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## MEMORIES AND SCIENTISTS

# Prof. dr hab. Lucyna Elżbieta Śliwa – Lady of *Lecanora*

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## Abstract

In 2024, Professor Lucyna Śliwa celebrates her sixtieth birthday and the fortieth anniversary of her scientific career. Her achievements in lichenological research, along with her professional career and the positions she has held, ensure her a place in the history of science forever.

## Keywords

scientist's biography; lichenology; honouring

In 2024, Professor Lucyna Śliwa (Figure 1) celebrates her sixtieth birthday and the anniversary of forty years of her scientific career. These four decades of her work constitute a significant and important contribution both to Polish and the world's lichenology. Her open mind, deep and detailed insight into the existing lichenological knowledge, thorough scientific analyses, and research achievements are to grant her a place in the history of science forever.

Prof. Lucyna Śliwa (Pustelniak) was born in Rzeszów on 20 February 1964. She came to Kraków in 1982, where she began her studies at the Faculty of Biology at the Jagiellonian University. She began her scientific activity as a young student during her master's studies. During her studies, she examined the lichens of Rzeszów, as well as the impact of the urban environment on lichens. At the same time, she started her first job as a technical assistant (1986–1988) at the Institute of Botany at the Jagiellonian University. She graduated from the Faculty of Biology in 1987 and received a master's degree in biology. In 1991, she published her first paper entitled “Application of the Transplantation Method in Studies on the Influence of the Urban Environment upon the Vitality of *Hypogymnia physodes* (L.) Nyl. Thali” in the *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego*. In 1991, Lucyna was granted a one-year scholarship from the Kosciuszko Foundation in New York and completed her internship at the Plant Biology Department at the University of Minnesota, where she collaborated with Prof. Clifford M. Wetmore, a prominent world-known lichenologist. In 1992, she started work as a research assistant at the Institute of Botany at the Jagiellonian University and began her research into anthro-

pogenic changes in the biota of lichens in the Beskid Sądecki. Her doctoral thesis was supervised by Prof. Maria Olech. In 1996, Lucyna Śliwa received her doctoral title in biological sciences, and in 1998, she was awarded the Jagiellonian University Rector's Award for her doctoral dissertation. In 2001, she started her work as an assistant professor at the Institute of Botany at the Jagiellonian University. It was then that she focused her scientific interests on the taxonomy and biogeography of species of the *Lecanora* genus, e.g., the *Lecanora varia* group and the *Lecanora dispersa* group. From 2001 to 2002, she was on a post-doctoral internship in the Plant Biology Department at the University of Minnesota, where she worked on the *Lecanora dispersa* complex from North and Central America. In 2003, she began her work as an assistant professor at the W. Szafer Institute of Botany of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Kraków. Her scientific research continued to deepen the knowledge of the taxonomy and biogeography of the *Lecanora* genus species – mainly from Europe and North America. That was also the time of her collaboration with Prof. David Hawksworth. The results of her research were published in several papers, e.g., “The Typification of *Lecanora dispersa* and *L. albescens*” and “A Revision of the *Lecanora dispersa* Complex in North America”. In 2008, she received her habilitation in biological sciences, as a specialist in lichenology and taxonomy of lichenized fungi. Her laborious and detailed work on the taxonomy and typification of the genus *Lecanora*, based on molecular, morphological, and chemical evidence, has resulted in over 20 scientific papers in taxonomy. On her own, or in cooperation with other taxonomists, she has



**Figure 1** Prof. dr hab. Lucyna Elżbieta Śliwa.

described several taxa new to science, e.g. *Lecanora varia* subsp. *laxa*, *L. varia* subsp. *densa*, *L. carlottiana*, *L. juniperina*, and *L. wetmorei* – to honor her Great Master of lichens – Prof. Clifford M. Wetmore. She has also proposed several new nomenclatural combinations. Over the years of her work, she has made great contributions not only in the field of taxonomy but also to the study of lichen diversity and lichen distribution, as well as that of anthropogenic impact on biota of the Polish part of the Carpathian Mountains. Her lichenological interests and international collaborations have resulted in about 50 publications, contributing an enormous amount of new and important information on lichen biota of different areas, including the ones that had been poorly recognized lichenologically, such as Russia, Antarctica, Argentina, Bolivia, and Romania. During her scientific journey, Prof. Lucyna Śliwa has been a leader or a co-researcher of about 20 interesting research projects, including: “Taxonomy and Ecology of the Genus *Lecanora* in Antarctica” (2000–2002) financed by the State Committee for Scientific Research (KBN), “Lichen Flora of the Greatest Sonoran Desert Region” (2000–2004) financed by the National Science Foundation, “Taxonomic Differentiation of the *Lecanora dispersa* Group in North America” (2004–2006) financed by the State Committee for Scientific Research (KBN), “Molecular Patterns within the *Lecanora dispersa* Group in Poland against the Background of Morphological-Anatomical and Chemotaxonomic Variability of Individual Species” (2007–2009) financed by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, and “Biological

Diversity of Tropical South America: Bolivian Lichens – A Case Study” (2010–2013) financed by the National Centre for Research and Development (NCBiR). Implementation of research projects and cooperation with Polish and foreign scientists provides Lucyna Śliwa with satisfaction and a sense of scientific fulfillment. Her research interests are very broad and include systematic of lichenized fungi (lichens) with a special focus on the family *Lecanoraceae*, phylogeny, genetic variation and microevolution of representatives of the genus *Lecanora* s.l. on a global scale, biodiversity and chorology of lichens in the mountainous areas of Europe, South America, and North America, as well as anthropogenic transformations of lichen biota.

In 2014, Lucyna Śliwa received the title of professor conferred by the President of the Republic of Poland. In 2019, she was nominated for the post of the head of the W. Szafer Institute of Botany of the Polish Academy of Sciences, which she has held since then. Prof. Lucyna Śliwa is fully involved in the development of the Institute. She puts a lot of effort into maintaining its high position in the world of science. She has participated in the organization of numerous interesting meetings, seminars, and scientific conferences. She also leads some development projects for the Institute, such as “OZwRCIN: Open Resources in the Digital Repository of Scientific Institutes (2018–2021)” financed by the Digital Poland Operational Programme for 2014–2020 or “IMBIO: Integration and Mobilization of Data on the Biotic Diversity of Eukaryota in the Resources of Polish Scientific Institutions (2020–2022)” financed by the Digital Poland Operational Programme for 2014–2020, aimed at facilitation of access to the scientific data collected by the Institute of Botany for other scientific centers in the world. Prof. Lucyna Śliwa has participated in many foreign internships and scientific expeditions, where she collaborated with prominent lichenologists, e.g., Andre Aptroot, Ulf Arup, Damien Ertz, David Hawksworth, François Lutzoni, Chris Lewis, Thorsten Lumbsch, Jolanta Miadlikowska, Christian Printzen, Clifford M. Wetmore, and Volkmar Wirth. She is a member of the International Association for Lichenology (IAL), the Polish Botanical Society – the Lichenological Section, the American Bryological and Lichenological Society, and the Polish Mycological Society. From 2008 to 2012, she was a member of the IAL’s Nominating Committee. She has been a long-time member of the Lichenological Section of the Polish Botanical Society and has worked in its presidium. She is also a Member of the Editorial Boards of *Fragmenta Floristica et Geobotanica Polonica*, *Monographie Botanicae*, *Plant and Fungal Systematics*, and *Studia Nature*. Prof. Lucyna Śliwa promoted two young PhD scientists in lichenology, and she reviewed many doctoral and habilitation theses and written opinions during the procedure for awarding the title of professor. In 2015, Prof. Lucyna Śliwa was honored with the Golden Cross of Merit for her activities in science development.

Among lichenologists, is viewed as a person full of energy and passion and, at the same time, gentle and calm. She is always ready to help other lichenologists and offers them her invaluable advice. In 2024, to honor Prof. Lucyna Śliwa, her colleagues named a newly discovered species after her: *Wetmoreana sliwae*. As for her personal life, Lucyna Śliwa is a fulfilled and happy wife, a loving mother of a daughter and a son, and also a caring grandmother.

The central focus of Lucyna Śliwa's professional life since the beginning of her career has been the species of the *Lecanora* genus, and this passion continues to this day. Her character, personality traits, and life attitudes fully justify the infor-

mal title of "Lady", allowing her to be described as the "Lady of *Lecanora*". We wish Prof. Lucyna Śliwa to continue her research for many years to come. We wish her much further success, joy in her work, and the fulfillment of her dreams.