

OBITUARY

Ingimar A. Óskarsson

IN MEMORIAM

The distinguished Icelandic botanist and conchologist Ingimar Óskarsson died in Reykjavík on 2 May 1981. He was born on 27 Nov. 1892 at Klængshóll in Svarfaðardalur, Eyjafjörður district, North Iceland, the son of a farmer, Óskar Rögnvaldsson and his wife Stefania Jóhanna Jónsdóttir.

As a boy he developed an interest in natural history especially plant collection and botanical studies and this interest was further manifested while he attended the high school (Gagnfræðaskólinn) at Akureyri in 1912-1913 where the famous botanist Stefán Stefánsson (the author of the Icelandic flora) was a headmaster. In spite of good academic abilities he did not receive any further education at school; nevertheless he achieved a substantial knowledge of natural science and foreign languages by self-teaching.

In the following years he was engaged in a variety of jobs in Akureyri and Dalvík, mainly teaching in winter. With keen enthusiasm he also began systematic studies of the flora and vegetation of his home district, which were gradually extended to the more distant parts of Iceland. The results were published in different journals, often in the form of local floras. During this period he also studied the mollusc fauna of Eyjafjörður. For many years he was the only specialist in seashells in Iceland, and published the first Icelandic shell fauna (Skeldýrafána Íslands 1952/1962).

In 1943 he was nominated with two other botanists for revision of the flora by Stefán Stefánsson, the third edition of which was published in 1948. He also became familiar with garden plants and published a book on that subject in co-operation with Ingólfur Davíðsson (*Garðagróður*, 1950 and 1968). He also composed the text to the Icelandic issue of some popular books on plants and animals. (*Villiblóm í litum, Stofublóm í litum, Fiskar í litum*, 1960-1964)

Ingimar Óskarsson moved to Reykjavík in 1945 and lived there up to his death. In 1947 he became an assistant at the Fisheries Institute (*Hafrannsóknastofnun*), where his main job was the determination of the age of fishes by their otoliths. He held this employment to the age of 86, as nobody could replace him in this precise and difficult work.

From about 1950 I. Óskarsson devoted most of his spare time to studying Icelandic Hieracia, on which subject he wrote a number of articles and monographs, the most important being *Synopsis and Revision of Icelandic Hieracia* (1966). He soon became renowned as the foremost hieraciologist in the Nordic Countries after the Norwegian S.O.F. Omang, and was entrusted with material from the neighbouring countries for determination. This was his main subject of research up to his last days.

Ingimar Óskarsson was nominated fellow of the Icelandic Society of Science (*Vísindafélag Íslendinga*) in 1931, honorary member of the Natural History Society (*Náttúrufræðifélagið*) 1960 and received an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Iceland 1977. He was untiring in his efforts to arouse public interest in natural history and wrote a number of popular articles in journals and newspapers. He was also an admired reader in the Icelandic radio. He always remained the same enthusiastic naturalist as he was in his youth. A new plant or a new shell was a revelation to him. Probably he was fortunate neither to get an university degree nor to earn his living by his hobby.

Helgi Hallgrímsson

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