

WOLFRAM DUNGER**9 OCTOBER 1929–24 JANUARY 2019**

Wolfram Dunger in 2004 at the Myriapoda in Europe Habitats and Biodiversity, St.Marienthal nr Görlitz

Prof. Dr Wolfram Dunger died on January 24, 2019 at the age of 89 in Görlitz. In his person we have lost one of our most important soil zoologists and one of the founders of this branch of science in the German-speaking world, an outstanding taxonomist, ecologist and museologist. For many years he acted as director of the State Museum (today: Senckenberg Museum) of Natural History Görlitz, an institution he initiated, managed for more than 35 years and brought to an international reputation.

Dunger studied and gained his doctorate at the University of Leipzig. For political reasons he was denied a classical academic career at the university, and instead was appointed to the small provincial museum of Görlitz on the eastern border of the GDR, where he became director in 1959. In keeping with his scientific interests, Dunger here established the soil zoology as a main topic of research, starting with the creation of curatorial areas for soil fauna (soil macrofauna/Myriapoda, ‘Apterygota’/Collembola, and soil mites (Oribatida and Gamasina)), and further consistently also

orientated the other research areas of the museum on this focus of investigation. During his tenure he successfully increased the number of museum’s scientists fivefold. As an essential prerequisite for this, Dunger succeeded in keeping the museum subordinated to the GDR's Ministry of Higher and Technical Education against severe political obstacles and, after the Peaceful Revolution, having the museum transferred into the responsibility of the State Ministry of Science and Art of the Free State of Saxony.

A substantial number of scientific projects provided the basis for the expansion of research capacity, out of which we name one here that may exemplify Dunger's holistic research approach: he and the Görlitz museum became internationally known through his worldwide unique long-term “field experiment” on the soil fauna on opencast mining sites in the post-mining landscape, a study he pursued from its beginnings for more than 50 years. The focus of this research was on the immigration and colonisation of soil organisms and the further development of their populations in interaction with the respective habitat site conditions. Altogether twelve soil organism taxon groups were included in this study, together with data from plant sociology and soil science.

Besides his research on soil zoology and ecology, Dunger also achieved worldwide recognition as an expert on the Collembola. He initiated the publication of a large-scale critical review of the current knowledge of systematics, ecology, distribution and applied ecology of all Palaearctic Collembola species so far described. These "Synopses on Palaearctic Collembola", written by top experts and including two volumes by himself, are known worldwide as "Dunger’s blue books", and present a comprehensive overview of this important soil organism group.

However, his second scientific passion was with myriapods. He was one of the first members of the Centre International de Myriapodologie when it was founded in 1968, but was, for political reasons, not allowed to attend their congresses prior to 1989. Despite such adversities he maintained an intense written exchange with many of his colleagues. In 1979 he established the soil macrofauna department at

the Görlitz museum and delegated the Myriapoda curation to the first author (K.V.). However, a large number of individual myriapodological publications and the regular inclusion of the Myriapoda in his 'general' works indicate he never lost his interest in this group of organisms.

With great interest Dunger observed the activities of the British Myriapod Group (later British Myriapod and Isopod Group) and their successful initiatives to build a large network of professional and amateur researchers. Already in 1979 he drew the attention of the first author to an article by A. D. Barber and C. P. Fairhurst (1974) on a habitat and distribution recording scheme for myriapods and other invertebrates, which he proposed to be used as a role model for her future work as curator of the Myriapoda collection. Based on the British example, Dunger intended to set up a German working group and was significantly involved in an advisory role in the founding of the Association of German-speaking Myriapodologists and its journal "Schubartiana" in 2004. He followed the work of both group and journal with interest and professional advice until the end of his life.

Dunger dedicated himself to the tasks of a museum director with the same commitment as to his research: to collection management, development of exhibitions, organisation of lecture series and educational offers for citizens as well as events within the framework of teacher training. He developed the soil zoological collections as an indispensable foundation of museum research, regarding collections not only as a taxonomic reference but as an archive for the soil and its inhabitants in space and time. He fulfilled a dream of bringing "Life in Soil" closer to an interested audience with the travelling exhibition of the same name, presented in several museums throughout Europe.

An outstanding achievement in the field of popular science deserves special mention: The Görlitz Nature Researchers Society, founded 1811, was no longer permitted in this form after the Second World War. Dunger saw the responsibility to maintain regional research, and thus started to organize regular "Symposia on Scientific Research in Upper Lusatia" at the Görlitz museum from 1961. For many years he sought to revive the old society, and on his initiative, in 1990 the Naturforschende Gesellschaft der Oberlausitz was (re-)founded, where he held the chair and, later, the honorary chair of the society.

Dunger was not only an active author with about 230 published original articles, reviews, textbook contributions and monographs, but also acted for 40 years as chief editor of the "Abhandlungen und Berichte des Naturkundemuseums Görlitz" (today "Soil Organisms"), and for almost 20 years of the "Berichte der Naturforschenden Gesellschaft der Oberlausitz". His popular scientific book "Tiere im Boden" (Animals in the soil) fascinated and inspired many prospective scientists to dedicate themselves more closely to studies of life in soil.

His former employees and colleagues admired Dunger's enthusiasm and competence as well as his strategic talent as a manager. His visionary work, his specialist knowledge and his outstanding personality have made the Görlitz Research Museum of Natural History what it is today.

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