

Professor Vladimír Hanák, 75

Profesor Vladimír Hanák pětasedmdesátníkem

This volume contains the papers devoted to Vladimír HANÁK, professor emeritus in Zoology at Charles University of Prague, a leading personality in Czech vertebrate zoology and one of the founding fathers of the modern study of mammals in the former Czechoslovakia and in the Czech Republic, on occasion of his 75th birthdays. Of course, it should be stressed that the senescence aspects commonly associated with that age like would not touch Vladimír in any significant extent – even in these days he continually works in field study of bats, finishes a series of voluminous papers (among other, two volumes of a complete list of bat records in the Czech Republic and detailed summaries of distributional status of all particular species), a short time ago he coauthored immense analysis of bat banding results, a monographic survey of Palaearctic bats, wrote dozens of popularising articles, a survey on history of zoology in Central Europe and, at the same time, acts as a chief expert in various institutions of Nature Conservancy and essentially contributes to supervising of various research projects including PhD and MSc theses. Indeed, it is hard to believe that a man with so excellent mind and so manifold spectrum of activities really achieved his 75.

Yet, it is the reality. Vladimír HANÁK was born on 31 March 1931 in Znojmo, a town to which he paid a considerable attention during last decades, among other with his essential role in designing the National Park Podyjí-Thayatal, where he organizes a board of experts and actively promotes a large scale multidisciplinary investigations of that region. Going back to the region of his youth and/or concentration on regional faunal summaries (like e.g. a survey of bats in UNESCO Biospheric Reserve Třeboňsko he has finished just recently) is in no way a sign of regression. Since beginning of his scientific career, HANÁK emphasized that a reliable primary record is an ultimate prerequisite to any further study and just because he ever put special attention to that point his results and scientific achievement, which much exceeded the regional scale of course, remain largely valid and invariant to extensive conceptual and methodical shifts which appeared since time of his beginnings.

Vladimír HANÁK undoubtedly ranks among the chief personalities who designed the framework on which the Mid-European mammalogy of 20th century has arisen. At the beginning of 1950s when he started with profound critical reexamination of the taxonomical and distributional status of mammals in Central Europe and the Balkans, the state of knowledge was incredibly poor and to a considerable degree patterned by numerous misinterpretations and speculative predictions not rooted in a real evidence.



HANÁK started with a critical revision of that state and despite he continuously worked in more groups of mammals and performed analyzes of mammalian communities and inter-regional comparisons of mammal fauna in a general extent, he focused, already in 1950s, together with Jiří GAISLER, his attention particularly to the group then the least known – bats. He started with large scale field studies of that group including extensive bat banding program and multidisciplinary gathering of various data on biology of particular species that was performed in cooperation with his students and colleagues of his age such as Jiří GAISLER, Karel HŮRKA, Ladislav JANSKÝ, Milan KLÍMA, Jaroslav FIGALA, Leo SIGMUND and others. Soon HANÁK designed a large scale project of detailed analyses of taxonomic and distributional status of bat species covering not only the region of central Europe but the whole Palaearctic region. He succeeded to investigate the bat collections in many prominent European institutions and came in close contacts with almost all European specialists in that group and his approach soon became a model of a well designed research effort widely respected in an international scale. Among the achievements which particularly contributed to HANÁK's international reputation were first of all his pioneer role in discovery of sibling species *Plecotus austriacus* and *Myotis brandtii*, detailed taxonomical analyses of *Myotis mystacinus* group, studies on taxonomy and distribution of several least known taxa of the Palaearctic fauna such as *Rhinolophus bocharicus*, *Eptesicus sodalis*, *Myotis longipes*,



1970s: Vladimír HANÁK among his colleagues and students during a field excursion to southern Moravia, the county of his childhood.

Hypsugo savii (and several other mostly in coauthorship with Jiří GAISLER or Ivan HORÁČEK) or the papers providing first comprehensive data on bats of Bulgaria, Libya and other regions. Unfortunately, only a smaller part of his achievements was properly published and the rest remained in state of manuscripts (such as his voluminous 1960 PhD thesis which summarized taxonomical and distributional status



2006: Vladimír HANÁK with his students (and the editors of this volume) during field studies in southern Bohemia.

of all Mid-European bat species throughout whole their ranges or a prepared monograph on the genus *Myotis*).

Nevertheless, it was not only his research effort and publications for which HANÁK became a leading personality of the post-war generation of Czech zoologists and a man who actually imprinted the development of the discipline in this country for next decades. His university teaching and the design of the vertebrate zoology program at the Charles University to which he essentially contributed present undoubtedly particularly significant part of HANÁK's achievements.

Almost all Czech zoologists of today generations are direct or indirect students of Vladimír HANÁK and perhaps all, similarly as many foreign zoologists who met HANÁK personally were deeply impressed of his charming personality. It is not easy to identify which is source of the charm similarly as it is not easy to specify what all attributed the fact which all HANÁK's students like to stress – namely, that it was just the HANÁK's role as a university teacher what became an essential imprinting factor that stimulated their further career in zoology, their view of the specific qualities of that discipline and the meaning of the scientific study in that branch. The HANÁK's lectures, the practical courses or field excursions were, of course, traditionally performed as a top of professional standard and despite of HANÁK's sense of humor and tolerance with quite strong requirements on students' comprehension. Yet, neither that was perhaps the most essential. What may have played a more significant role was probably the context in which HANÁK the specificities of the branch and the particular scientific problems he uses to expose. Quite characteristic is his vivid, unostentatious but highly qualified interest in a broad spectrum of phenomena and processes which make together the phenomenon of Nature, his deep respect to their aesthetic dimensions as well as to historical and cultural heritages which form our comprehension to them. HANÁK perceives the Nature and animals like instant source area

of aesthetic and intellectual pleasures and the science of life grows thus in his representation in an extremely attractive domain which opens a real chance to integrate an intellectual creativity with a meaningful way of life rich in aesthetic and cultural issues. Vladimír has been quite consequent in respecting such a view in his own life and particularly with that, with his way to treat the pleasures and troubles of life and with his richly human interest on life if his students he has instantly demonstrated actual relevance and qualities of that view and of the way of life indexed by it.

Moreover, HANÁK never applied techniques that nowadays are nearly obligatory prerequisite to a scientific career: conceptual opportunism, affiliation of own view of a topic to the mainstream interpretations, overexposing or overestimation of own achievements. In consequence, his publications are not excessive either in number or in impact factors of the periodical in which they appeared but without exception they bring the concise information which reliability stays without any doubt. The ultimate index of HANÁK's scientific efforts was the actual meaning of the facts and their relevance within a broad contextual background in which his studies did exposed. The respect to his own sense of meaning of particular facts and the deep meaning of the world was valued for him much more than aspects of his academic career, secular honours or public fame.

His straightforward way of presenting his opinions and deeply rooted sense of justice brought him many troubles, particularly in the period after occupation of Czechoslovakia by foreign armies in 1968. His career as well as contacts with the colleagues abroad were stopped for long years. The situation dramatically changed after the "velvet revolution" in 1989 when HANÁK was immediately appointed associate professor and elected to various academic positions in which he considerably help in transformation of the university study of biology into a vivid modern institution.

We do not wish, however, to repeat here the biographic data of Vladimír HANÁK, neither enumerate his particular research achievements nor will provide list of his publications, by the way extensively enlarged during the recent decades. The reader can find these information in the volume *Prague Studies in Mammalogy* edited on occasion of HANÁK's 60th birthdays.

Here we would like only to express, on behalf of numerous students and friends, warm thanks to Vladimír for all the gifts which he provided us and to wish him to the decades to come a good health, optimistic mind and lot of pleasure which he uses so generously to disseminate around throughout his life.

The Editors