



In memoriam

ornithologist AUREL PAPADOPOL

(9th of July 1923 – 16th of June 2009)

The staff of “Grigore Antipa” National Museum of Natural History of Bucharest and all ornithologists of Romania lost Aurel Papadopol on 16th of June 2009, a very good colleague, specialist in ornithology, chief of the Upper Vertebrate Department (which included the palaeontology section in the beginning), then deputy director of this institution for 23 years (the 1st of July 1966 – 30th of June 1989).

He was born in a family of custom office workers from Sighetul Marmăției, locality where he also attended the primary school and gymnasium, and then moved

in Galați. He had a younger brother, Mihai Papadopol, whom Aurel took care of him, at first they being motherless and then, fatherless.

Since his childhood, Aurel Papadopol was very fond of plants and animals, going in the middle of nature to make observations, and later, as hunter. In Sighet and in Galați he made small collections of rocks and minerals, snails and shells, fish, reptiles and birds, thinking of a museum. In spite of all difficulties rose by the Second World War, those collections were not gathered in a “personal” museum but they were included among the collections of the Museum of Natural History of Iași, in 1951.

Nature beauty was represented in his paintings, firstly made under the guidance of the well known painter Mihai Dăncuș, who encouraged Aurel Papadopol to present his work in public exhibitions at Cultural House of Sighetul Marmăției, in addition to those organized in school. Also, when he was a child, he learnt to play violin and piano. But his plastic artist was stimulated harder by the financial needs after he became student at the Faculty of Natural Sciences of the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, in 1947.

Remarked by the professors of the faculty for his artistic talent, he was asked to make numerous plates of the circulatory, nervous, muscular systems in vertebrates, as well as structures of plant morphology or plant diseases, for the phytopathology courses. A part of these plates still exist as auxiliary material for the courses and laboratory works from the above mentioned faculty. Since the third year as a student, he was employed assistant at the Zoology Chair, period when he made numerous humid preparations. For the zoological material collecting, he made numerous field trips along Moldavian rivers and worked during holidays at the “Ion Borcea” Zoological Station of Marine Research from Agigea, on the shore of the Black Sea. There, he met university professors and scientists from all universities of Romania, for practical works with the students and for specialized courses in hydrobiology.

He was remarked by the great oceanologist Prof. Dr. docent Mihai C. Băcescu, then Chief of Department at “Grigore Antipa” National Museum of Natural History and director of the Piscicultural Institute of Bucharest, and invited Aurel Papadopol to transfer at the museum. Therefore, the last faculty year (1951–1952) was attended at the University of Bucharest and he was employed museologist, and then junior researcher. At the museum of Bucharest he worked 38 years (1951–1989), out of which 23 as deputy director of the Academician Mihai Băcescu, who became director of the institution on 16th of February 1964.

As ornithologist, Aurel Papadopol had important contributions to the enriching of the scientific and public collections, with valuable specimens collected in his numerous field trips, especially of the Romanian fauna. Since 1969, I had the opportunity of going with him in the field, when he taught me generously his theoretical and practical knowledge on the collecting of the biological material, notes in the field register, or provisory and permanent conservation, etc.

As a matter of fact, his knowledge in preparing the biological material was transferred on paper, being published in 1964, in his book “*Confectionarea materialului didactic pentru științele naturale*” (*Manufacturing of the educational materials for natural sciences*) in Didactic and Pedagogic Publishinghouse - Bucharest. There are also other books on this field, which deal with the working

technics in sections for: mammals, birds, invertebrates. Aurel Papadopol's book is the only one written in Romanian which includes all these sections, to which he added the part with rocks and minerals. It remained a reference work and the subsequent employees of the museum had it in their compulsory bibliography for the exams of restaurateur, assistant or museologist.

The same rich professional knowledge and artistic skill Aurel Papadopol used in the organization of the public exhibitions. He implied in making temporary exhibitions, seven of them being directly thought and managed by him, together with the specialists of the museum, among whom I had the honour of being included (e.g. "*Birds and mammals of hunting interest*", "*Economical value of the birds and mammals*", etc.).

As a researcher, Aurel Papadopol published approx. 130 papers and notes on birds from all over Romania: the Danube Delta, flooding plains of different rivers including the Danube, lakes and marshes from the Panonian region, from Moldova, Muntenia and Oltenia, North-Western part. In addition, he published, alone or in collaboration, catalogues and guides of birds of the museum's collections, a general guide on Bucharest's Museum of Natural History, techniques of restauration and conservation of the biological materials, etc.

As a deputy director, Aurel Papadopol identified personally with all administrative problems of the institution, inclusively in the rehabilitation of the public exhibition after it was destroyed by the 1977 and 1986 earthquakes. Some items were restaured personally by him, for others he was technical consultant and supervised the other collaborators' correctness in applying proper technics.

Aurel Papadopol was very close to his museum colleagues, helping them within any kind of circumstances. Extending his relations to the ornithologists all over the country, they always appreciated him for the value of his ornithological papers, for his friendship demonstrated to all those interested in birds. We can say that all people who knew or worked with him remained grieved after he passed away and promised to continue the ornithological and museological themes, at least at the level of Aurel Papadopol's passion.

DUMITRU MURARIU