

Tanyo Michev 1939–2018

On 25 December 2018, Bulgarian zoologists and the international ornithological community lost Tanyo Michev – the doyen of the nature conservation research and ornithology in our country!

Tanyo was born on March 14, 1939 in the town of Chirpan, Stara Zagora Region. He developing interests in ornithology, speleology and nature conservation as a university student and graduated as a biologist from Sofia University in 1961. Immediately after his graduation, he was employed as a field biologist at the research station of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences at the Srebarna Reserve – one of Bulgarian natural sites with the highest conservational value, now recognised as a Biosphere Reserve, a Wetland of International Importance, an important bird area and a World Heritage site, to a great extent because Tanyo's long-lasting research there. This was an extremely successful start of a research career of a zoologist and a conservationist, driven by fascination and full of successful efforts and results. This employment determined his further efforts as a researcher for the next 55 year at various units of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences: Institute of Zoology, Centre for Nature Conservation, Institute of Ecology, Central Laboratory of General Ecology and Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research. His study areas were conservation of wetlands, protection of aquatic and other birds, studies on avian migrations, development of the network of protected territories and many other studies associated with the development and implementation of conservational ideas. On each topic, he always combined scientific publications and popular books, articles and films that inspired generations of Bulgarian young people to become biologists and conservationists, or just to become passionate nature lovers. Among his most popular works were the books *Protected Birds in Bulgaria* (1980) and *Pelicans, Reed and People* (1982) as well as the films *The Blue Eyes of the Earth* (devoted to wetlands) and *Nests on the Rock*. And, along with the work of a researcher, he had numerous applied projects – development of management plans for protected areas and threatened species, consulting policy makers, organising non-governmental sector, educating young researchers, organising volunteers, etc.



He had the chance to specialise in one of the leading centres for wetland research in Europe (1965-1966) – Tour de Valat in the Camargue, southern France. Research ideas, approaches and methods from the time of this work were later applied in the examination and conservation of Bulgarian wetlands. And even during the years of the Iron Curtains, he stayed connected with the international research community, sharing ideas and inspiration.

In 1977, together with Dimitar Nankinov, Bozhidar Ivanov and John Roberts, he started the midwinter assessment of water birds in Bulgaria, continuing also in our days by the next generations of Bulgarian ornithologists. Results were published in the book *Midwinter numbers of waterbirds in Bulgaria: Results from 25 years of mid-winter counts carried out at the most important Bulgarian wetlands* (Michev & Profirov 2003). He also initiated in 1978 the regular observations on the autumn migration of soaring birds along the Black-Sea migratory flyway, a project continuing also now; some of the results (for 1979–2003) were published in 2011 (Michev and co-authors) in the journal *British Birds*. Based on these efforts, Bulgaria also joined the network for registration of numbers of migrating birds (www.trektellen.nl) by including the site Bourgas and Bulgarian names of birds, thus adding Bulgarian as one of the official languages for this database.

Further efforts were directed to the monthly assessment of water bird of the biggest wetland complex in Bulgaria – Bourgas Wetland; the results of it were published by Dimitrov, Michev and co-authors (2005 – *Water Birds of Bourgas Wetlands: Results and Evaluation of the Monthly Waterbirds Monitoring 1996-2002*), which was an important step in their recognition as Ramsar sites. He was a key contributor to the first *National Plan for Management of the Most Important Wetlands in Bulgaria*, the management plans for the Lake Srebarna Reserve (2001), Lake Atanasovsko

Reserve (2003), Lake Pomorie Protected Area (2010); Reserves Chuprene, Corna Korja and Ibisha (2015) as well as in the development of the national plan for conservation of the Dalmatian Pelican.

Several his works are with fundamental value for the development of the ornithology and nature conservation in Bulgaria: the field guide *Birds of the Balkan Peninsula* (two editions – 1991, 2012), substantial parts of bird sections in the two editions of the Red Data Book of Bulgaria (1985, 2015), the UTM Grid Directory of Bulgaria (1999), the description of the first 22 Important Bird Areas in Bulgaria (in the publication edited by Grimmet & Jones 1989), two volumes of the series *Fauna of Bulgaria* devoted to birds (1990 and 1997), *Inventory of Bulgarian Wetlands and their Biodiversity* (2007) and many other papers, contributions to collective works, books...

Tanyo Michev was one of the founders of the Bulgarian Society for Bird Protection and its first president. He was also the national representative in the Ramsar Convention events as well as the national correspondent for the elaboration of the fundamental work *Birds of the Western Palaearctic*.

Tanyo's life and work have been a source of inspiration for generations of younger biologists and an example for serving to the Nature and to the fatherland. His death is a severe loss for his colleagues and followers!

Lyubomir Profirov & Boyko B. Georgiev