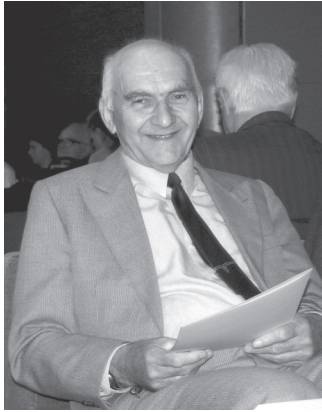


Doc. RNDr. Jan Patočka has died



On March 13, 2009, after a short but serious disease left us our colleague doc. RNDr. Jan Patočka, DrSc., an outstanding entomologist and ecologist, an honorary member of the Slovak Entomological Society and the Czech Entomological Society.

He was born on September 25, 1925, in the town of České Budějovice (Southern Bohemia). In this town he also obtained primary and secondary (real gymnasium) education. After the war, he went to Prague, to study biology at the Charles University. He was graduated in 1948 (RNDr.).

In 1949, he moved to Slovakia and started to work at the just established Forest Research Institutes in Banská Štiavnica. At the period, a team of young entomologists and ecologists was created at this working place. In a very short time, the members of this team: Ing. M. Čapek, K. Charvát, RNDr. V. Pašek, RNDr. J. Patočka, F. J. Turček, had reached excellent results in study of forest insects, their parasitoids and predators, and achieved a considerable international acknowledgement. Jan Patočka published his pioneer works dealing with Lepidoptera associated with poplars, oaks and fir. In some aspects, these works have not been surpassed yet. In 1962, Jan Patočka defended his dissertation (CSc.) on Lepidoptera pupae causing damage to oak trees, and in 1964, he successfully presented his habilitation thesis at the Faculty of Forestry of the University of Forestry and Wood Sciences in Zvolen. He was given fresh incentives also during his one-year study trip to Munich (1964–1965). At this time, his working institution (Research Institute for Forest Management) moved to Zvolen. Here, Jan Patočka continued with his study of relations between Lepidoptera and their host woody plants. In year 1970, he defended his DrSc. – dissertation work at the Faculty of Natural Sciences of the Comenius University in Bratislava. The dissertation work dealt with bionomics, ecology and taxonomy of Lepidoptera associated with fir.

In the period of so called “politic normalisation” following the year 1968, Jan Patočka appeared on the “Black List” of politically unreliable persons. The projects concerning the study of forest Lepidoptera were

stopped. The voluminous manuscript of a monograph on Lepidoptera associated with oak, prepared for press, was excluded from publication.

Since 1989, retired, he was working a part-time job at the Institute of Forest Ecology SAS in Zvolen. The change of political climate meant for him academic freedom and new possibilities to publish both in Slovakia and abroad. He continued with intensive study of morphology of Lepidoptera pupae, and also devoted his time to ecology, bionomics, faunistics and protection of Lepidoptera. Every year he published several scientific works. He was always ready to help younger colleagues, and put in contact young people and experienced specialists. Jan Patočka identified lots of materials for Slovak and foreign entomologists. In this period, he published several fairly extensive monographs on Lepidoptera pupae. In the year 1999 was issued the book on oak pests and their natural enemies. The most important appreciation of his life-long work was the offer from the Danish Apollo Books publishing house to publish a collected edition of his study results concerning pupae of Central European Lepidoptera species. The book was issued in two volumes in 2005. Unfortunately, the author’s life ended before appearing his last two monographs (dealing with ecology and bionomics of Slovak Lepidoptera and with Lepidoptera in Natura 2000 habitats), the manuscripts of which were submitted for publication in 2009.

Jan Patočka worked in close cooperation with many research institutions, universities and museums in Slovakia and abroad. He also red lectures for students of the Faculty of Ecology and Environmental Sciences of the Technical University in Zvolen and for students of the Faculty of Forestry and Wood Sciences of the Czech University of Life Sciences in Prague.

The records of the Institute of Forest Ecology SAS in Zvolen prove about 228 scientific and expert works of the author.

Jan Patočka was an internationally-recognised and respected scientist. He considerably enhanced knowledge in several areas of entomology and ecology. At the first place, his immense contribution to knowledge of morphology of Lepidoptera larvae and pupae is undisputable. He drew up identification keys for Lepidoptera larvae associated with important forest woody plants in Central Europe and for pupae of almost all Lepidoptera families occurring in Slovakia. The value of these works is evident not only for Lepidoptera identification, but also for taxonomy. Jan Patočka enriched the science with descriptions of several new Lepidoptera species.

He described and supplied with new details the bionomics of many Lepidoptera species. He also explained the influence of the environment on dynamics of their abundance. Especially valuable are his descriptions of consortia of Lepidoptera on several host woody plants (poplars, oaks and fir). He assembled a large piece of data on distribution of several hundreds of Lepidoptera species in Central Europe. He was the head of several research teams studying also other groups of insects feeding on forest woody plants – primarily oaks and fir. He recorded several Lepidoptera species in Slovakia for the first time. Apart from studying Lepidoptera and other insect groups associated with forest woody plants, he also worked on implementing his knowledge in forestry practice. He elaborated original methods for control of and protection against pests in forest management. He had also contributed to nature protection. He participated in projects and helped with preparing research reports concerning threatened Lepidoptera species and their occurrence in protected areas and habitats on Natura 2000.

Jan Patočka was equipped with extraordinary personal faculties for his scientific work. He had an outstanding memory, and sharp and extremely swift perception of details enabling identification of Lepidoptera caterpillars, pupae and adults. He was friendly and tolerant and always ready to help and encourage younger colleagues.

His work was also given support in his own family. His wife helped him also at time when he was having serious problems due to its political orientation. He left one son and two daughters.

We all have lost not only an outstanding scientist, entomologist and ecologist, but also a remarkable, kind-hearted man.

All honour to his memory!

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