

IN MEMORIAM
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR JOLANTA KOSTKEVIČIENĖ (1962–2021)

On 2 August 2021, the heart of Jolanta Kostkevičienė, Associate Professor of Vilnius University, stopped beating. The life of our dear friend and colleague, who spent most of her academic life at Vilnius University, and who looked forward to life with hope and optimism, has ended.

Jolanta Kostkevičienė (Darškutė) was born in Vilnius, on 1 May 1962. After graduating from the 15th Secondary School in Vilnius, she enrolled at the Faculty of Natural Sciences of Vilnius University. She successfully graduated in 1985 as a biologist, biology and chemistry lecturer. After that, Jolanta started working at the Water Quality Research Laboratory of the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania as a senior engineer in hydrobiology. While working at the Ministry, J. Kostkevičienė researched Lithuanian water bodies' water quality and became interested in algal biology, ecology and systematics.

In 1993, as a senior assistant, J. Kostkevičienė started academic work at the Department of Botany and Genetics of the Faculty of Natural Sciences of Vilnius University. At first, Jolanta lectured a course in algology and supervised a summer field practice on algal diversity, which took place at Vilnius University Field Station in Puvočiai. Later, she taught many courses in hydrobiology, algal biology and ecology.

In 2001, J. Kostkevičienė defended her PhD dissertation “Phytoplankton of Lithuanian rivers and streams”. She summarised the research on algae from 177 Lithuanian flowing waters, presented the patterns of phytoplankton formation in rivers and compiled a comprehensive outline of phytoplankton taxa. After defending her dissertation, J. Kostkevičienė was awarded the degree of Doctor of Biomedical Sciences. In the same year, Jolanta took the lecturer position, and two years later, associate professor. Finally, in 2016, Vilnius University awarded J. Kostkevičienė the academic title of Associate Professor.



In 2007, J. Kostkevičienė published the digital textbook “Algologijos įvadas [Introduction to Algology]”, and a few years later, the book “Algologija [Algology]” (which is a comprehensive textbook on algal taxonomy, biology and ecology for university students. In her book, Jolanta provides a detailed description of algal biology and reviews algae’s biotic and abiotic environmental factors, algae’s ecological groups and the role of algae in nature. The book also addresses problems of systematics, describing both widespread and rare species of algae, presenting their biology, ecology, natural and economic significance. Jolanta Kostkevičienė’s book also presents new Lithuanian algological and limnological terms.

Jolanta Kostkevičienė was an active and insightful researcher. Her scientific activities were wide-ranging. First, Jolanta investigated formation patterns of planktonic and benthic algal assemblages in Lithuanian rivers and later delved into the biology and ecology of Lithuanian freshwater red algae (*Rhodophyta*) and slime algae (*Nostoc*), as well as into the biotechnological applications of algae. Jolanta Kostkevičienė has summarised her scientific achievements and discoveries in more than 30 scientific articles.

To further her scientific knowledge and find new research methods in algology, limnology and algal biotechnology, J. Kostkevičienė has undertaken research fellowships at Uppsala University, the United Kingdom, the Italian Institute for Ecosystem Research, the Polish Academy of Sciences. In addition, she participated in scientific expeditions in Sweden and Poland and has made presentations at international conferences in Spain, Sweden, Denmark, Latvia, the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic, Poland and Greece.

Jolanta Kostkevičienė was an excellent teacher, and once the students elected her as the best lecturer of the Faculty of Natural Sciences. From 1995 to 2018, Jolanta supervised the preparation of the final theses of 42 students. The themes of the final theses she supervised were wide and varied, ranging from general studies of the algae flora of water bodies to studies on the biology and ecology of specific algal groups to the biotechnological applications of algae.

Under the supervision of J. Kostkevičienė, PhD student Ina Špakaitė successfully defended her thesis “Morphology, ecology and phylogeny of the Lithuanian *Nostoc* and *Desmonostoc* genera of algae”. The novelty of the dissertation lies in the fact that detailed studies on the species diversity, taxonomy, biology and ecology of freshwater and terrestrial cyanobacteria of these genera have been carried out for the first time. Furthermore, the molecular methods of data analysis have been applied to the studies on taxonomy and phylogeny of these genera.

Jolanta Kostkevičienė was the founder and the President of the Lithuanian Society of Algology (1998–2021), a member of the Lithuanian Society of Hydrobiology and the International Limnological Association (1993–2005), and an expert member of the Baltic Region Red Data Book Commission.

Jolanta was a beloved colleague. She loved people and the world around her. Jolanta was a child of nature. She loved nature, especially Dzūkija. She cherished ecological values, took part in environmental clean-ups, organised ecological schools for schoolchildren. Jolanta had a passion for travelling, exploring new places and people. We remember her as subtle, elegant, creative and always smiling; she was our light, but at the same time demanding and principled, for herself and each of us. This is how we remember Jolanta, and this is how she will remain in all our minds and hearts.

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Rima Briškaitė, Ingrida Prigodina Lukošienė
Vilnius University, Life Sciences Center,
Institute of Biosciences
Saulėtekio Av. 7, 10257 Vilnius, Lithuania
E-mail: rima.briskaite@gf.vu.lt;
ingrida.prigodina@gf.vu.lt