

Tribute to prominent Czech ornithologist Karel Hudec on his 80th birthday



Associate Professor RNDr. Karel Hudec, DSc. was born at Jehnice – Mokrá Hora (now part of the city of Brno, Czech Republic) on 18 November 1927 to Karel and Anna Hudec. His father was a teacher, and later he was appointed headmaster of elementary school. During World War I, he was a member of the Czechoslovak Legion in Russia which fought against Austria-Hungary. When World War II broke out, the family suffered greatly as both father and son were persecuted by the Nazis. While Karel was studying at high school, his father was arrested by the Gestapo and executed in Mauthausen concentration camp shortly before the end of the war, and Karel's studies were interrupted in 1944–45 when he was called up to do forced labor for the Nazi Technische Nothilfe. After the war he started studying at the Faculty of Science at Masaryk University, Brno, where he majored in biology and geography, and graduated in 1950. As he qualified as a teacher, he took his first job at primary school in Bohumín. From 1952 through 1954 he did compulsory military service, and after that he taught at high school in Ostrava for a short time. In 1955, he joined the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences as a research

scientist in the Laboratory of Vertebrate Zoology, Brno, which was later reorganized and renamed several times (Institute of Vertebrate Zoology, Institute of Systematic and Ecological Biology, Institute of Landscape Ecology, Institute of Vertebrate Biology), and he worked for this institution until he retired in 1991. He held various positions; for 12 years he was the head of the Department of Ornithology (1958–1970), and he was also appointed deputy director (1968–1970). When he retired he started lecturing on ornithology and zoogeography in the Department of Zoology and Ecology at the Faculty of Science, Masaryk University, Brno, where he also taught in 1968–1970. In 1996, he became head of the newly established Laboratory of Ornithology at the Faculty of Science, Palacký University, Olomouc. In 1959 he completed his PhD, in 1990 he received his DSc. degree and a year later he became associate professor of zoology at the Faculty of Science, Masaryk University, Brno.

He has dedicated all his life to ornithological research and most of it was focused on ecology of birds. He took an early interest in science, which resulted in his first publication in 1946. As a member of various research teams he concentrated his investigations into myophagous birds, carried out detailed research on common starling, and, above all, waterfowl and its environment influenced by landscape planning and water management measures in southern Moravia. In 1970 he started research into birds associated with human habitation. Furthermore, he collaborated on projects within the International Biological Program, conducted research into the transfer of pathogenic agents and botulism, carried out geoecological analyses in southern Moravia and the city of Brno, and worked on a project financed by the World Wildlife Fund. He is an author or coauthor of 114 scientific papers, 542 magazine articles and 29 books, and he translated four books from German. Moreover, he provided basic data on status, distribution and populations for species occurring in Czechoslovakia and later the Czech Republic, which were used in important ornithological monographs, e. g. *Fauna of Czechoslovakia – Birds* and *Fauna of the Czech Republic – Birds* published in several volumes and editions, *Handbuch der Vögel*

Mitteleuropas, Birds of the Western Palearctic, and Birds of the Western Palearctic – Concise Edition. His scientific concern lay at the research into Greylag Goose, and he also participated in coordination of international activities for the International Waterfowl Research Bureau. During his long and fruitful career he took part in several international ornithological congresses (Helsinki 1958, Oxford 1966, the Hague 1970, West Berlin 1978, Moscow 1982), and he was awarded the Prize of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences twice, honorary memberships in the Czech Society for Ornithology, Czech Zoological Society, Slovak Ornithological Society, Hungarian Ornithological and Nature Protection Society, and he became a corresponding member of the Austrian Ornithological Society, German Ornithologists' Society and British Ornithologists' Union. For 16 years (1978–1994) he was a member of the International Ornithological Committee. Additionally, in 1958–93 he was a member of the Committee of Czechoslovak and later Czech Ornithological Society, and in 1964–88 he was a delegate to the International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau (UK).

Since the late 1970s one of his main concerns has been the protection of environment. Karel was one of the founder members of the committee of the Ecological Institute Veronica in Brno, he has been a member of editorial board of the journal Veronica since it was established in 1986, and at present he is vice-chairman of the Veronica Foundation. His accomplishments in nature conservation also led to his being given several prizes. The Czech Union for Nature Conservation presented him with honorable mention twice; in 2006 he received the Josef Vavroušek Award, the award of the Minister of Environment of the Czech Republic, and the award of the Hlávka Foundation for “Atlas of Breeding Birds in the Czech Republic” (along with coauthors K. Š a s t n ý and V. B e j č e k). He has been a member of numerous editorial boards (including the journal *Folia Zoologica*), scientific councils and advisory boards, expert committees and grant agencies, and a supervisor of undergraduate and PhD students. At present he participates in writing expert opinions on ecological matters.

Besides his scientific activities Karel has never lost interest in classical and folk music, theater and sports. He is a keen theatergoer and since his youth he has been a great amateur actor and dramatist whose hilarious satirical comedies have become a kind of legend. For all his life he has been an excellent swimmer, and until recently he took part in various competitions. Even while he was in the army, he was allowed to pursue his hobby and got the opportunity to compete at national and international level, and held a Czechoslovak record in butterfly swimming. His wife Svatava, a physician, shares his passion for folk music and theater. Although his two daughters do not follow in their father's footsteps, they inherited his love of nature. Karel's helpfulness, patience and a great sense of humor make him popular not only among his friends and colleagues but also young birders, who he encourages greatly. Last but not least, he is a real connoisseur of Moravian wine and good food.

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