



Professor Zygmunt BOCHEŃSKI (1935-2009)

Professor Zygmunt BOCHEŃSKI passed away on November 28th, 2009, at the age of 74. He was one of the most prominent palaeontologists and ornithologists in Poland.

Zygmunt BOCHEŃSKI was born on July 25th, 1935 in Zakopane, Poland to two well-known art historians who lived and worked in Kraków – Anna MISIĄG-BOCHEŃSKA and Zbigniew BOCHEŃSKI. Zygmunt was interested in natural history, in particular in birds, since his childhood.

Zygmunt's entire scientific career was spent in Kraków. He graduated with a M.Sc. degree from the Jagiellonian University in 1957, and received his Ph.D. at the same University in 1961 on the basis of a dissertation on the bird fauna of the Pieniny National Park. He obtained his further scientific degree (habilitation) in 1974 as a result of his research on the fossil birds of Poland and the publication of *The birds of the Late Quarternary of Poland*. In 1983 Zygmunt obtained Poland's top academic degree of professor.

Zygmunt BOCHEŃSKI's entire professional career was connected with our institution. For 47 years, from 1959 until his retirement in 2006, he worked at the Institute of Systematics and Evolution of Animals, Polish Academy of Sciences (the institute was formerly known under five other names). In the years 1979-1981 he was deputy director of the Institute.

Zygmunt BOCHEŃSKI was active in various fields of ornithology. He authored and co-authored more than 170 publications including more than 80 original scientific papers covering the faunistics of national parks and other interesting areas (Pieniny, Babia Góra, Ojców, Kraków-Wieluń Jurassic Ridge) as well as the breeding ecology and nest-building of various birds (Spotted Flycatcher, Black-headed Gull, Common and Black Terns, genera *Turdus*, *Sylvia* and *Acrocephalus*). Later he expanded his interests to avian palaeontology, in which field he achieved an international reputation. He co-described five new species of fossil birds – *Phasianus etuliensis*, *Pavo moldavicus*, *Otis khosatzkii* and *Otis paratetrax* with E. N. KUROCHKIN, and *Eurotrochilus noniewiczzi* with his son Zbigniew. His aforementioned 1974 monograph *The birds of the Late Quarternary of Poland*, and his 1993 *Catalogue of fossil and subfossil birds of Poland* are milestones in Polish palaeornithology and are still extensively referred to. He founded and consequently systematically developed an osteological reference collection of birds. With about 5000 specimens, it is one of the richest collections in Europe.

Professor BOCHEŃSKI supervised three PhD thesis (Włodzimierz TOMEK in 1977, Piotr PROFUS in 1986 and Michał LORENC in 2005) and eight BSc (magister) thesis (KIJOWSKA T. in 1965, KUŚNIERCZYK P. in 1965, WALIGÓRA E. in 1966, KARDASZ in 1976, KUCHNA B. In 1980, OKOŃSKA K. in 1980, KIEŚ B. in 1989, ŚLIZOWSKI J. in 1989).

From 1969 onwards Zygmunt was a member of the editorial board of *Acta zoologica cracoviensia*, and its long-term Editor-in-Chief (1985-2007). Many authors benefited from his scientific suggestions and editorial help; some valuable manuscripts would never have been published without it.

He was active in a number of scientific societies both in Poland and abroad. He co-founded the Ornithological Division of the Polish Zoological Society, and the Society of Avian Paleontology and Evolution (SAPE). His other memberships include Committee of Zoology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Committee of Quaternary Palaeogeography of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences (PAU) and British Trust for Ornithology.

For his outstanding scientific activity he was twice awarded the prize of Secretary of the Polish Academy of Sciences (1973 and 1986); he also earned one of Poland's most prestigious honours, the Knight's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta (1986).

Many people would like to achieve as much as Professor Zygmunt BOCHEŃSKI. Those who knew him personally know that he was a good-natured colleague, always ready to help. They also know that he suffered from a motoric disability, an illness that started in his childhood and progressed throughout his life – he spent the last 15 years in a wheel chair and was able to write only with one finger on a computer. Yet, he never gave up and worked until the last days on a new book *The history of Polish birds*.

Teresa TOMEK