

INFORMATION

OBITUARY

JAN BOGUSŁAW SZCZEPSKI

The founder of the Ornithological Station in Gdańsk, Jan Bogusław Szczepski, after having lived for nearly 101 years, died on 12 November 2011 in Gdynia.

Born on 12 December 1910 in Warsaw, Jan Bogusław Szczepski spent his childhood and adolescence in Poznań, where he attended primary and secondary schools. Since his youth he had been interested in ornithology, spending a lot of time on the observation of birds' life. At the beginning of the 1930s he contacted the Bird Migration Research Station of the National Zoological Museum in Warsaw and in 1933 he became a ringer. The outbreak of World War II forced him to cease the study at the Department of Agriculture, University of Poznań, as in 1939 the Germans closed all Polish universities and higher schools. During the war he was a soldier of the underground Home Army. He took part in the Warsaw Uprising, in the squad responsible for building and repairing barricades, food supply, care for the wounded and sick and for the burials of the dead. After the war, he graduated from the Higher School of Agriculture in Poznań, ending with the degree of Engineer in Agriculture; however he was never employed in this profession.

In 1946 Jan Bogusław Szczepski became a head of the Ornithological Station, functioning as the Polish Ringing Centre. Soon after the war, the station had replaced the Bird Migration Research Station of the National Zoological Museum, which was later included into the Polish Academy of Sciences and named as the Institute of Zoology. Szczepski began his work by arranging documentation on bird ringing (which had not been burnt during the fire of the Museum building; the fire was set by the German troops after the Warsaw Uprising failure), the reconstruction of a network of ringers and the organization of ring production. These tasks were particularly demanding in the country heavily destroyed during the war. In 1948 he began field studies, which included ringing and observations of bird migration in different parts of Poland. He also studied the role of birds in the control of the Colorado Potato Beetle (*Leptinotarsa decemlineata*). Since 1949 he had been organizing ringing expeditions to the Masurian Lake District, Milicz Ponds in Lower Silesia and the forests near Puławy. At the same time he promoted bird ringing in press and radio, as well as successfully convinced the Ministry of Education to include information on ringing on the syllabuses.

In 1957, due to his initiative, the Station was transferred to the Baltic coast (region located on the main migration flyways), to a small fishing village Górkki Wschodnie on Sobieszewo Island near Gdańsk; later the village was included into this town. In 1976 he retired.

Jan Bogusław Szczepski was an author of *ca* 150 scientific and popular publications. He published mainly in Polish, promoting and developing ornithology in Poland. He took part in many national and international conferences. The Station, which he organized, was not only fundamental for the development of bird ringing and many ornithological studies in Poland, but it was also a basis for the development of international cooperation in bird ringing (*e.g.* within Euring – European Union for Bird Ringing). Nowadays the Ornithological Station, ran and developed by his successors, continues the broad-range studies on ecology of birds and still hosts the Gdańsk Ringing Centre.

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and Maria Wieloch**