

In memoriam

Dr Maria Paspaleva- Talpeanu (1933-2015)



In 2015, Bulgarian and Romanian zoologists have lost one of their brightest representatives. Dr. Maria Georgieva Paspaleva-Talpeanu deceased on 16 May 2015 in Bucharest, Romania.

Maria Paspaleva-Talpeanu was born on 4 July 1933 in Varna, in the family of biologists. At that time, her father, Professor Georgi Paspalev (Corresponding Member of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences) was the director of the Marine Biological Station in Varna. Her mother, Anastasia Zhelyazkova, was assistant and researcher of Black Sea ciliates. After 1940, the family moved to Sofia. Since the autumn of 1952, Maria became a student in biology at the University of Sofia. Since her first years at the university, she was involved in studies on diversity, biology, ecology and conservation of avifauna, and continued this work during her entire life.

After her graduation, Maria occupied a position as a biologist at the Sofia Zoo. In 1958, she continued her work at the Institute of Zoology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, where she completed her doctoral thesis entitled *Studies on the Ornithofauna of the Bulgarian Danube Riverside* (1961). Subsequently, she was appointed as a researcher and became the head of the Bulgarian Ornithological Center. In Bulgaria, she published 25 articles on the avifauna of the country. Simultaneously, she contributed popular articles, mostly in ornithology and nature conservation, and consulted several popular films in the field of ornithology. Together with R. Doychev and S. Dimitrov, she authored the popular science book *Birds* (250 pp.) published by Nauka i Izkustvo Publishers, Sofia.

In 1969, she was married by the outstanding Romanian ornithologist Dr Matey Talpeanu and moved to live and work in Bucharest. In 1970, she occupied a position of a research assistant at the Bucharest Zoo. In 1973, she successfully applied for a research position at the Institute of Biology at the Ministry of Education of Romania and started a new research program on the avifauna of Romania. Substantial parts of her studies in this period were devoted to the diversity and biology of birds from the Danube Delta. Due to the proximity of the two countries and her interests at the avifauna of the Danube Delta and Danubian Riverside, she frequently visited Bulgaria and contributed to the establishment and development of the Natural History Museum at the Srebarna Biosphere Reserve, field studies in Rusenski Lom Natural Park, lectures in ecology and nature protection at school workshops. She also wrote numerous articles for Bulgarian popular magazines. She collaborated with Bulgarian ornithologists from the National Natural History Museum in Sofia and the Regional Museum in Ruse.

Dr. Maria Paspaleva authored more than 60 scientific articles on diversity, biology and ecology of the Bulgarian and Romanian birds, mainly published in scientific journals of the two countries. As a skilled promoter, she also wrote numerous popular articles for Bulgarian and Romanian magazines as well as three popular books: *Babush rafting down the Danube* (1970, 180 p.), *Oiseaux du Delta du Danube* (with M. Talpeanu, 1973, 289 p.) and *Living Delta* (1990, 160 p.). These books inspired many students in biology, ecology and nature conservation.

The life and work of Dr. Maria Paspaleva is an example of passionate love of nature and tireless activities for studying biodiversity, for its preservation for the forthcoming generations in Bulgaria and Romania.