

Charophytes (Charales) of Lake Skadar/Shkodra: Ecology and Distribution

Jelena Blaženčić¹, Lefter Kashta², Aleksandra Vesić³, Vera Biberdžić⁴ and Branka Stevanović⁵

Abstract

Charophytes or stoneworts (Charales, Characeae) are submerged green macroscopic algae of great importance for the environmental and economic sustainability of the aquatic ecosystem of Lake Skadar/Shkodra. In the course of many years of research of these algae in the Montenegrin and the Albanian part of Lake Skadar/Shkodra, 30 taxa of charophytes have been registered in the rank of species, forms and varieties. These taxa belong to the four genera of the Characeae family existing in the lake – namely, *Chara*, *Nitella*, *Tolypella* and *Nitellopsis*. The largest number of taxa belongs to the genus *Chara*, namely, 12 species, 3 forms and 2 varieties, 10 species belong to the genus *Nitella*, 2 species belong to the genus *Tolypella* and, finally, only 1 species belongs to the genus *Nitellopsis*. The ecological and phytocenological characteristics of each taxon, as well as the hydrological and geomorphological characteristics of their finding sites, are presented in order to emphasize the fact that Lake Skadar/Shkodra is one of the most significant charophyte diversity centres in the Balkan Peninsula. All the data presented in this study are based on our own field investigations, as well as herbarium and literature surveys.

Keywords

Charales Charophyte flora Distribution Ecology Lake Skadar/Shkodra

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¹ Jelena Blaženčić, Faculty of Biology, Institute of Botany and Botanical Garden „Jevremovac“, University of Belgrade, Takovska 43, Belgrade, Serbia. E-mail: jelenablazencic@gmail.com

² Lefter Kashta, Department of Biology, Faculty of Natural Sciences, University of Tirana, Bulevardi Zogu i Parë, 25/1, 1001 Tirana, Albania. E-mail: leka.kashta@yahoo.com

³ Aleksandra Vesić, Department of Chemistry, Institute of Chemistry, Technology and Metallurgy, University of Belgrade, Njegoševa 12, Belgrade, Serbia. E-mail: a.vesic@ihm.bg.ac.rs

⁴ Vera Biberdžić, Natural History Museum of Montenegro, Vojvode Bećir-bega Osmanagića 16, P.O.Box 374, Podgorica, Montenegro. E-mail: vera71@t-com.me

⁵ Branka Stevanović, Faculty of Biology, Institute of Botany and Botanical Garden „Jevremovac“, University of Belgrade, Takovska 43, Belgrade, Serbia. E-mail: bstev@bio.bg.ac.rs