

PARTICIPATION OF THE INSTITUTE OF ECOLOGY IN THE STUDIES ON THE PRODUCTIVITY OF TERRESTRIAL ECOSYSTEMS UNDER THE INTERNATIONAL BIOLOGICAL PROGRAMME

S u m m a r y

The International Biological Programme (1964–1973) was designed to draw attention to the natural environment, and dependence of humans on its resources. In face of an increasing degradation of the natural environment, spontaneous growth of human population, and rising demand for food, it was decided to develop a complex research focused on estimating the state of the biosphere.

During the 50-year period of the scientific activity of the Institute of Ecology PAS (1952–2002), the research under the International Biological Programme – IBP prompted extensive studies on the structure and function of natural systems that had been conducted already from the beginning of its foundation as the Department of Ecology PAS. Professor Kazimierz Petrusiewicz, head of the Department (since 1973 director of the Institute of Ecology PAS), a member of international scientific organizations, was a co-organizer of international structures, Polish committees of IBP, and also forms of cooperation and exchange of information (results of the studies) among them. Prof. Petrusiewicz (head of the Polish Committee of IBP), who appreciated the importance of cooperation and concentration of research efforts leading to the development of both ecological theory and issues important to human life and management, gave the highest

priority to the IBP in the Department. Even more so that the structure and function of natural systems (populations, communities, biocoenoses, ecosystems) under variable habitat conditions, being the subject of IBP, was the major issue at the Department of Ecology PAS since the beginning of its existence, and many results were already published (of the total number of 54 contributions to the first International Symposium of IBP at Jabłonna near Warsaw in 1965, 16 were prepared by scientists from the Department of Ecology).

The Polish Committee of IBP consisted of 5 Sections: Productivity of Terrestrial Ecosystems (with 5 working groups), Freshwater ecosystems, Marine Ecosystems, Productivity Processes (with 2 subsections), and Adaptability of Humans. Two major sections (Productivity of Terrestrial Ecosystems and Freshwater Ecosystems) were headed by workers of the Department of Ecology.

As a result of the IBP activity, research centres in 33 countries of the world genuinely cooperated. Of special importance was the development of a closer cooperation among scientific centres in our country; concentration of the study subjects on the productivity of natural systems, their structures and function; also the development of unified and comparable methods of the study.