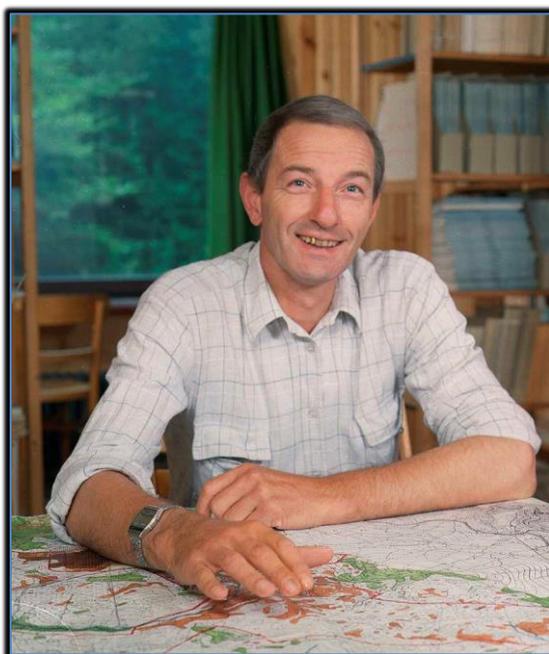


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## IN MEMORIAM

**Hon. Prof. René SCHUMACKER**  
 (28 November 1937 - 10 February 2015)



This year one of the closest collaborators of our Bryology team passed away - René Schumacker (28.11.1937-10.02.2015). However, the life of a scientist goes on through his achievements.

René Schumacher graduated in 1958 at the University of Liège (Belgium). Then, in the Department of Botany of the same university, he gradually built an exceptional teaching and research career: in 1959 became assistant, in 1967 he obtained the PhD degree, in 1969 he was promoted lecturer, in 1988 associate professor, in 1994 professor, and retired in 2003 as Professor Emeritus.

As a passionate botanist, professor Schumacker taught subjects in the various fields of Botany: *Botanical Geography* (Phytogeography), *Botany*, *Plant Ecology*, *Practical work of mycology*, *Lichenology*, *Bryology* (also as visiting professor or international lecturer), *Biochemistry and Plant Physiology*, *Chemotaxonomy of cryptogams*. His avant-garde thinking was reflected in his courses, such as *Biological data processing and simulation of biological systems on computers* (1971-1976) or *Applications of sociology and plant ecology to the perception and landscape management* (1979). He accumulated a rich experience and achieved high teaching skills by coordinating 60 BS and 9 PhD theses.

His excellent organisational skills strongly contributed to his election in different administrative positions at the University of Liège. From 1966 to 1969 he was Director *ad interim* of the Technical Organization of the Scientific Council Bureau of the Libraries (B.O.T.); between 1970 and 1976 he held the position of Director of the Documentation Unit - Department of Botany; from 1973 to 1976 he became a member of the Administration Council of the University of Liège. Most of his energy was dedicated to the Scientific Station Hautes-Fagnes, which was rebuilt and

extended between 1969 and 1996 under his directorship. Equipped with modern equipment, research labs, conference room, accommodation facilities and a rich library and bryological herbarium, the Scientific Station Hautes-Fagnes hosted more than 50,000 students, many researchers, twenty international symposia and, more than 800 courses and seminars organised by universities, secondary schools and naturalistic societies. At this scientific station was also set up an important information centre for the Walloon protected areas. The Planetary Observatory, whose director was between 1995 and 1997, was organised by René Schumacker as a system of greenhouses designed to meet phytogeographical and ecological aspects of teaching, but has been also opened to the public.

Director of or member in about 30 research projects, he focused his scientific work in the field of Bryology, contributing to the knowledge of bryophyte flora primarily in Belgium, but also in other countries like France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, the Canary Islands, Azores, Portugal, Madeira, The Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Great Britain, Romania, Algeria, the USA, Venezuela, and Canada by collaborating with young or famous researchers. Known as an outstanding specialist of liverworts, he published together with Jiri Váňa one of the best taxonomic key for the identification of the European liverworts [Schumacker R. & Váňa J., 2000. Identification Keys to the Liverworts and Hornworts of Europe and Macaronesia. (Distribution and Status). 2nd revised edition. Sorus, Poznan. 209 pp.].

René Schumacker was the scientific secretary of the "Workgroup for mapping bryophytes in Europe" (founded in 1980), member in the Organization for the Phyto-Taxonomic Investigation of the Mediterranean Area (OPTIMA) - Commission for Bryophytes, and the Vice-President of the European Committee for the Conservation of European Bryophytes.

Professor René Schumacker's scientific achievements are significant. He was the author of more than 235 original papers, 9 books and two films. The international acknowledgement of his scientific skills was proven by various honorary memberships in the editorial boards of several international journals: Documents floristiques (Amiens), Documents phytosociologiques (Lille/Camerino), Braun-Blanquetia (Lille/Camerino), Lejeunie (Liège) and Botanical Contributions (Cluj-Napoca). He was also an active member in 21 scientific societies from Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Switzerland and UK.

It is difficult to assess whether he was more a bryologist or an ardent promoter of nature conservation, but he certainly worked in both directions with passion and determination. René Schumacker was definitely one of the personalities involved in the conservation of the natural heritage of the Walloon region. His actions aiming the nature conservation used a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach embodied in the region of Wallonia, but also consisted in interventions on local administrations or at the governmental level, development of management plans of protected areas in Wallonia, and popularising the natural heritage. Therefore, he was elected member in the Management Council of the national nature reserve of the Hautes Fagnes in 1972 and of the reserve of Holzwarche (RNOB), member in the Scientific Council of the Open-air Museum Sart-Tilman (in 1972), member in the Management Council of the Natural Park Hautes Fagnes/Eifel, and representative of the Superior Conservation Council of the Walloon Region (from 1986 until 1996).

In 1980, René Schumacker was awarded the Emile Laurent Prize by the Royal Academy of Science, Letters and Fine Arts of Belgium for all his scientific work carried out in the Hautes-Fagnes Natural Park.

The collaboration with Babeş-Bolyai University began in 1995, when he accepted the invitation addressed by Prof. Vasile Cristea to supervise my doctoral thesis in a co-tutoring system. From the stage of field work, passing through laborious taxonomic identification, to bryophyte community description, I had a real and competent support for which I have been deeply grateful to him. René, as he modestly wanted to be addressed, will always remain in our memory not only as a prestigious scientist, but also as a spiritual and devoted friend. Rest in peace!