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IN MEMORIAM MARGIT BABOS (1931–2009)

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The monumental research work of Margit Babos among others includes the discovery of 12 new macrofungi taxa and 9 new combinations from the current area of Hungary, mostly from the sandy areas and the sawdust depots of the country. She completed the macrofungi records of both the Hortobágy and Kiskunság National Parks, as well as the Szentendre Island, and reported at first time on the occurrence of numerous species known so far only from distant sea coast areas. She was pioneering in the study of the macrofungi that appear in sawdust depots of lumber mills. She was an internationally recognised expert of the genera *Lepiota* s. l. and *Inocybe*. She published 77 scientific and 14 popular articles, and participated in the preparation of five mycological books. She has given 31 scientific and 409 popular and educational presentations.

MARGIT BABOS (1931–2009)

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BIOGRAPHY

Born on 28th October 1931 in Budapest (as Margit Greskovits before married), she was attracted to nature from her early years. Having a gift for drawing, her parents were supportive of the idea of sending her to art school, but she was more inclined to study agriculture and eventually obtained the school-leaving certificate in an agricultural high school.

After successfully completing in April 1951 a 9-month-course of natural history collection curation, she began working in the Botanical Department of the (then) Natural History Museum, at first in the Palaeobotanical collection (with dr Klára Rásky) and then in the Algological Collection (with dr Erzsébet Kol). Later she was assigned to work with dr Gábor Bohus, as part-time associate beginning in 1954, and full-time from 1956. In this position, Margit Babos has been applying the Herpell method with great care and success, modified by Gábor Bohus, in the preparation of the rapidly decaying mushroom materials, often beginning the steps of specimen processing right in the field. During the many years to come, she processed over 20 thousand – and in most cases, thanks to her manual skill, state-of-the-art-quality – specimens. Her duties included working in the Macrofungi Laboratory, where she regularly transferred the close to 80 isolates prepared by Gábor Bohus, which now are the core of the Macrofungi Gene Bank unique to Hungary.

Working as a curatorial assistant, during the course of years Margit Babos had eventually become an expert in mycology and an acknowledged researcher in the field. To illustrate the articles written by her and Gábor Bohus, she created excellent artworks – watercolours and black ink illustrations – of the rare and newly described macrofungi. As early as in the 1960s she was regarded as one of the leading mycologists of the country; in respect of her achievements in 1976 she was appointed as museologist (a research position in the Natural History Museum). Along with her greatest helper, husband Lóránd Babos, she carried on field work on her own budget, even in their spare time and even after her retirement in 1986. These collecting trips were made mostly in Hungary, but in 7 occasions also outside the country.

Our beloved mycologist colleague, well-respected and widely known both in Hungary and abroad, had passed away on 27th December 2009. Up to the last days she continued working on her favourite subject, the macrofungi of the Szentendre Island and Alsórákos, a work that had to remain incomplete.

SCIENTIFIC ACHIEVEMENTS

The re-establishment of the macrofungi collection of the Natural History Museum (given that the previous collection had largely been damaged during World War II) is thanked to Margit Babos. This renewed and extended collection has rapidly gained recognition at European level. She made a comprehensive revision of the macrofungi of the collection, and compiled a checklist of the mushrooms of Hungary (including a new combination, *Leucopaxillus cutefractus* f. *subaerugineus* (Bohus) Babos) (BABOS 1989).

Between the years of 1954 and 1965 she made most of the fieldwork together with Gábor Bohus, covering areas of the Buda, Bükk, Zemplén, Mátra, Visegrád, and Bakony Mountains, and the environs of Szakonyfalu and Murarátka. Also, in this period of time they worked out the methodology of macrofungi coenology. In their research they also paid attention to the role and significance of macrofungi in the forest ecosystems. They concluded that species with mycorrhiza connection in deciduous forests developed on acidic soils are characterised by greater species diversity and specimen numbers (also overall volume) than those of the saprotrophic species. Discussing macrofungi coenology, Margit Babos has published 6 articles in co-authority with Gábor Bohus (BOHUS and BABOS 1960*b*, 1963, 1966, 1967, 1973, 1978), and one under her name (BABOS 1973*a*). These publications are regarded as basic works of mycology up to date.

Her greatest achievements, however, are in mycotaxonomy, with the main area of research being the generic group *Lepiota* s. l. In 1958 she has initiated a series entitled "Studies on Hungarian *Lepiota* species", with 5 articles published in *Annales historico-naturales Musei nationales hungarici*, and the rest in other noted mycological periodicals (the 6th in *Agarica*, and the 7th in *Documents Mycologiques*). On the species of *Lepiota* s. l. she wrote 9 articles (BABOS 1958*a*, 1961, 1969*a*, 1970, 1974*a*, 1979*a*, 1980*a*, 1985*a*, 1995), in one of these exclusively dealing with the greenhouse species of this generic group (BABOS 1985*a*). In 1958 she published two new combinations (*Lepiota obscura* (Locq.) Babos, *Lepiota sistrata* f. *minima* (J. E. Lange) Babos), in 1961 a new combination (*Lepiota clypeolaria* var. *metulispora* (Berk. et Broome) Babos), in 1974 a new form (*Macrolepiota excoriata* f. *barlae*), in 1980 a new species (*Leucoagaricus brunneolilacinus*) and in 1982 another new combination (*Leucoagaricus densifolius* (Gillet) Babos). One new variety (*Leucocoprinus pilatianus* var. *erubescens*) was described

(BABOS 1979*a*) and a new combination (*Leucocoprinus cepistipes* var. *rorulentus* (Panizzi) Babos) was made (BABOS 1980*a*) in the genus *Leucocoprinus*.

Margit Babos was also engaged in the genus *Inocybe*, especially those of the sandy areas where she found a number of rare and noteworthy species. In works regarding the Hortobágy and Kiskunság national parks, the Szentendre Island and the environs of Szekszárd, she reported on these findings in great detail. Although she only published two articles on species of the genus *Inocybe*, both of these contain novelties: each having the description of a macrofungus new to science. Based on records from Csévharaszt, in 1968 she communicated a report on *I. aeruginascens* (noted for its hallucinogenic poison), a character species of the cottonwood plantings of sandy areas of the Great Hungarian Plain (Alföld) (BABOS 1968*a*, 1983). Also growing in sandy areas and more rare than the previous species, *I. javorkae* was published from Bugac in co-authority with Stangl (BABOS and STANGL 1985).

During the mycological investigation of sawmills she began studying the species of *Pluteus* (BABOS 1981*a*, *c*, 1982*a*). In this genus, she published two species new to science, both of them occurring in sawdust. Of these, *P. variabilicolor* was found at Szárliget (BABOS 1978*a*), while *P. nigroviridis* at Uzsa (BABOS 1982*a*).

Of the genus *Tricholoma* she published in co-authority two new species: *T. nodulosporum* Babos et Bohus (BOHUS 1982) [with a new name *Asproinocybe nodulospora* (Babos et Bohus) Guzmán et Contu (CABI 2010)], and *T. eosinobasis* Babos, Bohus et Vasas (BABOS *et al.* 1989). In addition, she reported on the Hungarian occurrence of *T. orirubens* Quél. (BABOS 1968*c*).

Margit Babos also studied the genera *Russula* (BABOS 1987*a*, BOHUS and BABOS 1960*a*), and *Lactarius* (BABOS 1959), and analysed their distribution in Hungary in comparison with the species' wider range in Europe. Three new combinations (*Russula heterophylla* var. *vesca* (Fr.) Bohus et Babos, *Russula lutea* subsp. *roseipes* (Bres.) Bohus et Babos, *Russula pectinata* subsp. *pectinatoides* (Peck) Bohus et Babos) were made in the genus *Russula* together with Gábor Bohus (BOHUS and BABOS 1960*a*).

She liked to study genera known for their small-sized species. This area of interest is marked with the description of varieties of three species; one was found at Uzsa – *Collybia distorta* var. *amara* (BABOS 1982*a*), the second at Horány – *Coprinus micaceus* var. *mammosus* (BABOS 1976), and the third

one at Csévharaszt – *Rhodocybe popinalis* var. *hollósii* (BABOS *et al.* 1993). Furthermore, her studies included the genera *Bolbitius* (BABOS 1977), *Coprinus* (BABOS 1972*a*), *Psathyrella* (BABOS and SZŰCS 1979, BABOS 1984*a*), *Galeropsis* (BABOS 1968*d*), *Conocybe* (BABOS 1987*a*), and *Psilocybe* (BABOS 1997).

During her entire career she was searching for rare and noteworthy macrofungi. In 1963 she began publishing a 6-part series "Data to knowledge of rare Agaricales and Gasteromycetes in Hungary" (BABOS 1963, 1966, 1968*b*, 1969*b*, 1974*b*, 1975). Additional publications on rare and notable macrofungi are BABOS 1958*b*, 1968*d*, 1970, 1973*b*, 1976, 1978*b*, 1980*c*, 1981*b*, 1985*b*, 1987*a*, 1997, BOHUS and BABOS 1977, BABOS and NAGY 1969, and BABOS and SZŰCS 1979; also, on rare species found abroad she reported in BABOS 1980*b*, and BABOS *et al.* 1968, respectively. Her collection (incl. type specimens) is deposited in the Hungarian Natural History Museum, Budapest.

The species of the genus *Agaricus* were mostly studied together with Gábor Bohus. At the XIIth Cortinarius Conference she was part of the team with László Albert and Gábor Bohus presenting an account of the *Agaricus* species of Hungary (BOHUS *et al.* 1994). There is one article in which she reported on the distribution of *Agaricus bohusii* in Slovakia (BABOS 1980*b*).

Margit Babos has also investigated the macrofungi of various types of habitats within the country. While studying the macrofungi of the Hortobágy and Kiskunság national parks, as well as those of the Szentendre Island, she recognised several species whose occurrence is tied to sandy areas, and started in 1973 to write a 3-part series on this subject (BABOS 1973*b*, 1976, 1980*c*). Additionally, she also published articles on the psammophilous and halophilous species of macrofungi of Hungary, noting in these writings the "deep-rooted" feature of the stem, or the characteristic large "sand tuber" which surrounds it, a phenomenon observed especially in dry areas (BABOS 1970, BABOS 1978*b*). A separate study focused on the macrofungi occurring on the slightly acidic sandy soils and the saline grass steppes*.

* As understood today by most ecologists, these Hungarian "steppes" are of course not real steppes or forest steppes but more or less treeless areas of anthropogenic origin.

A series of exploration showed 226 species of mushrooms from the area, with the apparent dominance of the genus *Agaricus.*

Notes on several mycological records new to the country, as well as reports on occurrences of rare or noteworthy species, was also published by her. In one publication she showed that several macrofungi species, characteristic of the Turkey oak forest of the Hungarian Middle Ranges, do also appear in the remnants of "forest steppes" (BABOS 1982*b*).

Margit Babos has also showed that the same or very similar species of macrofungi known to occur in marine coastal dunes, do also appear in the Great Hungarian Plains' alkaline soils, including areas of the Kiskunság National Park. From the Kiskunság, she compiled a checklist of 559 taxa of macrofungi including 11 species new to science and 54 new to the country (BABOS 1999).

As a special and beloved occupation spanning 34 years, she kept recording the macrofungi of the calcareous sandy soils covered by the typical local subassociation *Festucetum vaginatae danubiale fumanetosum* in the proximity of the family's weekend house. This "homework" has also served as a major input in the compilation of the macrofungi of the southern Szentendre Island, finally in the form of a study, of which only the first part could be published (BABOS 2004).

By the way of the mushrooms found in sandy soils, this area of interest is tied to the activity of László Hollós who at first researched the environs of Kecskemét, and later Szekszárd (HOLLÓS 1904, 1911, 1933). Babos Margit has paid several visits to various locations around Szekszárd, and investigated the changes in the realm of macrofungi that occurred in the area in more than half a century. Additionally, she also explored the macrofungi in pastures of the broader area of Tolna County. And when preparing for the celebration of 125 years of Hollós, she has made a comprehensive revision of the collections of Hollós, also making it into a publication with an amendment of her own findings (BABOS 1984*b*).

Margit Babos did extensive work in exploring the macrofungi of sawdust depots in lumber mills. These places are excellent habitats for the warm-demanding species of macrofungi, thriving well in the higher temperatures of the deposited wood shavings and sawdust (BABOS 1981*a*, *c*, 1982*a*). She clearly documented that the warmth effect extends the fruiting period of the species, and helps developing enormous sizes and cluster-growth, not characteristic of the species under normal conditions. She showed the presence

of almost 100 species of macrofungi recorded in 17 sawdust depots of various places in Hungary (Budapest: Tahi street, Kén street, Háros; Visegrád: Lepence-völgy and Franciavágás; and other locations at Bakonyszentlászló, Csévharaszt, Dömös, Lenti, Monostorapáti, Pusztavacs, Pusztavám, Szárliget, Uzsa, Zalahaláp). Dominant species found in these locations belong to genera *Pluteus*, *Volvariella*, *Leucoagaricus* and *Bolbitius*. From sawdust depots, Margit Babos has described 2 new species of *Pluteus* (BABOS 1978*a*, 1982*a*) and 1 new variety of *Collybia distorta* (BABOS 1982*a*).

Since Hungary is known for frequently occurring years of draught, she was often forced to work in places of well-tempered areas with a relatively good water balance, and even wetlands, which support the appearance of macrofungi for investigation even in dry periods of time. For Margit Babos, one such area of research has been the bogs of the Carpathian Basin; quite often in those locations certain species develop their fruiting bodies on reed (BABOS 1979*b*, BABOS 1987*a*, ALBERT *et al.* 2004, ZÖLD-BALOGH *et al.* 2009).

The tragic loss of her two children, a sad fact she could have never make peace with, led her to frequent visits to the new public cemetery of Rákoskeresztúr (Budapest). On these occasions she also had the opportunity to sample the macrofungi found around the graves, followed by an article on the mushrooms of this major cemetery (BABOS 2007).

As the fruiting bodies of macrofungi provide substrate for many fly families, another subject matter was the study of mushroom flies. Between 1964 and 1976, along with Ágnes Dely-Draskovits, Margit Babos has bred close to 50 thousand flies from about 400 species of macrofungi. They concluded that one particular fruiting body can serve as the substrate for several species of fly, some of them being species-specific. Most fly larvae are present in September, at the end of the summer period and beginning of the autumn. Seven co-authored articles were written about the subject (DELY-DRASKOVITS and BABOS 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976*a*, *b*, *c*, 1993).

Among the great achievements of Margit Babos should be noted her research on the development and usage of the Hungarian names of macrofungi (BABOS 1987*b*), and on the commercial aspects (including marketing regulations) of mushrooms in the country (BABOS 1972*b*). She was keen on applying the most appropriate Hungarian names in her works of science dissemination, and took part in a work of recording the Hungarian

and scientific names of macrofungi (PRISZTER *et al.* 1988) and in the effort of naming the subterranean mushrooms of Hungary (HALÁSZ *et al.* 2007).

A well-known and much sought expert of the field, she made 409 popular science lectures to share her knowledge – these presentations were highly evocative and fascinating. She wrote 17 high-grade popular articles on mushrooms, two popular books (BABOS and GYURKÓ 1987, KALMÁR *et al.* 1990) and three identification books (ALBERT *et al.* 1990, BABOS 1991, BABOS and RIMÓCZI 2003); directed the mounting of two mushroom exhibitions. As the years went on she really became the master of generations of mycologists within the Carpathian Basin, as for almost 20 years she was also teaching at middle- and high-level mycology courses.

She received an impressive series of awards, including 7 certificates or diplomas from the Mycological Chapter of the National Forestry Association, from the Mycological Educational Committee, and the Mycological Study Circle of the TIT (Society for Science Dissemination), between 1967 and 1974. At the XIIth Cortinarius Congress, in 1994, she received the "Budapest Commemorative Medal". In 2008 an Achievement Award was given for her by the journal "Magyar Gombász" (Hungarian Mycologist). Two times she was awarded "Clusius Commemorative Medal" by the Hungarian Mycological Society, first on August 20, 1974, and second time on February 12, 2009. In 2004 Margit Babos was given the "Szemere László Commemorative Medal" from the First Hungarian Truffle Society. On September 10, 2005 she was appointed knight of the "Szent László Trifla" Knight Order. The last of her many awards, the "Effectrix Manus Collectiones" from the Hungarian Natural History Museum, was given to her just one month before her passing away.

List of new taxa described by Margit Babos

Collybia distorta var. *amara* Babos 1983
Coprinus micaceus var. *mammosus* Babos 1976
Inocybe aeruginascens Babos 1970
Inocybe javorkae Babos et Stangl 1985
Leucoagaricus brunneolilacinus Babos 1980
Leucocoprinus pilatianus var. *erubescens* Babos 1979
Macrolepiota excoriata f. *barlae* Babos 1974
Pluteus nigroviridis Babos 1983

Pluteus variabilicolor Babos 1978
Rhodocybe popinalis var. *hollósii* Babos 1994
Tricholoma eosinobasis Babos, Bohus et Vasas 1991
Tricholoma nodulosporum Babos et Bohus 1983

List of new combinations made by Margit Babos

Lepiota clypeolaria var. *metulispora* (Berk. et Broome) Babos 1961
Lepiota obscura (Locq.) Babos 1958
Lepiota sistrata f. *minima* (J. E. Lange) Babos 1958
Leucoagaricus densifolius (Gillet) Babos 1982
Leucocoprinus cepistipes var. *rorulentus* (Panizzi) Babos 1980
Leucopaxillus cutefractus f. *subaerugineus* (Bohus) Babos 1989
Russula heterophylla var. *vesca* (Fr.) Bohus et Babos 1960
Russula lutea subsp. *roseipes* (Bres.) Bohus et Babos 1960
Russula pectinata subsp. *pectinatoides* (Peck) Bohus et Babos 1960

List of taxa named after Margit Babos

Agaricus babosi Bohus 1990
Leucoagaricus babosiae Bon 1993

List of new taxa described by Bohus from the collections of Margit Babos

Agaricus bernardiiformis Bohus 1975 (Hortobágy)
Agaricus bisporus var. *perrubescens* Bohus 1980 (near Lake Szelidi-tó)
Agaricus campestris f. *ferruginascens* Bohus 1980 (Hortobágy)
Agaricus macrosporoides Bohus 1974 (Hortobágy)
Agaricus pseudopratensis var. *niveus* Bohus 1980 (Horány)
Cortinarius ammophiloides Bohus 1979 (Fülöpháza)
Cortinarius moserianus Bohus 1970 (Üllő)
Cortinarius paracephalixus Bohus 1976 (Horány)
Hebeloma ochroalbidum Bohus 1972 (Fót)

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