

## INTERESTING OLD SPECIMENS OF RARE BIRDS FOUND IN SLOVENIA IN THE COLLECTION OF THE UNIVERSALMUSEUM JOANNEUM, GRAZ, AUSTRIA

**Zanimivi stari preparati redkih vrst ptic,  
najdenih v Sloveniji, iz zbirke v ustanovi  
Universalmuseum Joanneum, Gradec,  
Avstrija**

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The Universalmuseum Joanneum (UMJ) was founded as Landesmuseum Joanneum in 1811 by the Estates of Styria and named in the honour of Archduke Johann (FELDNER 2015). The initial collection was mainly based on specimens presented to the museum by the Archduke himself and later expanded by purchases and donations. The addition of Count Egger's collection in 1815 was particularly important. Although a formal treatise is missing, contemporary sources describe it as containing most Inner Austrian species, as well as specimens from Carniola collected by Hacquet and Scopoli (ANONYMUS 1815). The zoological section was initially the smallest in the museum, but rose in prominence after assuming teaching roles for the local lyceum and the University of Graz (Karl-Franzens-Universität). The collection was systematized in 1830 and further expanded by a donation of about 1000 European specimens by Josef Höpfner in 1839 (GÖTH 1861, FELDNER *et al.* 2006, FELDNER 2015). A donation by Emperor Ferdinand a year later and the purchase of around 500 eggs belonging to about 300 species were two more important additions to the ornithological collection. After the merging of UMJ's and the University's collection in 1863, few ornithological specimens were added until the appointment of August Mojsisovics von Mojsvár as curator in 1889, who procured some important additions, notably the collections (or parts thereof) of Pater Blasius Hanf and Count Carl von Attems-Petzenstein as well as Othmar and Ernst Reiser, whose collection contained specimens from what is now Slovenia. The latter are also the only collectors known to have consistently supplied specimens from Slovenia to the UMJ. In 1899,

the entire collection was inventarized, catalogized and a unified nomenclature system was drawn up to avoid inconsistencies in the catalogue. After the death of August Mojsisovics von Mojsvár in 1897 the number of additional specimens decreased rapidly as well as the regularity of the formerly annually published reports of the UMJ. The latter was mainly justified by the beginning of World War I. The last report in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was published in 1929 to be continued as late as 2003 (FELDNER 2015). As of 2003 the collection contained 1756 skins of 700 species, 150 skeletons of 60 species, 350 egg sets and 100 nests (ROSELAAR 2003). It grows by approximately 20 specimens annually, mainly from local birds.

In summer 2014, I visited the UMJ on a number of occasions to check several specimens and skins referred to in the Styrian literature. This work was part of a project, which led to the publication of Avifauna Steiermark in 2015 (ALBEGGER *et al.* 2015). After several visits to the UMJ, on a few occasions in the company of my colleagues Sebastian Zinko and Michael Tiefenbach, I noticed a reasonable number of specimens of Slovenian origin. I decided to photograph and collect these records to supplement the knowledge of the occurrence of rare birds in Slovenia, summarized by HANŽEL & ŠERE (2011). I checked the eight inventory books of the UMJ, which meant controlling all inscriptions for a period of 204 years from the opening of the UMJ. Specimens that are no longer in the collection are nevertheless mentioned in the summary, even though their identification cannot be proven. The list includes rare species, as defined by HANŽEL & ŠERE (2011) and HANŽEL (2014), as well as some considered interesting in the sense of their historic or regional distribution. The toponyms are cited directly from the inventory book. The toponyms were translated into Slovene using CANNONI & JERKO (2014). Some specimens are not exactly dated. If possible, an estimate of the supposed time of its origin is given. The estimate was based on other dated specimens, sometimes even collected by the same person, listed adjacent to the undated specimen in the inventory book. Where the person, who transferred the specimen as a gift to the UMJ or from whom the UMJ bought the specimen, is not mentioned, this information was not given in the inventory books. A reference is added to the specimens that were unequivocally mentioned in subsequent published works.

Velvet Scoter *Melanitta fusca*

inventory number indeterminate, 1 individual, before 1842, Windisch-Landsberg / Podčetrtek, specimen no longer in the collection (ATTEMS *et al.* 1842)

Velvet Scoter *Melanitta fusca*

20482, 1 ♂, undated (19<sup>th</sup> century), Lembach bei Marburg / Limbuš, bought from Anton Godez, specimen no longer in the collection

Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*

inventory number indeterminate, 1 individual, 24. 5. 1922, Kranichsfelder Teich / Rački ribniki, specimen no longer in the collection (REISER 1925)

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*

20163, 1 ad., undated (probably around 1880), Windisch-Landsberg / Podčetrtek, donated by Othmar & Ernst Reiser (REISER 1925) (Figure 1)

Black Vulture *Aegypius monachus*

20157, 1 ad., undated (19<sup>th</sup> century), St. Leonhard in den Windischen Büheln / Lenart v Slovenskih goricah, donated by Othmar & Ernst Reiser (REISER 1925) (Figure 2)

This is the first or second record for Slovenia.

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*

20145, 1 icy, 24. 7. 1896, Unteres Pössnitz Tal (Marburg/Dr.) / spodnja Pesniška dolina, donated by Othmar & Ernst Reiser (REISER 1925) (Figure 3)

This is the first record for Slovenia.

Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*

20147, 1 individual, 1885, Windisch-Landsberg / Podčetrtek, specimen no longer in the collection, donated by Othmar & Ernst Reiser

Booted Eagle *Aquila pennata*

20409, 1 individual, 4. 7. 1893, Marburg / Maribor, bought from Swaty (Maribor) (Figure 4)

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*

20140, 1 icy ♂, 29. 7. 1887, Rothwein bei Marburg / Razvanje, donated by Othmar & Ernst Reiser (Figure 5)

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

1240, 1 individual, 11. 4. 1851, St. Leonhard / Lenart v Slovenskih goricah



**Figure 1:** Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*, undated (probably around 1880), Windisch-Landsberg, donated by Othmar & Ernst Reiser (photo: S. Zinko)

**Slika 1:** Čopasta čaplja *Ardeola ralloides*, nedatirana (verjetno okrog 1880), Podčetrtek, donirala Othmar & Ernst Reiser (foto: S. Zinko)



**Figure 2:** Black Vulture *Aegypius monachus*, undated (19<sup>th</sup> century), St. Leonhard in den Windischen Büheln, donated by Othmar & Ernst Reiser (photo: M. Tiefenbach)

**Slika 2:** Rjavi jastreb *Aegypius monachus*, nedatiran (19. stoletje), Lenart v Slovenskih goricah, donirala Othmar & Ernst Reiser (foto: M. Tiefenbach)

Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor*

20170, 1 ad., XI. 1892, St. Johann an der Pettau-Strasse/ Šentjanž na Dravskem polju, Starše, donated by Othmar & Ernst Reiser (REISER 1925) (Figure 6)

This is the first record for Slovenia.

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*

20178, 1 1cy, 1892, Bergenthal bei Pickern / Vrhov Dol pri Pekrah, donated by Othmar & Ernst Reiser (Figure 7)

This could be one of the three birds shot during the influx of 1890 (REISER 1891).

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*

20179, 1 1cy, X. 1892, no location given, donated by Othmar & Ernst Reiser, shot by Bernhaut (Figure 8)

This is the first record for Slovenia. REISER (1925) identified this bird as a Parasitic Skua *S. parasiticus* shot by "the famous hunter Bernhaut" at Laßnitz

near Lembach (Laznica pri Limbušu). This is also the identification originally given in the inventory book, which was later crossed out and changed. The mention of Bernhaut in the inventory book unequivocally links the specimen with the "Parasitic Skua" mentioned by Reiser.

Ural Owl *Strix uralensis*

1173, 1 individual, undated (19<sup>th</sup> century), Kranichsfeld/Rače, specimen no longer in the collection

SEIDENSACHER (1864) mentions that a breeding pair was shot at this site during a fox hunt on 22 Feb 1847. The record is also cited by REISER (1925), but it is unclear, whether the specimen formerly at the Joanneum indeed concerns one of these two birds.

Ural Owl *Strix uralensis*

20136, 1 individual, 1885, Windisch-Landsberg/ Podčetrtek, collected by Dr. Karl Ipavic, donated by Othmar & Ernst Reiser (REISER 1925)



**Figure 3:** Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*, 24 Jul 1896, Unteres Pössnitz Tal (Marburg/Dr.), donated by Othmar & Ernst Reiser (photo: S. Zinko)

**Slika 3:** Rjasta kanja *Buteo rufinus*, 24. 7. 1896, spodnja Pesniška dolina, donirala Othmar & Ernst Reiser (foto: S. Zinko)



**Figure 4:** Booted Eagle *Aquila pennata*, 4 Jul 1893, Marburg, bought from Swaty (Maribor) (photo: M. Tiefenbach)

**Slika 4:** Mali orel *Aquila pennata*, 4. 7. 1893, Maribor, kupljeno od Swatyja (Maribor) (foto: M. Tiefenbach)



**Figure 5:** Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, 29 Jul 1887, Rothwein bei Marburg, donated by Othmar & Ernst Reiser (photo: S. Zinko)

**Slika 5:** Južna postovka *Falco naumanni*, 29. 7. 1887, Razvanje, donirala Othmar & Ernst Reiser (foto: S. Zinko)



**Figure 6:** Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor*, XI. 1892, St. Johann an der Pettau Strasse, donated by Othmar & Ernst Reiser (photo: M. Tiefenbach)

**Slika 6:** Puščavski tekalec *Cursorius cursor*, XI. 1892, Šentjanž na Dravskem polju, Starše, donirala Othmar & Ernst Reiser (foto: M. Tiefenbach)

#### Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*

20224, 1 icy ♂, undated (probably around 1880), Bergauer Holzschlag am Bacher Gebirge / neznan kraj na Pohorju, specimen no longer in the collection, donated by Othmar & Ernst Reiser

REISER (1925) mentions that the lumberjack Wutte shot an immature male in the eastern Pohorje Mts at an altitude of 800 m a.s.l. in 1891.

#### Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon*

28574, 1 individual, undated (probably 1892–1895), Lembach / Limbuš, bought from Anton Godez

#### Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*

20222, 1 ad. ♂, 1880, Melling / Melje, donated by Othmar & Ernst Reiser

#### Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia bifasciata*

20228, 1 ♂, XII. 1889, Wiener Graben bei Marburg / Vinarski potok med Kamnico in Vinarjem, donated by Othmar & Ernst Reiser (REISER 1925)

This is the first or second record for Slovenia. Another bird shot in Ljubljana was exhibited in the Slovenian Museum of Natural History in Ljubljana in 1890.

The significance of these specimens for the avifauna of Slovenia is manifold. Firstly, they represent the first or second records of certain species in Slovenia (Black Vulture, Long-legged Buzzard, Long-tailed Skua,

Cream-coloured Courser, Two-barred Crossbill) which remain very rare, some of which were only observed more than a century after these first records (HANŽEL & ŠERE 2011). The standard of documentation (often only the year of acquisition or observation, not the full date, is given) does not permit differentiation between the first and second national records. Secondly, the specimens also serve as a point of reference for the breeding birds of Slovenia: both by documenting the occurrence of formerly common, but now extinct, breeders (Lesser Kestrel, Woodchat Shrike) and by providing information on the historical breeding distribution of species which are now absent from Styria or are localized breeders at sites which differ from those documented in the collection (Ural Owl, Rock Thrush). Finally, these specimens also highlight the importance of UMJ's collection as a key element in the process of gathering a historical overview of Slovenia's avifauna, which has not yet been undertaken.

**Acknowledgments:** I would like to thank the staff of the UMJ, especially Mag. Wolfgang Pail and Dr. Ursula Stockinger, who allowed me access, supported my work and were very helpful concerning specific questions concerning the collection. Moreover, I would like to thank Sebastian Zinko and Michael Tiefenbach, who assisted me during some visits and provided the photos. Hopefully, in the (near) future a more extensive paper about the whole, highly interesting collection of the UMJ will be published to fill the regrettable gap, which has not been done so far.





**Figure 7:** Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*, 1892, Bergenthal bei Pickern, donated by Othmar & Ernst Reiser (photo: E. Albegger)

**Slika 7:** Lopatasta govnačka *Stercorarius pomarinus*, 1892, Vrhov Dol pri Pekrah, donirala Othmar & Ernst Reiser (foto: E. Albegger)



**Figure 8:** Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*, X. 1892, no location given (probably Laßnitz near Lemberg), donated by Othmar & Ernst Reiser (photo: E. Albegger)

**Slika 8:** Dolgorepa govnačka *Stercorarius longicaudus*, X. 1892, lokacija ni podana (verjetno Laznica pri Limbušu), donirala Othmar & Ernst Reiser (foto: E. Albegger)

## Povzetek

Med študijskimi obiski ustanove Universalmuseum Joanneum v Gradcu v Avstriji sem odkril več preparatov redkih vrst ptic, ustrelenih v 19. stoletju na območju današnje Slovenije. V članku predstavljam pregled teh preparatov, skupaj s fotografijami še ohranjenih. Posebno pozornost zbuja jo preparati rjavega jastreba *Aegypius monachus* (prvi ali drugi podatek za Slovenijo), rjaste kanje *Buteo rufinus* (prvi podatek za Slovenijo), puščavskega tekalca *Cursorius cursor* (prvi podatek za Slovenijo), dolgorepo govnačko *Stercorarius longicaudus* (prvi podatek za Slovenijo) ter beloperutega krivokljuna *Loxia bifasciata* (prvi ali drugi podatek za Slovenijo).

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Prispelo / Arrived: 23. 11. 2014

Accepted / Sprejeto: 20. 1. 2016