

In memoriam

Carmela Cortini Pedrotti (1931-2007)

Professor Carmela Cortini died on April 29, 2007, at the age of 75, after a long and progressively debilitating illness during which, up to only a few days from the end, she was fully lucid.

Born in Caltanissetta (Sicily) on October 18, 1931, she graduated from the University of Florence in Natural Sciences in 1954, Biological Sciences in 1955, and Forest Sciences in 1966. She was proud of having been the first woman in Italy to earn a degree in Forestry.

In 1962 she moved to the University of Camerino, where she became Professor of Systematic Botany and Director of the Botany Institute, later the Department of Botany and Ecology, providing notable drive for the departmental library and the botanic gardens.

In Camerino, and from Camerino, Professor Cortini succeeded in restoring the discipline of Bryology to the level of importance it had held as a great tradition in the second half of the 1800s to the first decades of the 1900s. She formed many students who now conduct their research in a variety of universities, through individual sojourns at Camerino's Department of Botany and Ecology, and through specialization courses and field trips.

In 1992 she organized and for many years coordinated the Italian Botanical Society Work Group on Bryology, with the goal of creating a stable group of bryologists engaged as individuals and collectively in promoting research on species, vegetation, and ecology.

Most of her species and chorological research in Bryology was in the Alps, central Italy, and the islands, with several monographic works dedicated to Sardinia.

In 1986 she published the *Bryological Bibliography of Italy*, a work encompassing over two centuries of bryological publication in Italy by scholars in this sector. This bibliographical work formed the foundation for the compilation of the *Check-list of the Mosses that grow in Italy* and the assessment of the current state of knowledge about the Italian bryoflora.

In over 40 years of bryological research, Professor Cortini dedicated a great number of studies to define the role of bryophytes as structural and functional component of forest ecosystems, both in terms of the capacity for autoregulation and for forest autoregeneration.

An important part of her academic career was dedicated to the realization of the *Flora of the Mosses of Italy*, a two-volume monographic work containing the analytical keys for determining genera and species, diagnoses of all the species of the Italian flora (818), with notes on ecology and distribution and tables with drawings of the morphological, anatomical, and cytological characteristics of the various species. The first volume was published in 2001, the second in 2005. *The Flora of the Mosses of Italy* represented the first work of its



kind in Italy and was among very few such works produced on the international scientific scene.

Professor Cortini is to be remembered as a master/teacher able to transmit, without hesitation or jealousies, a rigorous scientific method of inquiry into reality, into nature, according to the totality of its factors.

Michele Aleffi
*Department of Environmental Sciences, Sect. of Botany and Ecology,
Bryology Lab., University of Camerino,
Via Pontoni 5 – I-62032 Camerino (MC)*

Creu Casas (1913-2007)

Creu Casas has died aged 94 years in Bellaterra. A relentless worker both in the field and the laboratory, until just two months before her death she was working on a new catalogue of the mosses of the Pyrenees, mountains she knew and loved, and was preparing a new book on the hepatics of the Iberian Peninsula.

Describing Creu Casas' dedication to bryology, is akin to describe a large portion of the history of Spanish bryology. Although she focused her study on Catalonia, her work and influence have covered the whole peninsula.

At a time when Spanish botany was totally dedicated to phanerogamae, Creu Casas made a remarkable impact on cryptogams as part of a course she gave on bryology in 1969. It was from that course that she found her first collaborators, originating from different Spanish universities, which led to the establishment of the *Reuniones de Briología* (visits to some of the least explored areas of the peninsula) which culminated in the constitution of the *Sociedad Española de Briología* in 1989, of which she was the first president. She also instigated, along with other cryptogamists, the *Simposios de Botánica Criptogámica* that we hold biennially.

Those of us that have had the fortune to work with Creu Casas would highlight above all else the tenacity, scientific rigour and enthusiasm for bryology and all of the other fields of botany that she was able to transmit to us. Generosity and humility defined her personality. The support she gave to so many young people that were starting out in bryology is the reason we have given to so many of our European colleagues when they ask why it should be that there are so many bryologists working in Spain. All of us sought her opinion at some time or other, and she was always right.

Spanish bryology has suffered a major loss, and not just of a great researcher, but also of a great person who was always committed to conserving our biological heritage. We hope that those of us who have enjoyed the satisfaction of working with her will be able to follow the example she has set.

Montserrat Bruges & Rosa M. Cros
*Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Departament de biologia animal,
de biologia vegetal i d'ecologia, area de botànica, E-08193 Bellaterra.*

