



DAN MUNTEANU PhD
(June 2, 1937 – February 25, 2017)

A life dedicated to the protection of nature and environment

Dan MUNTEANU's great flight towards the unknown
high world of birds and stars

Dan Munteanu PhD passed away on the 25th of February 2017, a very special personality, corresponding member of the Romanian Academy, chairman of the *Commission for the Protection of Natural Monuments* (CMN), member of the editorial staff (assistant of the editor-in-chief) of the scientific journal *Romanian Journal of Biology – Zoology* and of other periodicals, researcher – exceptional biologist and ornithologist, well-known in the Romanian scientific world of the lovers of nature for more than half a century.

In 2017, his colleagues, friends, acquaintances, all those who knew and appreciated Dan Munteanu, organised his 80th anniversary, paying homage to his life and scientific work, to his efforts for protecting nature in Romania. There were three months till the anniversary session, but “time had not been patient” and the session became posthumous.

We received with much regret and deep sadness the news of the disappearance of our colleague and a lifetime friend, Dan Munteanu, after unbearable sufferings. It is a great loss for the Romanian biology in the important fields covered by his restless activity.

Dan Munteanu was born in Cluj, where his father, Dr. Didi Munteanu was a paediatrician, Professor at the Faculty of Medicine and director of “Casa Copilului” [“The Child’s House”] institution, and his mother Maria Cupcea was a well-known artistic personality, songwriter, actress of the National Theatre of Cluj within the period 1949–1955, also director of this institution. He had deep Transylvanian roots, being, after his mother, descendent of a famous family of Greek-Catholic priests and professors of Maramureş, nephew of the vicar Petru Cupcea, of Şimleul Silvaniei, and after his father, grandson of the orthodox martyr priest in Huedin, Aurel Muntean.

Primary and gymnasium studies were attended at “Ioan Bob” School in Cluj, the oldest school in the Romanian language teaching of the city. After graduating from “Emil Racoviţă” High School of Cluj, Dan Munteanu attended the Faculty of Natural Sciences, Department of Biology of “Victor Babeş” University of Cluj (1959).

Since his childhood he loved the birds of the sky... he loved them with his mind and soul and had moments of unique satisfaction while watching their serene flight towards heights or their intimacy in nests and hiding places, feeding places... He also was a passionate hunter, but his passion for hunting was triggered by his desire to be in the midst of nature, to observe the behaviour of the living world, not to kill.

He ascended the stages of affirmation by himself and confidently, based on an in-depth knowledge of nature and especially of the world of birds, whom he loved deeply since his childhood, and he was attached to it for ever, becoming one of the outstanding Romanian scientific personalities in ornithology and protection of nature.

At the beginning of his career he worked as a Scientific Researcher, for a period of time being also director of the “Stejarul” Biological, Geological and Geographical Station at Pângăraţi (Neamţ County), an institution under the patronage of “Al. I. Cuza” University of Iaşi. Being a rich and varied floral and fauna region the Pângăraţi settlement area gives the young researcher the idea of reflecting on the choice of the theme of the PhD thesis – “Avifauna of the mountain basin of the Moldavian Bistriţa”. Dan Munteanu presented his PhD thesis in Bucharest in 1969, being highly appreciated for his contribution to biology and bird migration, for ornithogeographical, systematic and ecological novelties.

His scientific debut was marked by the publication, in 1963, in collaboration with I. Boisteanu, of the paper *Observații asupra componenței avifaunei bazinului mijlociu al Bistriței* [“Observations on the composition of the Bistrița midwater basin”] in *Comunicări de Zoologie* journal, followed by the publishing, in 1965, in *Travaux du Museum d’Histoire Naturelle “Grigore Antipa”* of the paper *Trois années d’observations ornithologiques sur le lac de barrage Bicaz*. He published a series of articles in *Lucrările Stațiunii de Cercetări Biologice, Geologice și Geografice “Stejarul”* [“Stejarul” Biological, Geological and Geographical Research Papers],

in Sesiunile științifice ale Muzeului de Științele Naturii din Bacău [“Scientific Sessions of the Museum of Natural Sciences in Bacău”], in *Nymphaea Journal – Folia Naturae Bihariae, Acta Musei Porolissensis – Museum of History and Art in Zalău* and in the Information Bulletins of the Romanian Ornithological Society.

In 1973, he came back to Cluj, as a Senior Scientific Researcher in Biological Research Center in Cluj-Napoca.

After 1989, Dan Munteanu PhD initiated a new orientation in Romanian ornithology and became the founding President of the Romanian Ornithological Society (S.O.R.), a solid non-governmental scientific organization with multiple achievements at national and international level, at the same time becoming a member of the Executive Board of *International Waterfowl and Wetland Research Bureau* (headquarters in the United Kingdom). S.O.R. was included in the European network of the societies of bird protection coordinated by *Bird Life International*. Therefore, the president-founder of S.O.R. was implied in the elaboration of several European projects on the bird knowledge and protection in South-Eastern Europe.

In 1999, he was appointed Corresponding Member of the Romanian Academy.

In recognition of his scientific merits and contributions, Dan Munteanu PhD received “Emil Racoviță” Award of the Romanian Academy (in 2007, for his scientific papers of 2005), and in 2013 he received Diploma “Meritul Academic”, for his scientific activities of 2011.

Aware of the environmental problems in our country, Dan Munteanu was recommended by the late Acad. Nicolae Botnariuc to follow him in the position of a great responsibility – the chairman of the Commission for Natural Monuments Protection (CMN). Within the period 2000–2017 he honored this function with great honour and competence, having a complex activity and contributing to solutions for several problems, materialized in important contributions to the good functioning of the system he was leading:

- the organization and functioning of CMN, including the development of regulations and legislation acts;
- coordinating the activity of the Scientific Councils of the natural and national parks;
- substantiating the declaration of new protected areas;
- developing realistic solutions for biodiversity conservation and protection of the natural heritage;
- analyses and opinions concerning numerous requests for works of national interest with a potential impact on the environment, exploitation of natural biological resources, works or constructions in protected areas, ecological restoration works and afforestation, collaborating in this respect with different biodiversity conservation bodies from the Ministry of Environment and the National Forestry Authority (RNP). He also contributed to structuring in Romania the network of NATURA 2000 protected areas, following the European model of this type of network.

Dan Munteanu was a member of the Editorial Staff of several scientific journals such as: *Romanian Journal of Biology-Zoology* (Deputy Editor-in-Chief), Academic Collection *Fauna României* ["Romanian Fauna"] (Deputy Editor-in-Chief), *Travaux du Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle "Grigore Antipa"*, *Oltenia Journal for Studies in Natural Sciences*.

Besides his ornithological research, Dan Munteanu was the scientific adviser of several young doctoral students whom they closely followed and gave him all the confidence in the elaboration of doctoral theses at the Doctoral School of Biology at "Babeş-Bolyai" University in Cluj.

Dan Munteanu PhD left us, as an inheritance, the memory of a model of man, researcher, close colleague, a good Transylvanian Romanian by conscience and faith, a man of hope, a modest, quiet one, who also knew what good jokes were. Also, Dan Munteanu left us, as an inheritance, the Ornithology Society of Romania which he founded, being its President, including it in international structures and around which he mobilized all bird lovers in the country. And he left us his work of reference, such as:

- *Aves*, in *Fauna României*, Vol. XV, Fascicle 2 (Galiformes and Ciconiiformes), Romanian Academy Publishing House, Bucharest (2015);
- *Conspectul sistematic al avifaunei clocitoare din România* [Systematic summary of the hatching avifauna of Romania], Alma Mater Publishing House, Cluj (2012);
- *O istorie a nomenclaturii zoologice* [A history of the zoological nomenclature], 2nd edition, Alma Mater Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca: 157;
- *Păsări rare, vulnerabile și periclitare în România* [Rare, vulnerable, endangered birds in Romania], Alma Mater Publishing House, Cluj (2009);
- *Păsările din România și Europa* [Birds of Romania and Europe] (Hamlyn Guide – Romanian edition) (Romanian Ornithological Society, 1999);
- *Păsări* [Birds], chapter in *Red Book of the Vertebrates of Romania*, Academia Română Publishing House, Bucharest (2005);
- *Arii de importanță avifaunistică din România – Documentații* [Areas of avifaunal importance of Romania – Documentations], Alma Mater Publishing House, Cluj (2004);
- *Atlasul păsărilor clocitoare din România* [Romanian hatching bird atlas], in *Publicațiile Societății Ornitologice Române/2002* [Publications of Romanian Ornithological Society], Cluj-Napoca: 16.

In the series of publications of the *Romanian Ornithological Society* he published two editions (1997 and 2000) on *Etimologia numelor științifice ale păsărilor din fauna României* [Etymology of Scientific Names of Romanian Birds], as well as three editions (1992, 1998 and 2001) of a *Dicționar poliglot al speciilor de păsări din România* [Poliglot Dictionary of Bird Species in Romania]. After his own confessions, the idea of printing this dictionary came to him at the ornithological camps organized by S.O.R. in Istria, where youngsters from Romania, Hungary

and Germany could hardly communicate, because of the lack of a common language of scientific names. That is why, besides scientific names, the author also mentioned vernacular names in English, French, Romanian, German and Hungarian.

Also, Dan Munteanu PhD was the author of the book *O istorie a nomenclaturii zoologice* [A History of the Zoological Nomenclature] (1999) – a history of the development of the animal nomenclature from antiquity, the Middle Ages, to the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature of the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature*.

There were many more projects to be carried out, including the coordination of a new fascicle on the Aves Class (in the Romanian Fauna Series), a project that will be continued by the younger ornithologists.

Considering both the important scientific and social achievements and the valuable projects remaining on his desk, the biological scientific community in the country and abroad has remained poorer, without the MAN Dan Munteanu, a model of fairness, morality, generosity and modesty – a lovable mentor respected by many young ornithologists, whom he encouraged and supported unconditionally.

We all thank our beloved colleague and friend for everything he left us. Those who have known and appreciated you, those you collaborated with, those who have been your colleagues in the passage of time will proudly keep you in the pantheon of their mind and heart as one of the remarkable personalities with whom they were contemporaries. Your flight to the heavens was a great sorrow to us, but this is the way of life!

Our sincere sympathy to his beautiful family that he was so attached to.

Farewell, Dan Munteanu!

Prof. Dr. Marian – Traian GOMOIU, Member of the Romanian Academy
Dr. Dumitru MURARIU, Corresponding Member of the Romanian Academy
Dr. Sanda MAICAN, Institute of Biology Bucharest of Romanian Academy