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## SCIENTIFIC LIFE AND WORK OF NARCIS MRŠIČ (1951-1997)

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### ABSTRACT

*The scientific work of Narcis Mršič consists of a number of topics. He made a revolutionary scientific revision of lumbricids. He improved very much the knowledge of zoogeography and taxonomy of lumbricids and diplopods, describing altogether 98 new taxa (12 subspecies, 66 species, 6 subgenera, 11 genera, 2 subfamilies and 1 family), 6 of them in co-authorship. He was firmly convinced that Slovenia should be treated as an important biotic park of Europe. This year we can only spiritually celebrate with him his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday anniversary.*

**Key words:** Narcis Mršič, scientific work, biodiversity, anniversary

## VITA E LAVORO SCIENTIFICO DI NARCIS MRŠIČ (1951-1997)

### SINTESI

*Il lavoro scientifico di Narcis Mršič comprende diversi argomenti. Egli portò a termine una rivoluzionaria revisione scientifica dei lumbricidi e arricchì le nostre conoscenze nel campo della zoogeografia e della tassonomia di lumbricidi e diplopodi, descrivendo 98 nuovi taxa (12 sottospecie, 66 specie, 6 sottogeneri, 11 generi, 2 sottofamiglie e 1 famiglia), 6 dei quali con altri autori. Mršič era fermamente convinto che la Slovenia dovrebbe venir considerata come un importante parco biotico dell'Europa. Quest'anno viene spiritualmente celebrato il cinquantesimo anniversario della sua nascita.*

**Parole chiave:** Narcis Mršič, lavoro scientifico, biodiversità, anniversario

## INTRODUCTION

He was born in Slovenia, his mother's country. He attended primary and grammar schools in Croatia, his father's land. Then he returned to Slovenia to study biology in Ljubljana. He graduated in 1975, and on March 3<sup>rd</sup> 1983 he was the first from his generation to defend his doctoral thesis on taxonomic, ecological and coenotic researches in earthworms (Lumbricidae, Oligochaeta) in the transections of Kranjska gora - Mt. Špik and Preddvor - Mt. Storžič.

In 1975 he was engaged, as graduate assistant, by the Jovan Hadži Institute of Biology of the Slovene Academy of Sciences and Arts. Although a zoologist at heart, he began his scientific work in the field of forestry and phytocoenology there. In 1977, he was elected assistant and when getting his PhD, he became a research associate in the Institute's zoological team. In 1994, he was the Institute's deputy director for few months. Since 1992, he was senior research fellow and leader of the Institute's research team in the major research project dealing with floristic, faunistic and vegetation research of Slovenia and adjacent regions.

## SCIENTIFIC WORK

Narcis Mršič was extremely prolific in the field of taxonomy as a scientist as well as an organiser in the first years of his scientific career. For his scientific contribution to the knowledge of Slovenia and Western Balkans' faunas he received numerous awards.

He took part in international biological excursions to Nepal (1978), New Guinea (1992), and Indonesia (1993), where he intensely collected material as well as studied the countries' ecology and biodiversity.

In 1995, he was elected assistant professor of ecology at the University of Ljubljana, giving lectures on general and animal ecology, zoogeography and ecosystems to pre- and postgraduate students.

Narcis Mršič was a member of the following international editorial boards: Atlas of European Myriapods, Catalogue of Palearctic Myriapods, Atlas des Reptiles et Amphibiens d'Europe, and reviewer for lumbricids and diplopods for *Miscellanea Zoologica*, Barcelona (since 1992); for lumbricids for *Bios*, Thessaloniki (since 1992); for lumbricids and diplopods for *Natura Croatica*, Zagreb (since 1996); and, since 1993, for The International Foundation Programmes (Soros), Washington. In the years 1989-1991, he was scientific editor in natural sciences for the *Enciklopedija Slovenije* (Encyclopaedia of Slovenia). In the last few years, he was consultant at the Ministry of Science and Technology and its coordinator of the long-term programme entitled The Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Slovene People, especially in creating an adequate programme for the preservation of biodiversity.

Taxonomically and ecologically, he was dealing with three animal groups: lumbricids, diplopods, and reptiles, while his main ecological preoccupation was dealing with edaphic organisms as a whole and pedogenetic processes. The biodiversity of Slovene territory was a kind of obsession during his last fifteen years. The fact (discovered by him) that this country is an important European biodiversity region inspired him very much indeed.

Narcis Mršič was a very productive scientist. More than 150 scientific, professional, popular, and educational papers and articles written by him constitute a great contribution to the knowledge and advancement of zoology and biology in Slovenia. He was one of our most agile biologists and science was actually his life. In this review, his bibliography is presented according to separate taxa.

## LUMBRICIDS

In 38 scientific and professional papers on lumbricids, Narcis Mršič described 46 new species, 3 subgenera, 3 genera, and additionally 3 species, 1 subgenus, and 2 genera as co-author. Individually or as co-author, he also improved 8 descriptions of taxa or changed their status. In his monograph on the earthworms of the Balkans, he analysed, the taxonomic values of setal formulas, muscle bundles types, shape and orientation of nephridial bladders, position of male pore, structure and position of calciferous glands, and typhlosoles. Using these morphological characters, he carried out a complete systematic revision of Lumbricidae.

## The lumbricid taxa described by Narcis Mršič

## Lumbricidae

*Helodrilus dinaricus* Mršič, 1991 (sp. n.) (33)

*Helodrilus ospensis* Mršič, 1991 (sp. n.) (33)

*Helodrilus vagneri* Mršič, 1991 (sp. n.) (33)

*Helodrilus slovenicus* Mršič, 1991 (sp. n.) (33)

*Cernovitovia* Omodeo, 1956, emend. Mršič & Šapkarev, 1988 (29)

*Zicsiona* Mršič et Šapkarev, 1987 (subg. n.) (25)

*Cernovitovia* (*Zicsiona*) *silicata* Mršič & Šapkarev, 1987 (sp. n.) (25)

*Italobalkaniona* Mršič & Šapkarev, 1988 (g. n.) (29)

*Italobalkaniona treskavicensis* Mršič, 1991 (sp. n.) (33)

*Serbiona* Mršič & Šapkarev, 1988 (stat. n.) (29)

*Serbiona matjasici* Mršič, 1990 (sp. n.) (31)

*Serbiona carneltutii* Mršič, 1990 (sp. n.) (31)

*Serbiona speciosa* Mršič & Šapkarev, 1987 (sp. n.) (25)

*Serbiona mayeri* Mršič, 1990 (sp. n.) (31)

- Allolobophora* Eisen, 1874, emend. Mršić & Šapkarev, 1988 (29)
- Microeophila* Omodeo, 1956, emend. Mršić & Šapkarev, 1988 (29)
- Panionia* Mršić & Šapkarev, 1988 (stat. n.) (29)
- Alpodinaridella* Mršić, 1987 (g. n.) (21)
- Alpodinaridella* Mršić, 1987 (subg. n.) (21)
- Alpodinaridella* (*Alpodinaridella*) *lozniciana* Mršić, 1987 (sp. n.) (21)
- Dinaridella* Mršić, 1987 (subg. n.) (21)
- Alpodinaridella* (*Dinaridella*) *biokovica* (Mršić, 1985) (sp. n.) (16)
- Karpatodinariona* Mršić & Šapkarev, 1988 (g. n.) (29)
- Allolobophoridella* Mršić, 1990 (stat. n.) (31)
- Apporectodea* Örley, 1885, emend. Mršić, 1991 (33)
- Apporectodea* (*Apporectodea*) *cemernicensis* Mršić, 1991 (sp. n.) (33)
- Apporectodea* (*Apporectodea*) *papukiana* Mršić, 1987 (sp. n.) (23)
- Apporectodea* (*Apporectodea*) *pannonilella* Mršić, 1987 (sp. n.) (23)
- Apporectodea* (*Apporectodea*) *kozjekensis* Mršić, 1991 (sp. n.) (33)
- Apporectodea* (*Apporectodea*) *bohiniana* Mršić, 1987 (sp. n.) (23)
- Creinella* Mršić, 1986 (subg. n.) (18)
- Apporectodea* (*Creinella*) *predalpina* (Mršić, 1986) (sp. n.) (18)
- Meroandriella* Mršić, 1987 (g. n.) (23)
- Meroandriella* *dinarica* Mršić, 1987 (sp. n.) (23)
- Octodrilus illyricus* Mršić, 1987 (sp. n.) (24)
- Octodrilus kvarnerus* Mršić, 1987 (sp. n.) (24)
- Octodrilus oesopgagus* Mršić, 1991 (sp. n.) (33)
- Octodrilus velebiticus* Mršić, 1991 (sp. n.) (33)
- Octodrilus istrianus* Mršić, 1991 (sp. n.) (33)
- Octodrilus savinensis* Mršić, 1987 (sp. n.) (24)
- Octodrilus meroandricus* Mršić, 1985 (sp. n.) (23)
- Octodrilus pseudolissaensis* Mršić, 1991 (sp. n.) (33)
- Octodrilus zirianus* Mršić, 1987 (sp. n.) (24)
- Octodrilus pseudozirianus* Mršić, 1987 (sp. n.) (33)
- Octodriloides paklonensis* Mršić, 1991 (sp. n.) (33)
- Octodriloides marinceki* Mršić, 1987 (sp. n.) (22)
- Octodriloides dinaricus* Mršić, 1991 (sp. n.) (33)
- Octodriloides zupancici* Mršić, 1991 (sp. n.) (22)
- Octodriloides bolei* Mršić, 1987 (sp. n.) (22)
- Octodriloides nazarensis* Mršić, 1991 (sp. n.) (33)
- Octodriloides bosniensis* Mršić, 1991 (sp. n.) (33)
- Fitzingeria* Zicsi, 1978, emend. Mršić, 1991 (33)
- Fitzingeria viminiana* Mršić, 1986 (sp. n.) (17)
- Dendrobaena velkovrhi* Mršić, 1988 (sp. n.) (26)
- Dendrobaena papukiana* Mršić, 1988 (sp. n.) (26)
- Dendrobaena durmitorensis* Mršić, 1988 (sp. n.) (26)
- Dendrobaena jastrebensis* Mršić & Šapkarev, 1987 (sp. n.) (25)
- Dendrobaena jahorensis* Mršić, 1991 (sp. n.) (33)
- Dendrobaena bosniaca* Mršić, 1988 (sp. n.) (26)
- Dendrobaena macedonica* Mršić, 1991 (sp. n.) (33)
- Dendrobaena vranicensis* Mršić, 1991 (sp. n.) (33)
- Dendrobaena grmecensis* Mršić, 1991 (sp. n.) (33)
- Dendrobaena montenegrina* Mršić, 1988 (sp. n.) (26)
- Dendrobaena hamzalensis* Mršić, 1991 (sp. n.) (33)
- Dendrobaena slovenica* Mršić, 1991 (sp. n.) (33)
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  6. **Mršić, N. (1982):** *Allolobophora altimontana* sp. n. (Oligochaeta, Lumbricidae) a new species in Slovenia. Biol. vestn., 30(2), 57-62.
  7. **Mršić, N. (1982):** Classification of some earthworm associations in Slovenia, worked out on the basis of the new coefficient of percentile similarity. Biol. vestn., 30(2), 63-84.
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- Kapela, Hrvatska (Croatia). Biol. vestn., 32(1), 55-69.
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## DIPLOPODS

In 26 scientific and professional papers on diplopods, Mršić dealt with faunistics and taxonomy. In his treatise on Attemsidae, he analysed male and female genitalia and made a determination key for both sexes. Besides, he substantiated the status of some taxa. He described 12 new subspecies, 17 species, 2 subgenera, 6 genera, 2 subfamilies, and 1 family (the works in print are not included).

## The diplopod taxa, described by Narcis Mršić

## Polydesmidae

- Polydesmus (Acanthotarsius) pseudoedentulus* Mršić, 1986 (sp. n.) (4)  
*Polydesmus (Basicentrus) fontius saviniense* Mršić, 1986 (ssp. n.) (4)  
*Absurdodesmus* Mršić, 1988 (subg. n.) (11)  
*Polydesmus (Absurdodesmus) jalzici* Mršić, 1988 (sp. n.) (11)  
*Polydesmus (Absurdodesmus) novaki* Mršić, 1988 (sp. n.) (11)  
*Polydesmus (Nomarchus) juergengruberi* Mršić, 1994 (sp. n.) (22)  
*Brachydesmus (Brachydesmus) liboensis* Mršić, 1988 (sp. n.) (13)  
*Brachydesmus (Brachydesmus) macedonicus* Mršić, 1988 (sp. n.) (13)  
*Brachydesmus (Brachydesmus) splitensis ragusensis* Mršić, 1988 (ssp. n.) (13)  
*Brachydesmus (Brachydesmus) herzegowinensis serbicus* Mršić, 1988 (ssp. n.) (13)  
*Brachydesmus (Brachydesmus) inferus velebiticus* Mršić, 1988 (ssp. n.) (13)  
*(Brachydesmus (Brachydesmus) calcarius* Kovačević, 1928) (redescription) (13)  
*Brachydesmus (Brachydesmus) henrikenghoffi* Mršić, 1994 (sp. n.) (22)

## Haaseidae

- Haasea (Brachybainosoma) lacusnigri intermedia* Mršić, 1985 (ssp. n.) (2)

## Craspedosomatidae

- Desultorosoma* Mršić, 1985 (subg. n.) (1)  
*Dyocerasoma (Desultorosoma) drimicum* Mršić, 1985 (sp. n.) (1)  
*Dyocerasoma (Dyocerasoma) biokovense* Mršić, 1986 (sp. n.) (3)  
*Ochogona (Ochogona) pusillum amabilitatum* Mršić, 1986 (ssp. n.) (4)  
*Ochogona (Ochogona) pusillum celjense* Mršić, 1986 (ssp. n.) (10)  
*Ochogona (Ochogona) pusillum zagrebense* Mršić, 1986 (ssp. n.) (10)  
*Craspedosoma montenegrina* Mršić, 1987 (sp. n.) (5)

## Neotractosomatidae

- Schizmohetera* Mršić, 1987 (g. n.) (6)  
*Schizmohetera sketi* Mršić, 1987 (sp. n.) (6)

## Julidae

- Orioiulus* Mršić, 1987 (subg. n.) (8)  
*Xestoiulus (Orioiulus) dalmaticus* Mršić, 1987 (sp. n.) (8)  
*Interleptoiulus* Mršić, 1988 (g. n.) (12)  
*Interleptoiulus cernagorans* Mršić, 1988 (sp. n.) (12)

## Biokoviellidae Mršić, 1992 (fam. nov.) (15)

- Biokoviella* Mršić, 1992 (g. n.) (15)  
*Biokoviella mauriesi* Mršić, 1992 (sp. n.) (15)

## Anthogonidae

- Macrochaetosomatinae Mršić, 1992 (subfam. n.) (15)  
*Macrochaetosoma troglomontanum biokovense* Mršić, 1987 (ssp. n.) (9)

## Attemsidae

- Grassografinae Mršić, 1987 (subfam. n.) (7)  
*Grassografia* Mršić, 1987 (g. n.) (7)  
*Grassografia makolensis* Mršić, 1987 (sp. n.) (7)  
*Mecogonopodium zirianus* Mršić, 1987 (sp. n.) (7)  
*Glomogonium karawankarum saviniense* Mršić, 1987 (ssp. n.) (7)  
*Glomogonium karawankarum intermedium* Mršić, 1987 (ssp. n.) (7)  
*Stiphrogonium attemsi celeae* Mršić, 1987 (ssp. n.) (7)

## Paradoxosomatidae

- Malayorthomorpha* Mršić, 1996 (g. n.) (22)  
*Malayorthomorpha siveci* Mršić, 1996 (sp. n.) (22)  
*Haplogonomorpha* Mršić, 1996 (g. n.) (22)  
*Haplogonomorpha gogalai* Mršić, 1996 (sp. n.) (22)  
*Anoplodesmus tarmani* Mršić, 1996 (sp. n.) (22)

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dediščini Slovenije, Društvo ekologov Slovenije, Ljubljana, str. 368-371.

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#### EDAPHIC ANIMALS

For his book on edaphic animals, he made about 1200 excellent drawings of animals, thus preparing one of the most exhaustive recent representations of the edaphon in Slovenia and in the world in general.

1. **Mršič, N. & T. Novak (1995):** Vzorčenje in določanje talnih živali. (Sampling and determination of soil fauna.) Zavod RS za šolstvo, Ljubljana, 109 str.
2. **Mršič, N. (1997):** Živali naših tal. Uvod v pedozoologijo - sistematika in ekologija s splošnim pregledom talnih živali. (Animals of our soils. The introduction to pedozoology - systematics and ecology with an review upon the soil animals.) Tehniška založba Slovenije, Ljubljana, 416 str.

#### BIODIVERSITY

In his works on the biodiversity of Slovene territory, he proved that its south-western parts, and the adjacent regions in Italy and Croatia, constitute a biotically very rich European region for the following reasons: biogeographical (junction of the Alpine, Central European, Sub-Pannonian, Sub-Mediterranean and Dinaric regions), geohistorical (the Adriatic tectonic plate, initially a part of Gondwana, paleoclimatic changes, etc.), geological (very diverse geological structure, extensive limestone), and consequent (e.g. pedological) ones. Among them, the past tectonic events were found out to exert significant influence upon the diversification processes and speciation of some groups, e.g. attemsiid diplopods. He gave his heart to the idea that the region should be treated as an important biotic park of Europe.

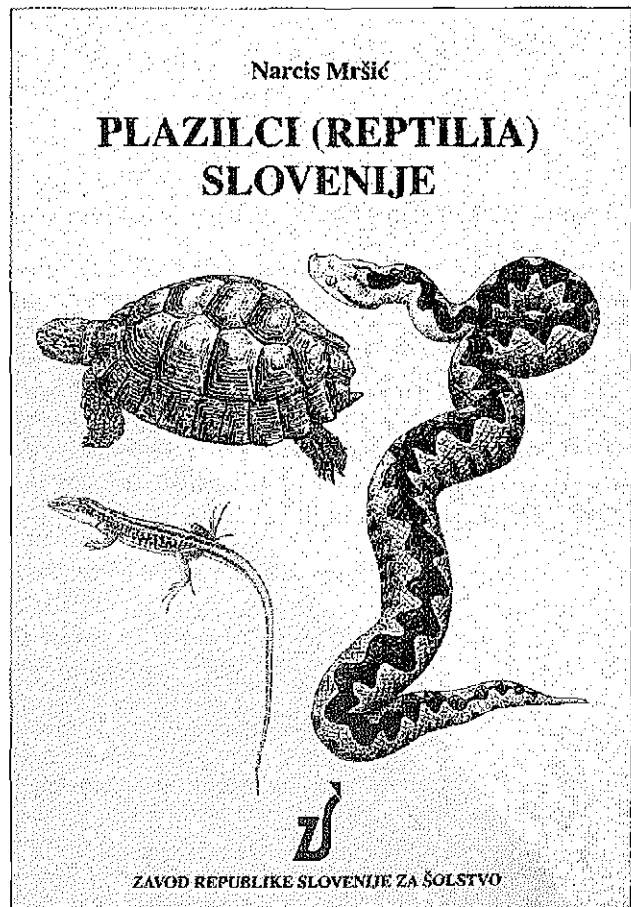
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## CONCLUSIONS

Beside the above listed works, Narcis Mršič wrote 17 unpublished expertises on lumbricids, diplopods, reptiles and biodiversity, 16 published summaries from scientific conferences, he prepared 4 contributions to the Encyclopaedia of Slovenia, 9 educational contributions, published 24 popular articles, and translated a small book from Slovene to Croatian. He was a mentor in 4 diploma works, one master- and one doctor thesis. Beside his works, he illustrated two more books. Being a perfectionist in drawing, this was not the case as far as some of his last written works are concerned (cf. Tarman, 1997). Was this due to his premonition of leaving us soon?

The scientific work of Narcis Mršič consists of a number of topics. He made a revolutionary scientific revision of lumbricids. He improved very much the

knowledge of zoogeography and taxonomy of lumbricids and diplopods, describing altogether 98 new taxa (12 subspecies, 66 species, 6 subgenera, 11 genera, 2 subfamilies and 1 family), 6 of them in co-authorship. His excellently illustrated handbook on soil fauna is a comprehensive pedozoological presentation of soil animals, revealing our scarce knowledge of many species and need for further investigations. His zeal to present Slovenia as an important European biodiversity region triggered off a national awareness upon this question and a great scientific interest of colleagues in a profound research in this respect. Indeed, many things to remember Narcis Mršič. He left us much too soon. This year we can only spiritually celebrate with him his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday anniversary. The chronological review of the bibliography of Narcis Mršič is presented on the internet: <http://www.izum.si> under the COBISS basis.

## ZNANSTVENO ŽIVLJENJE IN DELO NARCISA MRŠIČA (1951-1997)

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## POVZETEK

*Znanstveno delo Narcisa Mršiča sestoji iz različnih tem. Opravil je revolucionarno revizijo lumbricidov. V veliki meri je obogatil naše znanje, kar zadeva zoogeografijo in taksonomijo lumbricidov in diplopodov, saj je opisal kar 98 novih taksonov (12 podvrst, 66 vrst, 6 podrodov, 11 rodov, 2 poddružin, in 1 družine), 6 od teh v soavtorstvu. Njegov izvrstno ilustrirani priročnik o talni favni je vsestranska pedozoološka predstavitev talnih živali, ki pravzaprav razkriva naše skromno znanje o mnogih talnih vrstah in potrebi po novih raziskavah. Njegova velika vnema, da Slovenijo predstavi kot pomembno evropsko biodiverzitetno regijo, je sprožila nekakšno narodno ozaveščenost in veliko znanstveno zanimanje kolegov za temeljite raziskave na tem področju. Zares mnogo razlogov za spomin na Narcisa Mršiča, ki nas je zapustil veliko prezgodaj. Letos lahko z njim le v duhu praznujemo njegovo petdesetletnico.*

**Ključne besede:** Narcis Mršič, znanstveno delo, biodiverziteteta, obletnica

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