

The Institute of Zoology at the Bulgarian Academy of Science celebrated its 60th anniversary in 2007. It was founded as an independent Institute with a decision of the Council of Ministers on February 19th, 1947. In reality, the Institute is much older than that, starting in 1914 with the Royal Bulgarian Natural History Institutes, which consisted of three academic departments – Zoology, Botany and Geology. In 1947, the Department of Zoology became the foundation of an independent Institute of Zoology with three main sections – Invertebrate Animals, Entomology and Vertebrate Animals. The Institute also included the Natural History Museum, Bulgarian Ornithological Centre and Sofia Zoological Garden. In 1959, Sofia Zoological Garden became part of Sofia Municipality, and in 1974, the Zoological Museum became an independent National Museum of Natural History.

At present, the Institute of Zoology includes 5 scientific departments: Taxonomy, faunistics and zoogeography, Biology and ecology of terrestrial animals, Hydrobiology, Experimental zoology, and Protozoology with 10 specialized laboratories. The Institute includes also an Ornithological centre, an Experimental biological station near the Danube River, a Field station in the Rila Mountains, Chemical and Photo laboratories. The Institute has a big library of more than 15 000 books and more than 27 000 periodicals and journals.

The Institute of Zoology is the national coordinator of zoological research in Bulgaria. It is currently engaged in fundamental scientific and applied research in the following fields:

- Species composition, origin, taxonomy, distribution, evolution and zoogeography of Bulgarian fauna as an element of the Balkan and European fauna;
- Population biology and morphology of animals, migrations and the role of zoocenoses in the natural and human impacted water and terrestrial ecosystems;
- Rare and endangered animal species; conservation and sustainable use of animal resources;
- Invasive species; risk assessment; pests and ecological pest control;
- Response of animals and their populations to human impact with regard to their use as bioindicators; biological monitoring; potential for self-purification of freshwater ecosystems.

The main achievements of the Institute are:

- The composition, structure, distribution, biology and ecology of the main animal groups in Bulgaria have been studied;
- Data on morphology, karyology, cytotaxonomy, anatomy, biology and ecology of about 30 000 animal species of the Bulgarian fauna, including 790 species of vertebrates have been published;
- Based on survey data on Bulgarian fauna and scientific collections from other countries and continents, two protozoan families and over 800 invertebrate animal species mainly protozoans, arachnids, crustaceans, myriapods, insects, etc., are described;
- The Bulgarian cave fauna has been well studied; the occurrence of about 700 cave animals in about 715 studied caves has been reported;
- The hydrofauna of the biggest Bulgarian rivers, of numerous natural and man-made lakes, reservoirs and marshlands, as well as the Bulgarian section of the Danube River has been studied; ecological status and trends of fresh water basins under the influence of natural and human factors have been analyzed;
- Population biology and ecology of a large number of vertebrate animals from the Bulgarian fauna has been studied;

- The genotoxic effect of environmental pollutants on indicator species of insects and vertebrates has been studied;
- The scientific methods of biological monitoring have been developed and thus a contribution to the Global Environment Monitoring System has been made.

The Institute has rich scientific collections of invertebrate and vertebrate animals from Bulgaria as well as from Europe, Asia and America. The collections include more than 1600 000 specimens of insects, protozoan and metazoan animals, chromosome microscope slides, a great number of mammal and bird skeletons and skins, alcoholic preparations of fishes, etc.

The Institute of Zoology publishes the following periodicals:

ACTA ZOOLOGICA BULGARICA – a tri-annual journal, published in April, August and December. It is published in English, and distributed in Bulgaria and abroad.

FAUNA OF BULGARIA – a series of publications, consisting of 28 volumes on different taxonomic animal groups from the Bulgarian water and terrestrial fauna.

CATALOGUS FAUNAE BULGARICAE – a series of 6 volumes on various taxonomic groups, published in English.

Besides the above publications, the Institute of Zoology publishes proceedings from scientific conferences in the country, scientific popular books, and others. Many scientists of the Institute are authors or co-authors of monographs, books written for the universities and high schools, environmental protection materials, etc. In the last 3 years, the Institute of Zoology has contributed to the preparation of the second updated edition of the Red Data Book of Bulgaria, Vol. II, Animals, to be published in the end of 2008.