



Miscellaneous

Andon Darakchiev (1934-2018) – a prominent worker of Bulgarian ornithology

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Abstract. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Andon Iliev Darakchiev (1934–2018) was a prominent Bulgarian ornithologist whose career at Plovdiv University shaped generations of biologists and contributed substantially to national avifaunal research. He founded the university's ornithological collection, taught key zoological disciplines, and authored widely used textbooks and field guides. His study of the Chernatitsa Ridge remains a landmark work for the Western Rhodopes. Darakchiev published over 100 scientific and popular-science papers, containing valuable data on bird biology, ecology, and distribution. As founder of the university's Ornithology Circle, he supervised numerous theses and inspired future specialists in bird conservation. His contributions also supported the designation of several protected areas. This article provides a biographical overview and the most complete bibliography of his works to date.

Keywords: Andon Darakchiev, avifauna research, bird conservation, Bulgarian ornithology, ornithological bibliography, Plovdiv University



Fig. 1. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Andon Darakchiev (ca. 2010).

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Andon Iliev Darakchiev (Fig. 1.) was born in 1934 in the village of Malki Tsalim (Blagoevgrad Province, SW Bulgaria). In 1956 he graduated from Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski” and all his scientific career passed in the field of ornithology.

The name of Associate Professor Dr. Andon Iliev Darakchiev is inextricably linked to university biology education in Plovdiv. He entered Plovdiv University in 1963 and retired there in 2001.

After the establishment of the Department of Zoology, he created its ornithological collection of total dry-mounted preparations of the most common birds in Bulgaria.

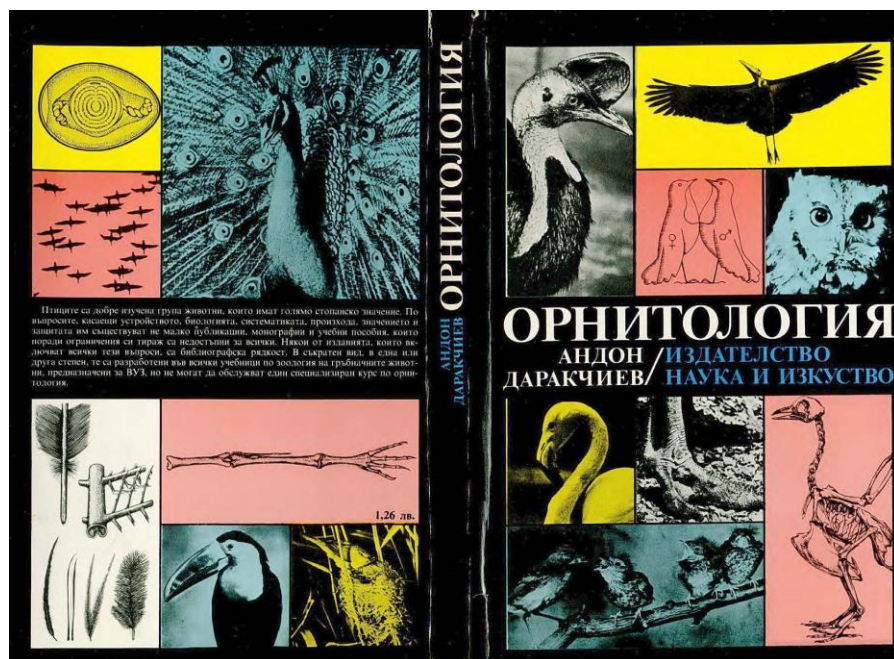


Fig. 2. Covers of the book “Ornithology” (Darakchiev, 1987).

A. Darakchiev has lectured on Vertebrate Zoology, Ornithology, Animal Behavior, Parkland Fauna. He is the author of university textbooks and study guides on ornithology (Figs 2, 3), and coauthor of textbooks for secondary schools. Assoc. Prof. A. Darakchiev was Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Chemistry and Biology of the university since 1979 to 1987.

In 1970 he obtained his PhD in the Faculty of Biology and since 1979 he is Associate Professor in that faculty. His comprehensive study (Darakchiev, 1970) on the avifauna of the Chernatitsa mountain Ridge in the Western Rhodopes still remains the most thorough and comprehensive study of this large and difficult-to-explore mountainous part of Bulgaria.

In 1993, Assoc. Prof. A. Darakchiev submitted his manuscript entitled: “Contribution to the abundance, density and reproductive biology of the nesting species of the Hirundinidae family in settlements” to the scientific council of the former Institute of Zoology – BAS for enrollment in doctoral studies for the degree of DSc (“Doctor of Biological Sciences”) – a product of his many years of research, mainly in Southern Bulgaria. Unfortunately, during the discussion of this work in early 1994, he was unable to gather the necessary votes to disclose this procedure.

Assoc. Prof. A. Darakchiev publishes his scientific works in Bulgarian, German, and French. They have been published in scientific journals in Bulgaria, Germany, and France.

In the present bibliography scientific publications in Bulgarian are cited verbatim according to their summaries in a foreign language. No corrections have been made in the translation, even when there is a discrepancy. It is also important to note that the surname of Assoc. Prof. A. Darakchiev in his scientific publications is spelled in five different ways: Darakchiev, Daraktchiev, Darakčiev, Daraktschiev, and Daraktschiew. Close colleagues and friends called Andon by the nickname Anilda (Anildata). He probably didn't mind and wasn't offended that "Anilda" seemed feminine.



Fig. 3. Front cover of the book “Guide to fieldwork in ornithology - Identification tables” (Darakchiev, 1983).

In his short biographical article about Assoc. Prof. Andon Darakchiev Bechev (2018) mentions that the number of his published scientific papers is over 80. The present list includes for the first time the complete bibliographic data for almost all 105 scientific and popular science publications of the author. Although most of them were published in regional scientific editions (mainly in the departmental scientific journal "Travaux scientifiques, Université de Plovdiv "Paissi Hilendarski", Biologie"), they contain extremely rich information on various issues of the biology and distribution of birds in Bulgaria. Many of these studies have remained the only ones of their kind or the only ones for the respective regions of the country. Thus, they represent a valuable contribution to ornithological research in Bulgaria.

In addition to being a field scientist and researcher, Assoc. Prof. A. Darakchiev was a remarkable lecturer at the university. It seemed that his work with students absorbed the main part of his strength and attention. In 1979, he founded an Ornithology Circle at the Faculty of Biology, in which he attracted and ignited the interest in birds of over 40

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students. Subsequently, they became his graduates and defended their diploma theses in the field of ornithology. Some of them are now prominent specialists and activists in the field of bird and nature conservation. According to Bechev (2018), one doctoral (PhD) and over 200 student diploma theses were successfully defended at the Plovdiv University “Paisiy Hilendarski” under his leadership. Among its graduates is the ornithologist Ventsislav Petkov - former director of the "Ecomuseum with Aquarium" in the city of Ruse and current director of "Plovdiv Zoo".

Assoc. Prof. Darakchiev’s nature conservation activities are mainly expressed in the preparation of scientifically substantiated proposals for the declaration of six new protected natural territories, one of which is the managed nature reserve “Atanasovsko Ezero” near the city of Burgas – one of the most important places for birds in Bulgaria. In 1988 members of the Ornithology Circle founded the Green Balkans Federation - one of the most active and influential environmental organizations in the country at present.



Fig. 4. Front cover of the book “Manual of Ornithology” (Darakchiev, 1988).

In the prime of his life, Assoc. Prof. A. Darakchiev published, albeit a short one, the first "Ornithology" (Fig. 2.) in Bulgarian (Darakchiev, 1987). To this day, it remains the only publication of its kind in the country.

In addition to the books included in this list, in 1989 A. Darakchiev prepared and submitted for publication his popular science book "Where Our Birds Come From and Where They Go". Unfortunately, it remained unpublished. His guides to identifying Bulgarian birds (Darakchiev, 1983, 1988; Figs 3, 4), however, are still used by students and naturalists. At the Plovdiv University he was a valued and respected colleague and lecturer (Figs 5, 6). He was also valued, respected and modest to his fellow ornithologists throughout the country.



Fig. 5. Assoc Prof. Andon Darakchiev (crouching in the middle) with his colleagues from Plovdiv University, Plovdiv, 1986.

Bibliography of scientific and popular-science publications of Andon Darakchiev

As mentioned above, in the present bibliographic list of the works of Assoc. Prof. Andon Darakchiev, scientific publications that have summaries in a foreign language are presented with their titles from the summary. However, their translation is often inconsistent with the original Bulgarian titles.

1966

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2. Darakchiev, A. 1966. Sanitaires of forests. *Eho*, 9/ 06.06.1966. (in Bulgarian).

1967

3. Beskov, V., Undshian, E., Simeonov, S. & Darakčiev, A. 1967. Neue angaben ober die verbreitung einiger amphibien und reptilien in Bulgarien. *Bulletin de l'Institut de zoologie et Musée, BAS*, 25, 1967, 5-10. (in Bulgarian, German summary).
4. Daraktschiev, A. 1967. Über die vermehrung der gebirgsstehe (*Motacilla cinerea* Tunstall) im Plovdiver Bezirk. *Travaux scientifiques, École Normale Supérieure Plovdiv – Bulgarie. Natura*, 5 (3): 139-145. (in Bulgarian, German summary).



Fig. 6. Assoc Prof. Andon Darakchiev, Stara Zagora, c. 2015.

1968

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1971

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