



Miscellaneous

Prof. Dr. Zlatozar Boev DSc, pillar of modern Bulgarian ornithology. Biobibliography on the occasion of his 70th anniversary

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Abstract. This paper honors the 70th anniversary of Professor Zlatozar Boev, DSc, a pillar in modern Bulgarian ornithology. During his 46-year career at the National Museum of Natural History (Sofia, Bulgaria), Prof. Boev pioneered the fields of avian osteology, paleornithology, and archaeornithology in Bulgaria. He founded three new ornithological branches in the country: (1) osteology, (2) exterior morphology and (3) paleo- and archaeo-ornithology. His work includes describing 41 avian taxa new to science and establishing one of the most significant paleornithological collections in Europe. With over 930 scientific and popular science articles, books, and textbooks published in more than 20 countries, he is the most productive author in the history of Bulgarian ornithology.

Keywords: Archaeo-ornithology, Avian Morphology, Biobibliography, Bulgaria, National Museum of Natural History, Paleornithology

Short biographical data

Prof. Zlatozar Nikolaev Boev (Fig. 1) was born on 20.10.1955 in Sofia, in a family of intellectuals. His father Nikolay Boev (1922–1985) was a prominent Bulgarian ornithologist, the founder of modern nature conservation in Bulgaria. His mother, Nadezhda Boeva, was a philologist and teacher of Bulgarian language and literature. Zlatozar Boev's family origins were in the town of Aytos, with one of his great-grandfathers being the volunteer Nikola Boev, a participant in the Battle of Stara Zagora during the Russian-Turkish War of Liberation, and the other - the Bulgarian revolutionary leader Diko Dzhelebov, standard-bearer of the Ilinden- Preobrazhenie Uprising.

He finished his elementary, primary, and secondary education in 15th School (Adam Mickiewicz High School) in Sofia. In 1973-1975 he fulfilled his mandatory military service in the town of Plovdiv. Zlatozar Boev completed his higher education, majoring in "Biology", at the Department of Zoology, Faculty of Biology of "St. Kliment Ohridski"

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Sofia University in 1980, under the supervision of Prof. Tsolo Peshev (1922–2009), with a thesis on small mammals from the Ograzhden Mountain, titled “Ecological and faunistic studies of insectivorous mammals and rodents (Insectivora et Rodentia, Mammalia) from the Ograzhden Mountain”.

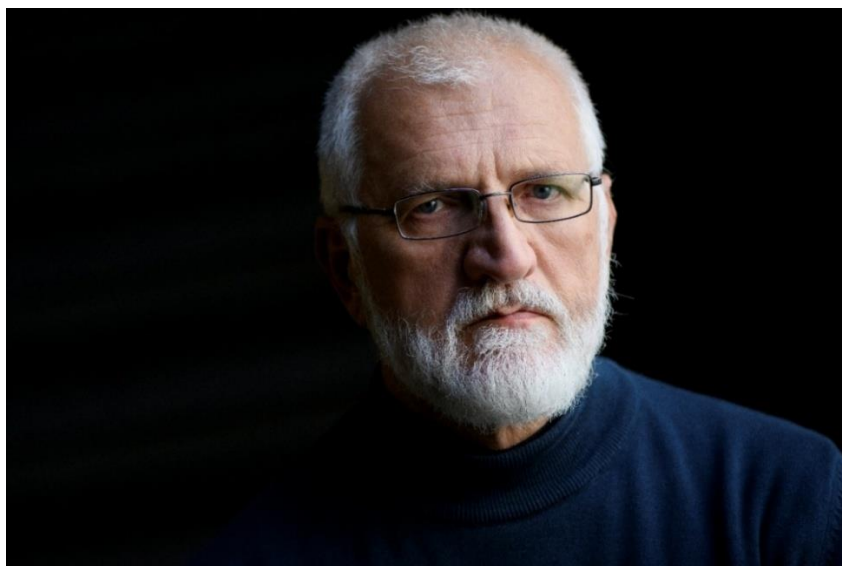


Fig. 1. Prof. Dr. Zlatozar Boev, DSc

He joined the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in 1980 and until 1983 worked as a part-time associate at the Zoology Department under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Petar Beron. There, he inventoried, arranged, and restored museum collections of birds, mammals, mollusks (shellfish snails and mussels), corals, etc. (Fig. 2). In the period 1984–1986, he was a full-time PhD student at the National Museum of Natural History at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, where the ornithologist Assoc. Prof. Simeon Simeonov (1935–1991) was his scientific supervisor. In 1986, he defended his PhD thesis on the topic “Comparative morphological studies of herons (family Ardeidae – Aves) from Bulgaria”. Zlatozar Boev defended his DSc dissertation in 1999 titled “Neogene and Quaternary birds (Aves) from Bulgaria” – the first study of the Bulgarian fossil and subfossil avifauna.

Zlatozar Boev was also among the founders of the first nature conservation organization in Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds, and served as its first secretary (Fig. 3). He also came up with the idea for the organization's logo, the endangered Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*). Prof. Boev was among the founders of the Bulgarian Ornithological Society and is currently a member of nine international and foreign scientific organizations (Fig. 4).

He has been working at the National Museum of Natural History for forty-six years, holding various positions including head of "Fossil and Recent Birds" Department, head of “Vertebrate Animals” Department, scientific secretary, etc.

In recognition of his contributions to paleontology, the fossil species *Plioperdix boevi* Zelenkov, 2024, described from a Miocene locality in Rostov Oblast, Russia, is named after Prof. Boev.



Fig. 2. Zlatozar Boev as a technical assistant at the Zoology Department of the National Museum of Natural History, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, arranging the collection of grey wolf (*Canis lupus*) skulls. 1982



Fig. 3. Zlatozar Boev (fourth from the left in the 4th row) among the founders of the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds in front of the Faculty of Biology of "St. Kliment Ohridski" Sofia University. 03.06.1988

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Zlatozar Boev is also a great admirer of Bulgaria's natural beauty, deeply loving the mountains. Over the last 20 years, he has climbed more than 100 Bulgarian peaks in various mountains, including some of Bulgaria's and Greece's highest peaks (Fig. 5).

Research interests

Palaeornithology; archaeornithology; evolution of birds and palaeoavifaunas; bone and external morphology of birds; disappearance and extinction of avian taxa; history of zoology, ornithology, palaeontology and natural science collections.



Fig. 4. Zlatozar Boev (2nd row, wearing a gray shirt) among the founders of the Bulgarian Ornithological Society at the former Institute of Ecology of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in Sofia. 08.06.2001.

Main scientific contributions

The contribution of Prof. Zlatozar Boev to the Bulgarian and world science is enormous and encompasses a variety of aspects. His basic scientific contributions to ornithology can be grouped into three main areas:

(1) Paleornithology and Archaeornithology

For 45 years he explored bird remains from 130 localities, turning Bulgaria into one of the best-studied countries in terms of fossil and subfossil avifauna. He found over 410 taxa and 318 species, 120 of which had been extinct in Bulgaria since the late Tertiary and Quaternary periods (Boev, 2023). Prof. Boev discovered and described 41 taxa, 5 genera, 35 species and 1 subspecies of fossil birds that were new to the science (Table 1). He discovered the first fossil remains of ostriches (Boev & Spasov, 2009), peacocks,

hornbills (Boev & Kovachev, 2007), snowy owls, waldrapps and many more in Bulgaria. For the first time in Europe, he discovered the distribution of a new order of birds-the tropical hornbills (Bucerotiformes). Based on his studies, in the 1990s, four Bulgarian localities of fossil avifauna (Varshets, Slivnitsa, Dorkovo and Muselievo) were included in the list of the most significant paleornithological localities in Europe, and the first two were ranked among the most important localities for Plio-Pleistocene avifauna in the entire Palearctic (Mlíkovský, 1996; Tyrberg, 1998).



Fig. 5. Zlatozar Boev on Gotsev peak in the Slavyanka mountain. 26.07.2025.

Table 1. List of avian taxa described by Zlatozar Boev

No	Latin name	English name
Genera		
1.	<i>Balcanas</i> (Boev 1998)	Balkan dabbling duck
2.	<i>Chauvireria</i> (Boev 1997)	Partridge of Cécile Mourer-Chauviré
3.	<i>Dobrostrurnus</i> (Boev 2020)	Dobrudzha-starling
4.	<i>Eremarida</i> (Boev 2012)	Rock-steppe lark
5.	<i>Euroceros</i> (Boev, Kovachev 2007)	European ground hornbill

Species		
6.	<i>Actitis balcanica</i> (Boev 1998)	Balkan sandpiper
7.	<i>Alauda xeravensis</i> (Boev 2012)	Dry-field skylark
8.	<i>Aquila kurochkini</i> (Boev 2013)	Eagle of Evgeniy Kurochkin
9.	<i>Balcanas pliocaenica</i> (Boev 1998)	Pliocene Balkan dabbling duck
10.	<i>Branta thessaliensis</i> (Boev, Koufos 2006)	Thessalian black goose
11.	<i>Buteo spassovi</i> (Boev, Kovachev 1998)	Buzzard of Nikolay Spassov
12.	<i>Chauvireria balcanica</i> (Boev 1997)	Balkan Partridge of Cécile Mourer-Chauviré
13.	<i>Chauvireria bulgarica</i> (Boev 2020)	Bulgarian Partridge of Cécile Mourer-Chauviré
14.	<i>Circaetos haemusensis</i> (Boev 2015)	Haemus Snake-eagle
15.	<i>Circaetos rhodopensis</i> (Boev 2012)	Rhodopean Snake-eagle
16.	<i>Coccothraustes balcanicus</i> (Boev 1998)	Balkan Hawfinch
17.	<i>Coccothraustes simeonovi</i> (Boev 1998)	Hawfinch of Simeon Simeonov
18.	<i>Cygnus verae</i> (Boev 2000)	Swan of Vera
19.	<i>Dobrostrurnus kardamensis</i> (Boev 2020)	Kardam Dobrudzha-starling
20.	<i>Eremarida xerophila</i> (Boev 2012)	Dry-loving rock-steppe lark
21.	<i>Eremophila prealpestris</i> (Boev 2012)	Pre-Alpine horned lark
22.	<i>Euroceros bulgaricus</i> (Boev, Kovachev 2007)	Bulgarian European ground hornbill
23.	<i>Falco bakalovi</i> (Boev 1999)	Falcon of Petar Bakalov
24.	<i>Falco bulgaricus</i> (Boev 2011)	Bulgarian falcon
25.	<i>Galerida bulgarica</i> (Boev 2012)	Bulgarian crested lark
26.	<i>Gallinula balcanica</i> (Boev, 1999)	Balkan moorhen
27.	<i>Geronticus balcanicus</i> (Boev, 1998)	Balkan bald ibis
28.	<i>Gyps bochenskii</i> (Boev, 2010)	Griffon of Zygmunt Bocheński
29.	<i>Lagopus balcanicus</i> (Boev, 1995)	Balkan ptarmigan
30.	<i>Loxia patevi</i> (Boev, 1999)	Crossbill of Pavel Patev
31.	<i>Lullula balcanica</i> (Boev 2012)	Balkan woodlark
32.	<i>Lullula slivnicensis</i> (Boev 2012)	Slivnitsa woodlark
33.	<i>Melanocorypha donchevi</i> (Boev 2012)	Black lark of Stefan Donchev
34.	<i>Melanocorypha serdicensis</i> (Boev 2012)	Serdica black lark
35.	<i>Otis hellenica</i> (Boev 2013)	Hellenic bustard
36.	<i>Phasianus bulgaricus</i> (Boev 2020)	Bulgarian pheasant
37.	<i>Pica praepica</i> (Boev 2021)	European pre-magpie
38.	<i>Porzana botunensis</i> (Boev 2015)	Botunya River crane
39.	<i>Regulus bulgaricus</i> (Boev, 1999)	Bulgarian firecrest
40.	<i>Tetrao rhodopensis</i> (Boev, 1998)	Rhodopean capercaillie
Subspecies		
41.	<i>Fulica atra pontica</i> (Boev, Karaivanova 2012)	Pontian Eurasian coot

(2) Morphology and ecology of recent birds

Morphological studies of herons are among the most detailed and elaborate studies ever conducted (Fig. 6.). Zlatozar Boev compiled a complete “Osteological Atlas” and an identification guide on all elements of the skeleton of the representatives of a family of birds, herons (Ardeidae), from the European avifauna, as well as studies on their bone morphological abnormalities (Boev, 1986). He studied the exterior and skeletal morphology of all heron species in Europe and established the related adaptation mechanisms and the evolution trends. He was the first scientist in the world to study the adaptations of this group with regards to their on-land movements and foraging, and established the correlation between their anatomical structure, the type of habitats they use, and the degree of adaptation to ichthyophagy (Boev, 1987 a; b; c).



Fig. 6. Zlatozar Boev with a night heron chick that fell from the nest. Tsibar Island, Danube River. 05.06.1984.

Zlatozar Boev also explored the breeding biology and ecology of rare and endangered species in Bulgaria (Fig. 7). With regard to the oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*), he was the first one to establish an intracontinental extension of the breeding area, reported an unknown new subspecies for the country, *Haematopus ostralegus longipes*, and also discovered new nesting sites (the first nesting of the species along the Danube) (Fig. 8). The survey on the diet of rare and protected diurnal and nocturnal raptors, such as the Eagle Owl (*Bubo bubo*), the Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*), the Eastern Imperial Eagle (*Aquila heliaca*), the Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*), and the Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*), carried out by Zlatozar Boev in collaboration with other researchers, was among the most detailed and long-term studies.

(3) Faunistics and zoogeography of recent birds

Zlatozar Boev was the first researcher to identify zoogeographically the entire composition of the modern avifauna of Bulgaria (419 species, 266 breeding). Prof. Boev studied the distribution of several dozens of bird species in Bulgaria, summarizing and

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elaborating the first comprehensive zoogeographical analysis of Bulgaria's contemporary avifauna (Boev, 1997). He implemented the first review and evaluation of bird studies carried out over the last 262 years (1744–2006), the composition of the avifauna of Bulgaria (96 Neogene, 160 Pleistocene, and 399 recent species) and the changes therein in the last 100 years, the importance of the Bulgarian territory for the migration and wintering of birds in Europe, migratory routes, wintering areas and the network of important bird sites, as well as the modern ornithographic regionalization of the country (Boev *et al.*, 2007).



Fig. 7. Zlatozar Boev during ornithological observation in the Chepan Mountain.
24.04.1993.

Besides his ornithological publications, Prof. Boev also published a series of articles on the history of the National Museum of Natural History, which contain a lot of information about the history of ornithology in Bulgaria. It should be mentioned that a significant part of his research has also been related to recent, subfossil and fossil mammals. He is the author of dozens of studies summarizing the past distribution of large mammals in Bulgaria - rhinoceros, tapirs, deer, camels, bear, lynxes, cave hyena, red wolf, leopard, ibexes, badger, the aurochs, beaver, monk seal, etc.

Bulgarian science owes a debt of gratitude to Prof. Boev, for he laid the foundations of Paleornithology in our country. Zlatozar Boev founded three new ornithological branches in Bulgaria: (1) osteology, (2) exterior morphology and (3) paleo- and archaeo-ornithology. In addition to Bulgaria, he has studied modern and fossil birds from Azerbaijan, Brazil, Vietnam, Greece, Kazakhstan, New Zealand, Serbia and Türkiye. For Greece, he reported for the first time 15 species unknown in the fossil record of the country. The description of the world's first fossil goose, the Thessalian goose (*Branta thessaliensis*) from Greece, proved the ancient origin (Miocene) of the genus differentiation.



Fig. 8. Zlatozar Boev during ornithological observation in the "Ibisha" nature reserve on the island of Tsibar in the Danube River. 22-28.05.1989.

Zlatozar Boev built the richest collections of fossil (Neogene and Pleistocene) and subfossil birds on the Balkan Peninsula and in Southeast Europe, a comparative osteological collection of recent birds and a scientific library (over 15,000 publications) on paleornithology and bird evolution (Fig. 9.). He created two new collections: (1) the osteological and (2) the paleo- and archaeo-ornithological collections (Boev, 2024).

Prof. Boev has participated with over 100 reports in national and international forums (Fig. 10.). He has also been part of dozens of field expeditions and research projects (Fig. 11.). Prof. Boev authored essays on a number of bird species for the second edition of the Bulgarian Red Data Book (Golemansky *et al.*, 2011) and the Atlas of breeding birds in Bulgaria (Iankov, 2007).

Prof. Boev's contributions to paleornithology are world-renowned, ranking him among the world's most respected specialists in this field. He is the author of over 930 scientific and popular science articles, books and textbooks, printed in more than 20 countries in Europe, Asia and North America, which makes him the most productive author in Bulgaria's ornithology.



Fig. 9. Zlatozar Boev and Prof. Nikolay Spasov before the presentation of their scientific work at the National Museum of Natural History, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, to foreign experts for international evaluation by the European Science Foundation and the European Federation of National Academies of Sciences. 09.07.2009.

Educational activity

Prof. Zlatozar Boev is also a leader in developing the scientific and educational capacity of the Bulgarian ornithological community. He was the supervisor of ten PhD students and four master students who developed their theses on different ornithological topics. Prof. Boev also participated in the training and evaluation of scientific personnel in paleornithology in Greece, Russia, Serbia, and Ukraine.

Zlatozar Boev has translated into Bulgarian and edited over 160 popular science books and 282 films (Fig. 12). He regularly contributes to two of Bulgaria's oldest journals: "The Fossil Record" in "Priroda" ("Nature"), published by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (since 2012) and "Game in the past on our lands" in "Lov i ribolov" (since 2022). In 2016, he was awarded the Prize of the Union of Translators in Bulgaria for his overall activity in the field of translation (specialized translation and editing of scientific and popular science literature from English).



Fig. 10. Zlatozar Boev (to the right of the tallest one in front of the entrance) among the participants in the Third International Symposium of the Society for Avian Paleontology and Evolution (SAPE) at the Senckenberg Natural History Institute and Museum in Frankfurt am Main. 21.06.1992.



Fig. 11. Zlatozar Boev (wearing a black shirt on the 2nd row) among participants in the Bulgarian-British archaeological expedition to the Roman city of Nicopolis ad Istrum at the village of Nikyup (Veliko Tarnovo Region). 1988 year.

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On the occasion of his 70th anniversary, the Scientific Council of NMNHS-BAS awarded him the “Academician Ivan Buresh” award in 2025 for his significant scientific contribution in the fields of ornithology, paleontology and archaeozoology, as well as for his contribution to the development of the museum. The Regional Museum of Natural History in Plovdiv awarded him the “70 Years of the Regional Museum of Natural History Plovdiv” award in the same year for his contribution to the cooperation between the two museums.



Fig. 12. Zlatozar Boev with Prof. Petar Beron at the presentation of the Bulgarian edition of the book "Animals. Illustrated Encyclopedia" (Bulgarian translation by Zlatozar Boev) at the National Museum of Natural History, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. 28.09.2009.

His promotion activity is extensive. Prof. Boev has had more than 70 interviews on radio, TV, and social media, and has written hundreds of popular science articles and books for children and older birders (Fig. 13). Zlatozar Boev has participated in dozens of scientific juries in procedures for academic scientific positions and scientists' degrees in the fields of zoology, paleontology, ecology, and hunting. He has reviewed hundreds of scientific publications in over 30 international, foreign and national specialized journals. He was a member of the editorial boards of Bulletin of the Natural History Museum – Plovdiv, Online ISSN 2534-9635; Print ISSN 2534-9627; ZooNotes — “Paisiy Hilendarsky” Plovdiv Univer, ISSN 1313-9916 and Natural Science and Advanced Technology Education / Education in Natural Sciences and High Technologies, ISSN 2738-7135 (print), ISSN 2738-7143 (online) AzBuki — Ministry of Education and Science.

Zlatozar Boev compiled the first Bulgarian-language dictionaries of the scientific names of all species of birds and mammals in the world (Boev, 2025 a; b; c).

It is difficult to briefly cover all the activities and contributions of this dedicated and tireless ornithologist. It would not be an exaggeration to say that he is the pillar of modern Bulgarian ornithology! May we wish him good health and many more great achievements in the second half of his life journey!



Fig. 13. Zlatozar Boev shows some of the emblematic exhibits at the National Museum of Natural History, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences to Prime Minister Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha and the Minister of Education and Science, Assoc. Prof. Daniel Valchev. 29.04.2009.

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