

EUGEN ȘERBAN

1932–2001



On the 25th of September 2001 the Speleological Institute “Emil Racovitza” lost one of its most distinguished researchers, Eugen Șerban. He died of leukemia, only 7 days after reaching the age of 68.

Eugen Șerban was born in Bucharest the 13th of September 1932. His father, Nicolae Șerban, was a clerk at the National Bank and his mother, Aurelia Șerban, was a housewife. Eugene had a younger brother, Nicolae who became a marine officer.

Between 1943 and 1952, Eugen Șerban studied at the “Cantemir Vodă” National College, distinguishing himself as a very good pupil, especially gifted for drawing and painting. From 1952 to 1955, he attended the courses of the Faculty of Biology at the University of Bucharest. From his first year of faculty, he was guided by Professor Radu Codreanu (member of the Romanian Academy) toward the domain of the zoology of the invertebrates and from his second year of faculty he became a member of the students’ debating society for the study of hydrobiology, led by Professor Traian Orghidan.

After finishing his studies, in the autumn of 1955, Eugen Șerban was appointed main preparator in the Faculty of Biology at the Zoological Station in Sinaia where he studied the Simuliidae, describing some new species.

In 1958, he moved to the Centre for Biological Researches of the Romanian Academy, at the Phreatobiology Laboratory led by Professor Constantin Motaş (member of the Romanian Academy).

In 1961 he joined in the Speleological Institute "Emil Racovitza", then, also, under the guidance of Professor Constantin Motaş.

As part of his activity at the Speleological Institute, Eugen Şerban explored a great number of caves, especially from the upper basin of the Cerna Valley, but his main preoccupation was the study of the subterranean aquatic crustaceans. His first aim was the Microparasellidae, describing three new species belonging to the genus *Microcharon*: *M.motasii*, *M.orghidanii*, *M.oltenicus*. Then, he studied the subterranean Amphipoda, respectively the genera *Bogidiella* and *Niphargus*.

Beginning with 1965, Eugen Şerban dedicated himself to the study of the Bathynellacea. In 1970, he defended his Ph.D. thesis, entitled "*Bathynella* (Podophallocarida, Bathynellacea)" before a commission composed of O. Boldor, deputy dean of the Faculty of Biology (president), Prof. Margareta Dumitrescu (supervisor), Prof. C.Motaş, Prof. R. Codreanu, Prof. Tr. Orghidan.

Eugen Şerban published numerous papers and described a great number of new taxa among the Bathynellacea, alone or in collaboration with: D. Dancau, N. Coineau, Cl. Delamare-Deboutville, J. Comas i Navarro, P. Leclerc, A. I. Camacho, N. Guil.

Starting with his Ph.D. thesis, Eugen Şerban argued that the Bathynellacea did not belong to the superorder Syncarida but represented an ensemble of the same level which he named Podophallocarida. In the conception of Eugen Şerban, the order Bathynellacea, respectively the superorder Podophallocarida, represents an archaic group characterized by primitive features (8 free pereionites, the presence of the furca on the telson, the constitution of the pereopods) and some original features (absence of the petasma, transformation of the VIII male pereopode into a penis). The conception of Eugen Şerban is at present even more noteworthy considering that in recent phylogenetic reconstitutions the group Syncarida (which would include Palaeocaridacea, Anaspidacea and Bathynellacea) is no longer regarded as a monophyletic group, each of the three groups representing independent phyletic lineages.

Eugen Şerban was married to Mihaela Şerban, a distinguished biologist who worked at "Apimondia", guiding the publications of this association. Mihaela Şerban, born Derlogea, descended from a family of biologists: her father, Horia Derlogea was a University Professor at the Veterinary Faculty, while her mother, Veturia Derlogea, was one of the first Romanian geneticists. Eugen and Mihaela Şerban had two children: Vlad Şerban (a hydrologist engineer) and Leonica Şerban (a biochemical researcher).

By a significant coincidence, Mihaela Şerban died in a sanatorium the same day, only a few hours before the death of Eugen Şerban.

The colleagues from the “Emile Racovitza” Institute of Speleology lost by Eugen Șerban’s disappearance, a very good friend.

One of us (A. G.) lost a generous colleague, always ready to share his vast knowledge in many domains such as biology, painting and music: in many ways, we saw in him a master and a friend.

IONEL TABACARU
ANDREI GIURGINCA

LIST OF EUGEN ȘERBAN’S SCIENTIFIC WORKS

1958. *Contribution à l'étude des Simuliidae de la République Populaire Roumaine. I. Eusimulium codreanuï nov. sp.* Arch. Inst. Pasteur Algérie. T. XXXVI, no. 2, p. 184–191.
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