

Third International meeting SOS *Proteus*: »Conservation of proteus and its habitat – 250 years after its scientific description« / Tretji mednarodni posvet SOS *Proteus*: »Varstvo človeške ribice in njenega habitata – 250 let po znanstvenem opisu«

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Upon the 250th anniversary of the first published scientific description of proteus, the Tular Cave Laboratory (Society for Cave Biology) organised, in partnership with Škocjan Caves Park, Slovenia, the 3rd International meeting SOS *Proteus*: »Conservation of *Proteus* and its habitat – 250 years after its scientific description«. It was held on 14. 4. 2018 at the Promotion and congress centre of Škocjanske jame Caves Park, in Matavun in Slovenia, under the honorary patronage of His Excellency the President of the Republic of Slovenia Mr. Borut Pahor.

The meeting gathered over 90 researchers and experts on proteus, speleobiology, karstology, herpetology, conservation and public outreach from Slovenia, Italy, Croatia, Hungary, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Germany, Portugal, Romania, USA, UK, China and Denmark. The meeting started with two keynote lectures: »Short history of Slovenian Karst«, held by Academician Andrej Kranjc, and »250th anniversary of the taxonomic description of *Proteus anguinus*« given by Academician Boris Sket. The program of 21 presentations was divided into six sessions: Conservation/Habitat, Conservation/Management and Health, Research Highlights and Perspectives, Education, Poster session, closing the meeting with the final session Discussions, Conclusions and Next steps. The lectures included the latest findings in the field of research and conservation of proteus and pollution of karst groundwater. The presentation part of the meeting was concluded by a short documentary showing the importance of film in promotion of awareness on vulnerability of proteus, and an educational computer game, visually exploring ecology of proteus against threats of groundwater pollution (Tular 2018).

In the closing session, participants were invited to participate in a debate related to current practices, legislation or protective measures needed or applied for the conservation of proteus along the Dinaric karst. The discussion was centred on the international cooperation among all countries hosting or researching proteus, in order to establish a better communication channel with European decision makers in research, conservation and public awareness, towards a practical protection of this endangered cave animal and its habitat.

The 3rd »SOS *Proteus*« meeting also launched its new logo, showing the black and white proteus coupled in a drop of (drinking) water (Fig. 1).



Figure 1. Participants of the 3rd International meeting SOS *Proteus*: »Conservation of proteus and its habitat – 250 years after its scientific description«, Škocjan Caves Park, Slovenia, 14. 4. 2018 (photo: Matej Blatnik).

Slika 1. Udeleženci 3. Mednarodnega posveta SOS *Proteus*: »Varstvo človeške ribice in njenega habitata – 250 let po znanstvenem opisu«, Park Škocjanske jame, Slovenija, 14. 4. 2018 (foto: Matej Blatnik).

The assembly of the meeting honoured Professor David C. Culver, American University, USA, for his outstanding contributions to the study and conservation of subterranean biodiversity, and Academician Andrej Kranjc, Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Slovenia, for his outstanding studies of Karst research history.

The submitted extended abstracts of the lectures are presented on the following pages of this issue of *Natura Sloveniae*.

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References

Tular (2018): Program of the 3rd International Meeting SOS *Proteus*: »Conservation of proteus and its habitat – 250 years after its scientific description«. Tular Cave Laboratory, Society for Cave Biology, Kranj, 4 pp. http://www.tular.si/images/Tular_docs/SOS_Proteus_2018_Program.pdf [accessed on 18.12. 2018]