

Bohumil Král
(4. 1. 1941 - 13. 11. 2020)

Bohumil Král left us forever, he will remain in our memories

The proverbial Friday the thirteenth this time fulfilled its sinister reputation. RNDr. Bohumil Kral, CSc. passed away this morning. Pain message! Sadness! He belonged to my world for years and now he has left it forever! Nevertheless, he will remain part of it. In the memories of our countless meetings and shared events.

We were brought together by a common interest in herpetology. As a participant in the inaugural meeting in 1973, Bohumil Král fundamentally contributed to the establishment of the Herpetological Section of the Zoological Society at the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, so I - at that time a grammar school student obsessed with herpetology - looked at him with due respect. Time passed and in addition to a common admiration for the realm of reptiles and amphibians, we began to be united by professional cooperation. Gradually, our decades-long friendship also developed, during which our scientific fields, the surrounding world and ourselves changed radically, but it itself remained.

Bohumil Král was born on January 4, 1941 in Prague. In 1963 he completed under the guidance of a zoologist doc. RNDr. Walter Černý at the Department of Systematic Zoology his study at the Faculty of Science of Charles University in Prague (where he was also awarded a doctorate in 1984) and subsequently obtained an internal postgraduate study at the Institute of Vertebrate Research of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in Brno, graduating in 1969. As an inter, he stayed in Germany (GDR), Yugoslavia and Poland.

The life of Bohumil Král was fundamentally influenced by the opportunity to work in the Soviet Siberian research center Akademgorodok near Novosibirsk, from where he got an opportunity to work at the then very difficult to access places. I eagerly awaited the experiences with which he returned home. There were many of them - he lived in the civilization of the then almost untouched kingdom of Ussurian tiger in the Sichote-Alin mountain range, in the Central Asian deserts and elsewhere, always faithful to his beloved herpetology, so he brought back home remarkable documentation of herpetofauna of visited places. He used this material for attractive lectures at a number of herpetological sessions, of which he was an active participant. He was popular for his friendly nature, sense of humor, kindness and storytelling skills. We could not get enough of his stories and anecdotes brought from his stay in the Soviet Union, sometimes told in brilliant Russian, at such meetings. It was similar later, when he was given the opportunity to work in exotic Cuba, which was another important milestone in his life, and he returned full of experiences - herpetological and the others.

The year 1987 was a crucial milestone for Bohumil Král. He left his academic career and started working as a chief zoologist at Brno Zoo. In 1989 he moved to Prague Zoo as a zoologist. Our professional paths met there. In the same year, I started working at the Ethological department of the Institute of Physiology of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, detached in Prague Zoo. The following year, Bohumil Král became the director of Prague Zoo, under which I also moved, including the relevant workplace.

It was a time of great change. Bohumil Král had immense credit for the incorporation of the Prague Zoo (and - as the then president of the Union of Czech and Slovak Zoos - another Czechoslovak zoos) into the international community of zoos. Thanks to his immediate, friendly and cordial behaviour, he quickly gained many friends among the directors of that time and other employees of many foreign zoos, as I was able to appreciate during our joint trips around the world of zoos. He was at the establishment of the European Association of Zoos and Aquariums (1992) and successfully integrated the Prague Zoo into it. He was a member of the International Union of Zoo Directors and was responsible for the admission of the Prague Zoo to the successor World Association of Zoos and Aquariums. He understood the need for international cooperation of zoos and the need for active involvement in building international relations. He promoted the zoo's involvement in the protection of endangered species in the wild and opened cooperation of Prague zoo with the IUCN - for example, in the protection of rare species of iguanas. With the same understanding, he continued the legacy of the former long-time director of the Prague Zoo, prof. RNDr. Zdeněk Veselovský, DrSc., in support of research activities in zoos.

By the time Bohumil Král was the director of Prague Zoo (1990 - 1997), the idea of building an Indonesian jungle or the Giant Tortoise Pavilion was born. The heart of the herpetologist did not deny in him even at this time. In the slightest, for example, I did not have any problem to persuade him to determine the atrium in the big cats pavilion, originally conceived as a purely botanical part, for the breeding of Cuban iguanas. At that time, zoos had very limited knowledge about their husbandry. In the Prague Zoo, however, a very successful project started, when the methodology of their perspective long-term breeding was developed and the Prague Zoo became a very significant breeder of these impressive lizards.

Bohumil Král once asked me what kind of reptile I would like to see in the reptile collection of Prague Zoo. Whether it is realistic to get it or not. After a moment's thought, I said the Guyana caiman lizard. Incredibly interesting species! And then completely unavailable! A short time later, he called me and mischievously informed me that he managed to gain caiman lizards for Prague Zoo! A miracle is done! The Prague Zoo then played a key role in establishing their population in human care in European zoos. And I could go on...

In 1998, Bohumil Král returned to the Brno Zoo, where he worked as a zoological director and subsequently in other positions. This did not prevent the continuation of our friendly and working relationships, when, for example, we formulated the basic concept of today's successful Brno Zoo program for the turtle conservation in Indonesia, which we named Kura Kura. At the Brno Zoo, Bohumil Král continued intensively to develop relations with zoos at the Eurasian Regional Association of Zoos and Aquariums, taking advantage of his previous rich experience with this part of the world. He was a very respected personality here. I remember a recent joint visit to Akademgorodok, where he got again after many years. Tense expectations and then a genuine emotion at a reunion after such a long time! Wherever he was, he always built lasting friendships!

Bohumil Král contributed to the development of the national zoology and to the formation of Czechoslovak herpetology, made a significant contribution to the development of Czech and Slovak zoos, and helped in the modernization of some

member zoos of the Eurasian Association. He has earned popularity and respect in the zoo community. He became an honorary member of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums, the Eurasian Regional Association of Zoos and Aquariums and the Union of Czech and Slovak Zoos. We have experienced turbulent times of profound changes in our world, and we have experienced many beautiful and uplifting things together.

**Goodbye Bohumil! I was honored! You remain in my memories!
Honor Your memory!**

RNDr. Ivan Reháč, CSc.
Prague Zoo

In Prague, November 13, 2020



RNDr. Bohumil Král, CSc. - as a zoologist at Prague zoo in 1989.
Photo Vladimír Motyčka/Prague Zoo