

EMIL RACoviȚĂ

(1868 – 1947)



Emil Racoviță was a remarkable personality in Romania and worldwide, the father of Biospeleology, and the first Romanian who laid foot in Antarctica. He was born on August 10th 1868 in Iași, in a famous aristocratic family. His father was a man of law, and his mother a pianist. His primary education and college were completed in Iași, afterwards he attended the courses of the Sorbona University in Paris (first the Law School, followed by the Faculty of Sciences). After graduation (1891), he worked in oceanography at the Marine Biology Institute in Banyuls-sur-Mer (France). He presented his doctoral thesis in Sorbona, a research entitled "*Le lobe céphalique et l'encéphale des annélides polychètes*". He was a crew member (a naturalist) of the Belgic ship during the Antarctica expedition between 1897-1899. He carried out a great number of thorough observations on the flora and the fauna from Chile, and on the shores of the Magellan's strait, he studied the life of whales (he discovered the beaked whale) and of the penguins in Antarctica. He published the work „*Essai sur les problèmes biospéologiques*” in 1907, and subsequently started an international programme of the cave fauna research called "Biospeologica". Emil Racoviță returned to Romania as a professor of Sciences (University of Cluj-Napoca) in 1920. That year he founded the first institute of speleology in the world in Cluj-Napoca, and he was elected in the Romanian Academy. He explored more than 1200 caves in Europe and in Africa, he made a collection comprising more than 5000 underground animals, he published over 60 scientific papers in this domain. Emil Racoviță served in many major positions: senator (1922 -1926), rector of the Cluj-Napoca University (1929-1930), president of the Romanian Academy (1926-1929), manager of the Institute of Speleology (1920-1947). He passed away in Cluj-Napoca on November the 17th 1947.