



## Birds from European countries in the collections of the National Museum, Prague, Czech Republic

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**Abstract.** The National Museum in Prague, Czech Republic, possesses ca. 9500 skins and mounts of European birds, including those from the Czech Republic (7000), other countries of continental Europe (2100), Mediterranean islands (250) and northern islands (150). A list of 25 specimen sets obtained from European countries (except Czech Republic) is presented. Earliest specimens originated from Christoph Fellner von Feldegg's sojourn in southern Dalmatia about 1830, and Antonín Frič's expedition to Vojvodina in 1852.

**Keywords.** Bird skins and mounts, Europe, history, collectors.

### INTRODUCTION

The National Museum (NMP), Praha (Prague), Czech Republic, was founded in 1918 as a Museum of the Kingdom of Bohemia (Nebeský 1868a,b, Černý 1884, Štěpánek 1975). During almost 200 years of its existence the NMP accumulated ca. 33,000 mounts and skins of birds. Many specimens were obtained by the NMP on the piece-by-piece basis from a large number of donors or were purchased from dealers, but the NMP possesses also coherent collections of bird specimens from a variety of non-European countries and European countries. I presented a list of such collections from non-European countries (Mlíkovský 2010c) and here I present a list of such collections from European countries. The paper is arranged in a similar way as that on the birds from non-European countries.

Main sources of information on expeditions and birds collected during them were label data, museum catalogues (Frič 1854a,b), and unpublished catalogues written in 1836 and from 1866 until today). Biographic data were taken from Hudec (1999), author's archives, and sources cited below.

Spelling of toponyms generally follows NGA (2012) where possible. Geographic references follow current administrative division of the world. All dates are given in Gregorian calendar (Mlíkovský 2010b). Spelling variants of personal names were standardized following Mlíkovský (2010a); original spellings are given in brackets in the 'References' section.

## SPECIMEN SOURCES

Specimens of European birds were obtained piece by piece or in large sets from the public, from own expeditions, from other collectors or via natural history dealers. Only sources of whole specimen sets are listed below.

**NMP EXPEDITIONS:** Very few in numbers. They include Antonín Frič's expeditions to southern parts of the then Austria-Hungary [2, 3], Otakar Štěpánek's expeditions to the island of Crete [16] and to what is now western Ukraine [18], and Jan Hanzák's trips to southern parts of the former Yugoslavia [24, 25].

**FIELD COLLECTORS:** The NMP obtained sets of specimens collected by field collectors during their expeditions to or business sojourns in various European countries. They include Feldegg [1], Seilern [6, 9, 10], Plachetka [8], Danihelka [13], Kraus [17], Kadlec [19], Matoušek [20] and Knoespel [21, 22]. In addition, collections made by Bamberg [4], Canesi [5] and Homberg [7, 12, 14] were obtained with the Seilern Collection in 1949 (see Mlíkovský 2010c).

## GEOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

The NMP houses ca. 2500 specimens of European birds (exclusive of the Czech Republic). They originated from three geographic regions, as follows:

**CONTINENTAL EUROPE:** Ca. 2100 specimens. Significant or interesting collections were made by Feldegg and Frič in Croatia [1, 3], Frič in Serbia [2], Bamberg in southern Russia [4], Plachetka and Homberg in Albania [8, 12], Jirsík and Kraus in Bulgaria [11, 17], Seilern in Austria [9, 10], Danihelka and Štěpánek in Ukraine [13, 18], Ryšánek, Kadlec and Matoušek in Slovakia [15, 19, 20], and Hanzák in Macedonia [23], Kosovo [24] and Montenegro [25]. All these collections originated from central and southeastern Europe.

**MEDITERRANEAN ISLANDS:** Ca. 250 specimens. Significant collections were made by Canesi on Corse [5], Homberg on Mallorca [7] and Crete [14], and Štěpánek on Crete [16].

**NORTHERN ISLANDS:** Ca. 150 specimens. Interesting collections were made by Seilern and Knoespel on Spitzbergen [6, 22], by Knoespel in Greenland [21] and by Klůz on Iceland [22].

## CHRONOLOGICAL LIST

### [1] 1829-1830: Feldegg – Croatia (Dalmatia)

**COLLECTOR:** Christoph Fellner von Feldegg (1779-1845), Austrian soldier and ornithologist, collected NMP specimens during his military sojourn in southern Dalmatia, including Split, Croatia, at least in 1829-1831 (details unknown).

**NMP:** 100 specimens belonging to 64 species donated by Feldegg during November 1830 – January 1831 (Anonymous 1831a: 115), and further 50 specimens donated during April to July 1831 (Anonymous 1831b: 345).

**[2] 1852: Frič – Serbia (Vojvodina)**

COLLECTOR: Antonín Frič (1832-1913), Czech zoologist, curator and later director of the NMP, collected the NMP specimens during his Banat expedition in March – May 1852. The specimens were labeled in NMP collections as originating from “Hungaria”. Frič’s travel reports (Frič 1853, 1900b) showed that he collected all these specimens in what is now southern Vojvodina, Serbia (Mlíkovský 2012c).

NMP: Ca. 40 specimens. Originally, Frič donated 109 specimens of birds to the NMP in 1852 (Anonymous 1852: 189). Not published; a few ornithological data are included in Frič (1853, 1900b).

**[3] 1856: Frič – Croatia**

COLLECTOR: Antonín Frič (see [2]) collected these specimens during his expedition to Croatia made on 26 February – 1 June 1856 (Frič 1857, 1864, 1900c).

NMP: 5 specimens. Published by Frič (1858); see also Mlíkovský (2004a).

**[4] 1908-1912: Bamberg – Russia (Sarpa)**

COLLECTOR: Otto Bamberg (1871-1942), German ornithologist and natural history dealer. The NMP specimens were collected in 1905-1912 in the steppes at Sarpa (see Törne 1938 for this locality).

NMP: Ca. 20 specimens. Obtained from Bamberg with the Seilen Collection. Not published.

**[5] 1910-1914: Canesi – France (Corse)**

COLLECTOR: François Canesi was a collector and natural history dealer based at Ajaccio (place des Palmiers), Corse.

NMP: Ca. 70 specimens, collected by Canesi in 1910-1914 in Corse; obtained with the Seilern Collection. Not published.

**[6] 1911: Seilern – Norway (Spitzbergen)**

COLLECTOR: Josef Seilern (1883-1939) collected NMP specimens during his expedition to the island of Spitzbergen, Svalbard Archipelago, on 28 July to 3 August 1911 (Seilern 1912).

NMP: Ca. 15 specimens. Obtained with the Seilern Collection. Not published.

**[7] 1913: Homberg – Spain (Mallorca)**

COLLECTOR: Richard Homberg (ca. 1886 – ca. 1967) was a collector and taxidermist, who worked for Josef von Seilern (see [6]) in the 1920s and 1930s. He collected the NMP specimens on behalf of Josef Seilern during the joint Adolf von Jordans & Richard Homberg Expedition to the island of Mallorca, Balears, in March-May 1913.

NMP: Ca. 65 specimens. Obtained with the Seilern Collection. Not published.

**[8] 1918: Plachetka – Albania**

COLLECTOR: Karel Plachetka (1877-1961), Czech soldier and bird collector, collected and purchased birds in Albania, mainly at Shkodër, when he was garrisoned there during January – August 1918.

NMP: Ca. 20 specimens. Not published. Some of Plachetka's Albanian birds are deposited in the MGOHR (Muzeum a Galerie Orlických hor = Museum and Gallery of the Orlické Mountains, Rychnov nad Kněžnou, Czech republic); for their list see Káda (1971).

**[9] 1922-1925: Seilern – Austria (Burgenland)**

COLLECTOR: Josef Seilern (see [6]). The NMP specimens were collected at Apetlon and Tadtén, Burgenland, in 1908-1925.

NMP: Ca. 15 specimens. Obtained with the Seilern Collection. Not published.

**[10] 1925-1926: Seilern – Austria (Niederösterreich)**

COLLECTOR: Josef Seilern (see [6]). The NMP specimens were collected in the vicinity of Litschau, Niederösterreich, in 1925-1926.

NMP: Ca. 25 specimens. Obtained with the Seilern Collection. Not published.

**[11] 1932: Jirsík – Bulgaria**

COLLECTOR: Josef Jirsík (1898-1956), Czech ornithologist, collected NMP specimens during May-June 1932 at Sofia.

NMP: 33 specimens, of which ca. 10 survived. Obtained from Jirsík in 1936. Not published.

**[12] 1934: Homberg – Albania**

COLLECTOR: Homberg (see [7]) collected the NMP specimens on behalf of Josef von Seilern in April 1934, mostly at “Lhogarah” = Llogara, Vlorë District.

NMP: Ca. 15 specimens. Obtained with the Seilern Collection. Not published.

**[13] 1934-1938: Danihelka – Ukraine**

COLLECTOR: V. Danihelka (fl. 1934-1938) was a Czech teacher, who worked in the village of Velika Kom'jaty, Carpathian Ruthenia, when this region of the modern-day Ukraine was part of the then Czechoslovakia. The NMP specimens were collected at Velika Kom'jaty during February 1934 and January 1938. The identity of the collector is unclear. His first name is abbreviated as “V.” in NMP catalogues (I did not find it spelled in full), but the only Danihelka known to me as a teacher and collector in Carpathian Ruthenia in the 1930s was Josef Danihelka (1908-1997) (cf. Mlíkovský 2004b).

NMP: Ca. 45 specimens. Not published.

**[14] 1935: Homberg – Greece (Rhodos)**

COLLECTOR: Homberg (see [7]) collected the NMP specimens on behalf of Josef von Seilern during an expedition to Rhodos in May-June 1935.

NMP: Ca. 60 specimens. Obtained with the Seilern Collection. Published by Sassi (1935).

**[15] 1935-1938: Ryšánek – Slovakia**

COLLECTOR: J. Ryšánek (fl. 1935-1938) collected NMP specimens in Vysoké Tatry Mountains, mostly at Štrba.

NMP: Ca. 760 specimens. Published by Mlíkovský (2012b).

**[16] 1936: Štěpánek – Greece (Crete)**

COLLECTOR: Otakar Štěpánek (1903-1995), Czech zoologist. The NMP specimens were obtained during a NMP expedition to Crete in summer 1936 (Štěpánek 1936, 1937). They lack exact localities and dates.

NMP: Ca. 40 specimens. Not published.

**[17] 1936-1938: Kraus – Bulgaria**

COLLECTOR: Anton Kraus (fl. 1936-1938) was a head gardener of Tsar Boris III of Bulgaria (1894-1943). All NMP specimens were collected in the vicinity of Sofia in 1936-1938.

NMP: Ca. 70 specimens. Not published.

**[18] 1937: Štěpánek – Ukraine**

COLLECTOR: Otakar Štěpánek (see [16]) collected NMP specimens at Apshinets in June 1937, when this region of modern-day Ukraine was part of the then Czechoslovakia. Štěpánek was accompanied during this expedition by Josef Matouš (1904-1943), a NMP taxidermist.

NMP: Ca. 75 specimens. Not published.

**[19] 1937-1939: Kadlec – Slovakia**

COLLECTOR: Otto Kadlec (1905-1980). Almost all NMP specimens were collected at Trnava in 1937-1939.

NMP: Ca. 50 specimens. Not published.

**[20] 1937-1941: Matoušek – Slovakia**

COLLECTOR: František Matoušek (1905-1997), Slovak ornithologist of Czech origin and natural history curator at the Trnava Museum, collected NMP specimens at Trnava in 1937-1946.

NMP: Ca. 90 specimens. Not published.

**[21] 1942: Knoespel – Denmark (Greenland)**

COLLECTOR: Hans-Robert Knoespel (1915-1944), German ornithologist and polar researcher. The NMP specimens were collected during the Herdemerten Expedition to western Greenland in June – October 1938. See Guspietsch (1945), Klüh (1998) and Barr (2012).

NMP: Ca. 45 specimens. Obtained after World War II from the field station Goldhöhe (Zlaté návrší), Krkonoše Mountains, Czech Republic (see Selinger 2001, Flajšman & Štekl 2009, and Barr 2012 for this station). Published by Mlíkovský (2012a).

**[22] 1942: Knoespel – Norway (Spitzbergen)**

COLLECTOR: Hans-Robert Knoespel (1915-1944), German ornithologist and polar researcher. The NMP specimens were collected during two expeditions in 1942 (“Unternehmen Knospe”) and 1944 (“Unternehmen Kreuzritter”). See Holzapfel (1951), Selinger (2001) and Barr (2012).

NMP: Ca. 40 specimens. Obtained from the same source as Knoespel’s specimens from Greenland [21]. Not published.

**[23] 1948: Klůz – Iceland**

COLLECTOR: Zdeněk Klůz (1920-1979), Czech ornithologist, participated in a Czech expedition to western Iceland in July 1948. See Staněk (1949), Klůz (1956) and Hadač (1957). Some of the NMP specimens were collected at Reydarvatn on 16 July, but exact dates and localities are unknown for most specimens.

NMP: Ca. 30 specimens. Not published.

**[24] 1968: Hanzák – Macedonia**

COLLECTOR: Jan Hanzák (1923-1994), Czech zoologist and bird & mammals curator at the NMP, collected NMP specimens during his visit to Macedonia on 18-24 May 1968.

NMP: Ca. 15 specimens. Not published.

**[25] 1969: Hanzák – Kosovo and Montenegro**

COLLECTOR: Jan Hanzák (see [22]), Czech ornithologist and bird curator at the NMP, collected NMP specimens during his visit to Kosovo and Montenegro on 6-24 May 1969.

NMP: Ca. 75 specimens. Not published.

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