



### **Krystyna Wiktor**

born 11 July 1922 – died 9 February 1997

Krystyna Wiktor née Świeżawska was born in Sosnowiec on 11 July 1922. She received her school-leaving certificate from the Secondary School of Mathematics and Natural Sciences in Kraków in 1939. During the Nazi occupation she worked as a typist in a furniture factory; at the same time, however, she attended clandestine classes at the Jagiellonian University of Kraków. After the war, in 1945–1948, she studied at that same University's Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, where she was awarded her degree of Master of Philosophy in zoology and comparative anatomy. Following this, she took up employment as an assistant in the Department of Zoopsychology and Animal Ethology at the Jagiellonian University. Already in 1949 the council of that same department conferred on her the title of Doctor of Natural Sciences for her research thesis 'Distinguishing colours in the lizard *Lacerta agilis* (L.)'. In the same year she married, and together with her husband moved to Trzebież, then to Świnoujście, where she found employment in the local branch of the Sea Fisheries Institute. There she moved up the academic ladder, from assistant to lecturer, then reader. In 1964 she received her assistant professorship from the Council of the Fisheries Department of the Higher Agricultural College in Olsztyn for her dissertation 'The links between plankton production and the feeding of planktonivorous fish'. In Świnoujście she headed the Marine Biological Production Laboratory. In 1970 she was transferred from the Sea Fisheries Institute to the University of Gdańsk, where she was entrusted with the task of creating the Department of Biological Oceanography within the Faculty

of Oceanography. She headed this Department until her retirement in 1992. The Polish State Council awarded her with an associate professorship in 1981 and a full professorship in 1986.

At the University of Gdańsk she fulfilled numerous functions. She was one of the original organisers of the University's Institute of Oceanography, and from 1981 was its director for three terms of office. She was one of the creators of the curriculum of the Oceanography course there, the only one of its kind in Poland.

Prof. Krystyna Wiktor's scientific work covers over 80 papers, most of which she wrote on her own. Her scientific interests were focused mainly on questions of the biological productivity of brackish waters, such as the Szczecin and Vistula Lagoons, the Pomeranian Bay and the Gulf of Gdańsk. The result of this research, which she carried out either by herself or together with the team she led, was the creation of a model of energy flow through the trophic levels of Baltic and Polish coastal waters. These results were received with the greatest interest and widely quoted in the Polish, Swedish, French and German literature.

Because of their location and nature, coastal waters are particularly susceptible to human pressure. Thus the first signs of environmental degradation in the Szczecin Lagoon, reported by Prof. Wiktor in 1967, led her to examine the changes occurring in the environment as a result of expanding industrialisation and intensive farming methods, to seek the causes of these changes and to find means of combatting them. The results of her studies, yielding the first indications of accelerating eutrophication in Baltic waters in 1967–1968, were presented at both Polish and international conferences. Prof. Wiktor continued to develop this line of investigation after moving to the University of Gdańsk. Here she worked with a team that included undergraduates working for their M.Sc., which enabled her to broaden the scope of her research. Most of the papers published at that time were the first to contain information about the population structure, biology and bioenergetics of the most abundant invertebrate species in the Baltic.

When in the 1960s the Polish fishing industry became interested in the shelf waters off north-west Africa, she did some oceanographic and biological research there for the Sea Fisheries Institute, mostly on the ichthyoplankton of that region. This was of great practical importance, since data on the distribution of fish eggs and larvae provided information on the spawning populations exploited by the Polish fishing fleet.

The third area of research of interest to Prof. Wiktor covered polar waters, in particular the coastal waters of Spitsbergen, but she also visited the Arctowski Station in Antarctica. Her commitment to this work

manifested itself chiefly in the organisation of the research: she outlined the research programmes, laid down the field work methodology, acted as scientific consultant, and supervised Ph.D. and M.Sc. theses.

Prof. Wiktor's active participation in scientific life at home and abroad is particularly worthy of note. In recognition of her achievements she was appointed to several committees of the Polish Academy of Sciences: in 1970–1975 she was an active member of the Hydrobiological Committee, in 1975–1982 of the Ecological Committee, and most recently of the Committee on Oceanic Research and the Committee for Polar Research. An outstanding specialist in her field, she also took part in the activities of the working party on the conservation of sea- and coastal waters of the 'Man and Environment' Committee, of the working party on monitoring the Baltic Sea, and the Interministerial Commission for Researching the Seas and Oceans. She was also a long-standing member of the Polish Hydrobiological Society and the Scientific Society of Gdańsk. She was one of the organisers and chairperson of the Gdynia Society of the Friends of Science. As an expert sitting on two ICES committees based in Copenhagen, she presented to them her own investigations and those of other Polish specialists on a number of occasions. She took an active part in the symposia organised by the Baltic Marine Biologists, and in 1968–1972 and after 1983 was a member of that society's praesidium.

Throughout her career Prof. Wiktor was involved in rich and diversified teaching activities. Initially she taught students at the Jagiellonian University. After this came lectures in fisheries oceanography on courses at Świnoujście organised by the Ministry of Shipping for lieutenants in the Baltic and North Sea trade. Also at Świnoujście, at the Sea Fisheries Institute branch there, she ran summer courses for students doing biology courses at various Polish universities.

On moving to the Oceanography Faculty of the University of Gdańsk in 1970, Prof. Wiktor compiled the syllabi for the biology of marine organisms and marine ecology courses, the latter of which she continued to run until her retirement. Apart from this she held practical classes and specialist and undergraduate seminars. She supervised more than 50 M.Sc. and 10 Ph.D. theses. She also wrote reviews for publishers. She was responsible for the under- and post-graduate training of foreign students, and was requested many times to act as scientific and methodological consultant both in Poland and abroad.

With her vast knowledge of oceanography, Prof. Wiktor was widely respected as an authority in this field, one to which she was selflessly devoted. She received a number of ministerial and state awards for her scientific work.

An outstanding marine biologist, Prof. Krystyna Wiktor was a person of great stature, one of the creators of Polish oceanography. She had a compelling personality, and was full of enthusiasm and energy, right up to the end, even when she was suffering. Her small, modestly appointed room on the 4th floor of the Faculty of Biology, Geography and Oceanography of the University of Gdańsk in Gdynia was always full of books and thick with cigarette smoke. The years passed, but her room never changed. It was the last stage on her long scientific journey. There she would spend much time in discussions with her students. She was demanding, she could be a little stand-offish at times, but she was always kind. Especially her students she approached with unparalleled warmth.

Prof. Krystyna Wiktor offered her services to the University right up to the last moment. Now she is in our memories and thoughts, and will remain there always. She was laid to rest at the Communal Cemetery of Mały Kack in Gdynia.

*Marcin Pliński*