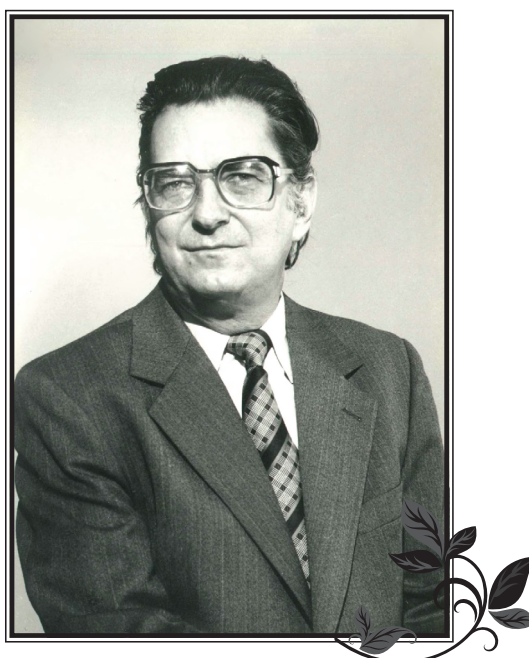


EDITORIAL

Jozef Kazimír Macko, a distinguished Slovak parasitologist, has passed away



On August 30, 2024, at the remarkable age of 97, Ing. Jozef Kazimír MACKO, CSc., a prominent Slovak scientist and taxonomist, passed away. He was a founding member of the Helminthology Laboratory, now known as the Institute of Parasitology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Košice, and the first chairman of the Scientific Council of this institution from 1990 to 1992. Throughout his career, he described numerous new species of bird parasites and acted as a mentor for doctoral candidates at various universities. His lifelong dedication to science is truly commendable.

He was born on January 21, 1927, in Marmarošská Sihoť, Romania, as the only child of a forestry engineer and a teacher. Growing up in an intellectually bilingual Slovak-Hungarian family, education was strongly emphasised, ensuring that young Jozef-Kazimír mastered both languages fluently. During the interwar period, the family relocated to central Slovakia, where he attended elementa-

ry school in Podbrezová and high school in Kremnica. In 1946, he began studying at the University of Agricultural and Forestry Engineering in Košice. After graduating in 1953, he started his career as a researcher in the newly established Helminthology Laboratory in Košice, which soon became part of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAV). He worked there throughout his professional life until his retirement. Even after retiring, he remained active in scientific research, publishing additional works primarily in taxonomy and collaborating with a new generation of parasitologists.

The taxonomy and systematics of helminths have always been key areas of focus in parasitological research, and this was also a priority for Ing. Macko. He studied a wide range of parasitic organisms, primarily from wild and domesticated birds. Macko collaborated closely with staff from Slovak universities and museums. He organised numerous field expeditions in Slovakia, particularly in the Eastern Slovak Lowland, as well as abroad. His most signifi-

cant contribution was creating a unique and extensive collection of bird parasites. This collection, which includes rare type specimens of newly described parasite species, is part of the natural history section of the Eastern Slovak Museum in Košice. Additionally, part of Ing. Macko's rich collection of bird parasites is housed in one of the most important European collections of helminths at the Institute of Parasitology, Biology Centre of the Czech Academy of Sciences in České Budějovice, where it is available as a comparative material for future studies.

Ing. Macko described 33 new species of bird helminths, including 7 species of trematodes, 20 species of cestodes, and 6 species of nematodes. He also discovered several species and genera for the first time in new areas or from new bird hosts, contributing new geographic and host records to science. As an author of a population theory applied in parasitology, he emphasised the importance of species polymorphism (the variability within species populations) in his descriptions of new species. This principle led him to revise and redescribe many previously valid taxa inadequately described in domestic and foreign literature.

Overall, he published more than 260 scientific and professional works in significant foreign and domestic journals. The last of these, a description of a new fluke species from the white stork, was printed in collaboration with his long-time colleague, RNDr. Marta Špakulová, DrSc., in 2014, when he was 87 years old. This publication was titled "Description of the rare echinostomatid fluke *Echinodollfusius longiuscula* n. sp. (Trematoda: Echinostomatidae) parasitising the white stork, with an amended diagnosis of the genus *Echinodollfusius*."

In international cooperation, a significant highlight is Ing. Macko's frequent visits to Cuba as an expert on cestodes and nematodes that affect free-living galliform birds, and especially domestic poultry. These visits were essential for farms that experienced severe economic losses during the 1970s due to parasitic outbreaks in the subtropical regions. In addition to his expert work, Ing. Macko utilised his knowledge of the Spanish language to educate Cuban

parasitologists. His efforts have also led to six original discoveries of new species, including four flukes and two tapeworms.

Personally, I highly appreciate Ing. Jozef Kazimír Macko, CSc. as a leading authority in solving complicated taxonomic issues within the Department of Systematics at the Institute of Parasitology of the Slovak Academy of Science and a charismatic person who fundamentally influenced my professional career. I sincerely value his role as the first chairman of the Scientific Council during the politically turbulent transformation period at the beginning of the 1990s. During this time, he was noteworthy in establishing a new scientific framework based on research projects for the institute. Thanks to his efforts, the institution was renamed the Institute of Parasitology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences.

Ing. Macko was awarded the Golden Plaque of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in 1992 for his significant biological research achievements and essential contributions to parasitology. Additionally, he received the Medal of Academician Ján Hovorka, the institute's founder and long-time director, awarded him in 1995 by the Slovak Parasitological Society at the SAS.

Ing. Macko faced health challenges for much of his life, which led him to carry out a significant portion of his work from home. His responsibilities ranged from basic microscopic identification of species to writing the final versions of his publications. Throughout his journey, he received tremendous support from his wife, Ing. Anna Macková, CSc., a researcher at the Institute of Biological and Ecological Sciences of the Faculty of Science, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice. Alongside their parallel careers, they shared a deep passion for nature.

The Slovak scientific community, particularly in the field of parasitology, has lost not only a significant scientist but also an exceptional individual.

Vladimíra Hanzelová