Heinjo During’s retirement enables him to focus fully on bryology

By the end of December 2011 Heinjo During had to retire from Utrecht University, because he reached the age of 65 years. This freed him from many obligations that scientific staff at Dutch universities have, and allows him to focus fully on bryology. As a tribute to Heinjo we marked his retirement with an international symposium in Utrecht on 9 December 2011. That symposium was perhaps small in size, but it certainly was challenging in ecological content. Heinjo During is considered a world authority in bryology; in fact, as one of the key speakers on that symposium said: ‘Heinjo is absolutely one of the most well-known and influential bryologists in the world’.

But not just in bryology, also in the field of plant ecology Heinjo is an internationally renowned authority, a great name. He has a very broad and in depth knowledge stretching from floristics and phytosociology to ecophysiology, population biology and evolutionary biology. He is strong and very creative in developing plant ecological questions that can be answered by proper, intelligently devised experiments in combination with mathematical modeling. And he is always ready to share his knowledge and does this in sharply formulated and stimulating discussions, often ornamented with wit and irony. His amazing knowledge, his analytic thinking, and his wit also marked his teaching and enthused his students.

Heinjo During studied at the State University of Groningen, presenting his MSc-thesis on phytosociological and ecological aspects of the Nanocyperion in 1973, and successfully defending his PhD-thesis on ‘A taxonomical revision of the Garovaglioideae (Pterobryaceae, Musci)’ in 1977. As from then he worked at Utrecht University in the Department of Plant Ecology.

Among his many and significant contributions to the bryophytic literature, his ‘Life strategies of bryophytes: a preliminary review’ (Lindbergia 5: 2–18) certainly is most famous. Its ecological relevance, clarity, simplicity and applicability soon made this life strategy system a very widely used tool of ecologists and ranks it in the category of generally applied systems such as Raunkiaer’s life form system, Ellenberg’s ecological indicator value system and Grime’s life strategy system. Very important, though perhaps on a more regional scale, are the two moss flora’s he co-authored (of the Netherlands published in 1982 and of the Netherlands and Belgium published in 2006). Already in 1975 Heinjo joined the editorial board of Lindbergia, and from 1993 to 2003 he was its Editor-in-Chief. Upon vacating that function, a special issue of Lindbergia (volume 29) was published in 2004 to acknowledge his genuine dedication and strong and constructive effort on behalf of the journal. The issue contained an editorial comment with a selected bibliography of Heinjo’s bryo-ecological papers.

Heinjo During is a unique person, very modest but not invisible nor quiet, ironic but not bitter or sneering or cutting, helpful and stimulating and inspiring but not meddlesome, loyal and supportive but also independent. He likes to take part in intensive, analytic discussions, on a broad range of scientific or political issues, and often lards his contributions with short bursts of loud laughs to emphasize a point or mark it as an exaggeration. And he is, as already stated, a first-class and productive ecologist, and a passionate naturalist and bryologist.

It is our pleasure to publish here the four papers based on the talks presented in Utrecht on 9 December 2011 at the retirement symposium for Heinjo During. We sincerely thank the authors for presenting their stimulating talks and preparing their manuscripts. We also cordially thank the anonymous reviewers who constructively commented upon the manuscripts. And obviously, we look forward to the new contributions to ecological bryology on which Heinjo is spending now much of his time. We wish him and his lovely and supportive wife of long, Dinie, many more excellent years to go.

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