Institut für Evolution und Ökologie
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Organismische Botanik

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Dear Pedro,

Herewith we would like to nominate Professor Dr. Franz Oberwinkler for the De Bary Medal of the International Mycological Association for outstanding career research.

Franz Oberwinkler has contributed to science for almost 50 years in various fields of fungal research. Besides his overwhelming scientific output he is a great teacher and many of his scholars have become influential mycologists as well. In the following we want to highlight some of the milestones among his scientific contributions.

First of all, Franz Oberwinkler had a major impact on our understanding of the systematics of basidiomycetes. Inspired by a deep interest in detailed morphology and anatomy of basidia and basidiocarp ontogeny and their comparative analysis his work revolutionarized basidiomycete systematics in wide parts. Early work concentrated on primitive basidiomycetes and their basidial types. Here, his results particularly emphasized the phylogenetic significance of basidial morphology. Besides on primitive basidiomycetes he worked on Corticiaceae, basidiolichens, auricularioid and tremelloid fungi, the relationships between Agaricales and Aphyllophorales and many other topics of basidiomycete evolution. He studied most of the basidiomycetous genera. A first overview was already published in 1977 based on an enormous number of personal observations and studies. The affiliation of gasteromycetous taxa to various agaricalean, boletalean and other groups is mainly based on his detailed studies in comparative anatomy. The thorough analysis of ultrastructural characters such as septal pores, spindle pole bodies and interaction structures was initiated by him and performed under his supervision for a long time, resulting in a completely new understanding of the evolution of the basal groups of basidiomycetes. The tripartite grouping within the Basidiomycota instead of the traditional bipartite grouping in Hetero- and Homobasidiomycetes was early supported by his work.

Together with his scholars, he covered Basidiomycota as a whole in countless studies. He investigated not only morphology, but included all relevant characters ranging from physiology to genetics to understand the main evolutionary trends in basidiomycetes. Thus, several updates of basidiomycete systematics have been published during his active period and our modern view on Basidiomycota is highly influenced by his work. The knowledge of heterobasidiomycetous fungi is linked to his name and numerous taxa would not have been described without his comprehensive scientific contributions to mycology.

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Besides the work on basidiomycete systematics he encouraged various major mycological endeavours such as the use of secondary metabolites for systematics, the role of yeasts in biodegradation, the use of molecular data for fungal phylogenetics, the study of the biology of mycorrhiza, the coevolution of plant parasites with their hosts and many more. He has always been very engaged in education. During his whole career he attracted excellent students and motivated them to broaden their horizon and to push the limits of knowledge in mycological research further from year to year. Numerous students passed PhD under his supervision; many of his scholars are highly influential in mycology today.

In addition to his scientific excellence he had an enormous political impact on mycology – not only in Germany but worldwide. He initiated mycological research projects at various levels. He is still representing botany and mycology in the German Science Foundation (DFG) and trying to push mycology wherever it is possible. He has been working for the international mycological community for a long time. He was participant on all International Mycological Congresses. He was president of the IMA from 1994-1998 and holds memberships of many mycological societies worldwide.

Consequently, Franz Oberwinkler is outstanding in basidiomycete systematics, and there is no doubt that he had a great influence on the development of fungal systematics during the last 50 years. In total he published more than 300 articles in journals most of which are internationally well known and highly acknowledged in the field of mycology. Therefore, we would like to nominate Professor Franz Oberwinkler for the De Bary Medal of the International Mycological Association in 2010.

We would be very glad if the International Mycological Association would consider our nomination.

Sincerely,

PD Dr. Michael Weiß

PD Dr. Robert Bauer