, and yet it is not beside the point to mention it once again, that Vladimir Pfeifer is not just a documentary photographer, but also a great fighter for nature conservation, not just with the creative use of his camera, but with the many articles he has published.

The exhibition can be taken – should be taken – as a plea for greater care and concern for our nature. It is not seldom that we are insufficiently aware of our natural diversity, of the natural wealth of the country, and it is necessary constantly to point out that we must not allow this abundance to be destroyed or to vanish even before we understand how much we have and how much it is really worth to us. And we have to be aware that physical conservation is not enough; we have to work on a thoroughgoing change on the attitudes to nature and to the whole of the flora and fauna.

And for this reason, this author, as a man who well knows and understands nature and its inhabitants, the plants and the animals, wants with his photographs to remind the public of the importance of each individual plant, animal and landscape. His photos need almost no comment, each one being interesting in itself, but still, the author will link each one of them with some tale, some interesting feature or anecdote expressed with the subject, the composition, the angle or the identifiable authorial attitude towards the photography, his wonder at nature, his enjoyment in it, as well as his great enthusiasm and in particular his wishes to convey to all of us who are not always able to enjoy it *in situ* to the same extent something of what he can see.

Renata Brezinščak