

## BOOKS

**Jerzak L., Kavanagh B.P., Tryjanowski P.** (Eds.). – *Ptaki krukowate Polski. [Corvids of Poland.]* 2005. Bogucki Wydawnictwo Naukowe. Poznań. ISBN 83-89290-92-8. 679 pp., graphs, maps, tables. Hard cover.

A huge monograph of the corvids occurring in Poland. Eight species breed here and two others are recorded accidentally. Despite the fact that corvids are generally common and well known to people, their ecology, number and distribution changes are still not studied enough. This encouraged students working on this group of birds to organize a scientific meeting and to gather all existing knowledge of this group that was collected in Poland. Thus, we have the present state of the knowledge of Polish corvids in one book, however, containing 52 separate papers. This solution has some advantages – one can selectively read papers that cover special preferences, but as every paper has its own list of cited literature, many publications are listed several times at different pages. In such a monograph, a solution used in some of proceedings of EURING Technical Meetings – one common list of the literature cited – would fruit as a comprehensive bibliography of papers dealing with corvids. This could be a very useful part of the book.

The first paper of the book is really very “historical” as it concerns fossil corvids in Poland. Then we can find a series (7 papers) of general reviews of the knowledge of different species and this is fully understandable taking into consideration the goal of monograph – to present current state of the knowledge. The next paper and a few following ones are a total surprise for the reader – two papers dealing with parasitological problems and three others presenting physiological and chemical studies done on corvids as the objects for studying so specialized problems. In my opinion, they are clearly marginal problems for the knowledge of corvids and they should be in a supplementary chapter somewhere at the end of the monograph. And here we can face the problem of planning the structure of such a rich bulk of papers – these are arranged in not very clear, as to the idea, thematic sequence. It’s true that so differentiated papers could be arranged according to different “logics” and it is a matter of discussion which one would be the best. Nevertheless, papers should be grouped into chapters under meaningful titles, what would cause that the reader would not be forced to read all the list of contents to find the theme interesting for him. I regard this as the biggest weakness of the book construction, which, however, does not change my generally good opinion about the selection of papers presented.

As readers of “The Ring” are interested especially in two fields of knowledge – bird migration and number monitoring I will make some comments on these. The first theme is discussed in all review papers, mainly as citations from older papers of mine: the elaboration of Polish ringing recoveries of corvids published in 1963 and the analysis of European recoveries of corvids published in 1969. Only two papers

deal with contemporary ringing data: the report about the starting of the programme of colour ringing of the Jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*) (pp. 313-318) and the re-elaboration of Polish ringing recoveries of the Rook (*C. frugilegus*) (pp. 319-331). The last mentioned paper is rather surprising as to its idea – presentation of recoveries from a very limited part of breeding area of the species and lack of discussion related to the general pattern of the Rook migration in Europe that was already published. This seems to be a step back in comparison to the idea developed as early as in the 1960s that only large scale analyses of recoveries can bring something new to the knowledge of the bird migration. A limitation of the idea applied in the present analysis is clearly visible – changes in political borders after World War II resulted in the eliminating of most recoveries from the past eastern Poland and, consequently, the Apenine winter-quarter of Rooks in the northern Italy is mentioned only marginally. I doubt if Ukrainian Rooks know the change in political borders. In the analysis there was found that contemporary calculations of migration distance, based on old and new data, differ from these published earlier. According to the paper it means that the hypothesis about the migration distance presented in 1969 is wrong. Did the authors analyse whether the new recoveries are distributed differently than the old ones? And did they take into consideration that within last forty years there are observed quick changes in the migratory state of species? Some examples show that a few tens of years are enough to change the migration pattern of the species – e.g. the Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*, the Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*). So, the most interesting finding was not discussed enough.

Monitoring of the corvids population changes is a matter of several papers and it is mentioned in some others. Any student of the problem can find something interesting – there are presented both changes in the breeding populations and these illustrating dynamics of population outside the breeding season.

Summarizing, the book is a real quarry of information on Polish corvids and a source of data. It should be recommended not only for the students of this interesting group of birds but also to others, as many more general problems connected with ecology of birds in different “wild” and synanthropic habitats were touched on here. It must be added here that some of the articles are published in English and their contents is easily accessible to foreign readers, while others are accessible to a bit lesser degree, but still abstracts and explanations to figures and tables are in English.

**Przemysław Busse**

**Nowak E.** – *Wissenschaftler in turbulenten Zeiten. [Scientists in a turbulent time.]* 2005. Stock und Stein Verlags GmbH. Schwerin. ISBN 3-9337447-16-4. 432 pp., 110 photos. Hard cover, price 24.50 EUR.

The book presented here is a very special one – it is not an ornithological book: it is clearly biographical-historical one, but it concerns prominent biologists, mainly

ornithologists, who lived in the XX<sup>th</sup> century – the century of two political disasters on the World scale – two World Wars. Biographies are presented on a background of war histories and even subsequent chapters contain biographies of people grouped according to dominant relations of the person and the historical circumstances. In this context it seems to be necessary to list chapters and their contents – it is a task for people especially devoted to historical problems to read the whole book from the first to the last page. I think that most of readers will read the book selectively searching for defined people according to special personal associations, e.g. “I met this scientist years ago...”, “I read his papers and cited him...” or just “I heard about him...”. At least I did so, as a detailed study, page by page, comprised too much history for me. As a result, my comments will be selective and not complete.

The first chapter is a very special one – it is devoted to the only one person. Its title is *Professor Erwin Stresemann (1889-1972) – a famous biologist of the XX century and “the Pope of ornithologists”*. Next chapters have their titles based on the historical background and contain several biographies each, presenting various people life-histories with differentiated detailness. Chapter 2 introduces us into the darkest parts of the XX<sup>th</sup> century: *Eastern Prussia, Siberia, Auschwitz – the fates in the worst years*. The people described here are: Friedrich Tischler (1881-1945), Lew Osipowisch Belopolskij (1907-1990), Jurij Andrejewitsch Isakow (1912-1988), Veleslav Wahl (1922-1950), Władysław Rydzewski (1911-1980), Andrzej Dunajewski (1908-1944), Günter Niethammer (1908-1974), Hans Kummerlöwe (1903-1995) and Władysław Siwek (1907-1983). Three Poles, three Germans, two Russians and a Czech together. Victims of totalitarian systems and active Nazis... Chapter 3 contains people that were *Refugees, deported and prisoners*: Włodzimierz Graf Dzieduszycki (1885-1971), Ferdinand Pax (1885-1964), Kazimierz Szarski (1904-1960), Werner Klemm (1909-1990), Boris Karlowitsch Stegmann (1898-1975), Nikolaj Alexejewitsch Gladkow (1905-1975), Hong-Gu Won (1888-1970), Pyong-Oh Won (born 1929), Jean Delacour (1890-1985), Kazimierz von Granów Wodzicki (1900-1987) – another international sample of scientists whose lifes passed through hard experiences of the war-time. People mentioned in the chapter 4 *“Lived and worked in this unsafe time”*: Nikolaj Wladimirowitsch Timofejew-Ressowski (1900-1981), Hans Stubbe (1902-1989), Konrad Lorenz (1903-1989), Jan Sokołowski (1899-1982), Roman Wojtusiak (1906-1987), Bernhard Grzimek (1909-1987), Hans Christian Johansen (1897-1973), Wasilij Nikolajewitsch Skalon (1903-1976), Wolfgang Makatsch (1906-1983) and Tso-hsin Cheng (1906-1998). The hardest war-time forced clear definitions – a person who sympatised with national socialism became SS-officer in Auschwitz while those of “incorrect” nationality or ideas became prisoners or soldiers in the underground army of resistance movement. After World War II the totalitarian system still covered eastern part of Europe and there was no hope for a change in an expectable time. In this time life decisions were not so “black and white” and people who are included in the chapter 5 had to balance between isolation (sometimes in the exact meaning of this word!) and adaptation to

the political environment (the title of this chapter is *Between internal emigration and adaptation*). The biographies put here comprises lives of: Nikolaj Boew (1922-1985), Hans Schildmacher (1907-1976), Oleg Ismailowitsch Semenow-Tjan-Schanskij (1906-1990), Alexander Bogdanowitsch Kistiakowskij (1904-1983), Heinrich Dathe (1910-1991), Erich Rutschke (1926-1999), Georgij Petrowitsch Dementjew (1898-1969), Alexander Nikolajewitsch Formosow (1899-1973) and Pierre Pfeffer (born 1927). Chapter 6 has a little bit mysterious title: *A look into the past to the world of spies and into the present time*. It contains biographies of very differentiated persons who died as early as in 1912 and as late as in the 1990s: Michał Jankowski (1842-1912), Alexander Michailowitsch Jankowski (1876-1944), Jurij Michailowitsch Jankowski (1879-1956), Walerij Jurewitsch Jankowski (born 1911) – this is a real family story, Charles Vaurie (1906-1975), Walter Beick (1883-1933), Richard Meinerzhagen (1878-1967), Wilfried Przygodda (1916-1991), Salim Ali (1896-1987), Boris Michailowitsch Pawlow (1933-1994). The last regular chapter (7. *Professor Ernst Schäfer (1910-1992) – two sides of the same life, one official and one hidden*”) is once more devoted to one person only. One person, but apparently composed of two: the scientist and the Nazi serviceman.

The book is not about birds – but about people working with them. It is the book of a deep philosophical reflection on human life-histories that run through hard times that force dramatic moral decisions. And scientists, even these on top, are not free from both the heroism and vileness.

It is a pity that this book is entirely in German, that limits the palette of readers.

**Przemysław Busse**

**Wember V.** – *Die Namen der Vögel Europas*. [*Names of European birds*.] 2005. Aula-Verlag GmbH. Wiebelsheim. ISBN 3-89104-678-2. 207 pp., 181 colour photos. Paperback.

Another book of a very special character – the subtitle: *The meaning of German and scientific names* clear that despite the fact that the book contains more than 180 photos of birds, the main theme is not the birds but the words – their names. Many ornithologists, birdwatchers and lovers of birds ask frequently why the bird is called e.g. Hoopoe or Spoonbill when using vernacular names or what “*caeruleus*” or “*major*” means when the scientific name is used. The book contains very detailed explanations and any question of that type can be answered as to German and scientific names.

The book consists of three main chapters. The first one explains some general rules in German vernacular names and those for scientific nomenclature. German names are divided into these of easily identifiable origin, names following visual or vocal characters of the species and names which are not easy to explain. This subchapter contains nine pages. Much more extensive explanations are served in the

second sub-chapter which is much more detailed discussion of the scientific names. There are explained basic rules of taxonomy, creation of the scientific name, origin of words used and very interesting table with names of the most famous authors of scientific names. Such care about the completeness of the scientific name (which, according to the rules of scientific nomenclature, must contain name of the author who described the species and the year of publication) indicates that the author of the book is the professional taxonomist: modern authors of field guides and more popular books do not use authors names any more.

The main part of the book is the chapter 2 that contains a checklist of European birds and their names. This is a very detailed discussion of the meaning and origin of the bird names. This part is illustrated with many colour photos that make the book colourful and “living” – otherwise so many details would be boring for the reader. In fact, the book is rather a kind of dictionary that is intended to answer questions which are born in mind from time to time than a textbook for reading page by page. Chapter 3 – the *Appendix* is a very specialized one and dedicated to the specialists in taxonomy – several hundred of comments are practically not readable for the laymen.

Generally speaking, I am glad to have this book in my library, although I do not expect to use it frequently. However, I will recommend it to my students and bird-watchers asking me *e.g.* why the Great Tit’s scientific name is *Parus MAJOR* and not *Parus MINOR*, *etc.*

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