

The History of Exhibitions Organized by the Warsaw Zoological Museum

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Abstract. The first zoological exhibition open to public was that organized by Zoological Cabinet in 1819 in its seat at the University of Warsaw in Krakowskie Przedmieście street. The exhibition was open for 116 years, being gradually enlarged and modernized. After the fire in 1935 the Cabinet, transformed earlier into the State Zoological Museum, was transferred to the building in Wilcza street. In the new location, no exhibition were organized until 1946. After the War, the Institute held exhibitions sporadically. Regular exhibition activity has been resumed in the last few years. The successive exhibitions of the Museum are mentioned and described in the article.

Key words: zoological exhibition, Zoological Cabinet, State Zoological Museum, Warsaw.

The Zoological Cabinet, set up in 1819, was meant to be a scientific and didactic institution auxiliary to the then Royal University of Warsaw. Its first temporary lodgings were two small rooms, on the ground floor and on the first floor, in Casimirus Palace at Krakowskie Przedmieście Street. These premises hosted the first zoological exhibition launched by the Cabinet in 1819. That exhibition remained open for 116 years, despite the complicated history of the institution which organized it. In 1823 the Cabinet's collection was relocated to a three times bigger setting in a newly-erected university building originally intended to house the Arts Faculty. 22 new glass

display cabinets and a number of smaller show-cases were purchased and the 33 display cabinets already at the Cabinet's disposal were remade and modernized. The cabinets displayed specimens of common animal species arranged on a taxonomic basis. Scientific collections and items presented at exhibitions were not stored separately. The Zoological Cabinet with over 10,000 exhibits was open to the public on two days a week. The relocation of the Cabinet to the new spacious setting was also meant as temporary but somehow the collections remained there for over 100 years, until 1935. The Museum, organized in accordance with the custom of the time, was very popular with Warsaw's citizens. The zoological exhibition was attended by crowds of people over several generations, as illustrated by frequent mentions in contemporary newspapers.

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In 1887 the Branickis' Zoological Museum was established. Its collections were on display to the public in the halls of Count Xawery Branicki's palace at Frascati Gardens. In 1919, the Zoological Cabinet and the Branickis' Museum merged to form the Zoological Department of the National Museum of Natural History. The Museum and its exhibition halls were still situated at Krakowskie Przedmieście. The name of the institution was changed in 1921 to the Polish State Museum of Natural History, and then in 1928, to the State Zoological Museum. The Museum took on the exhibiting tasks of the Zoological Cabinet. In 1935 part of the building of the State Zoological Museum was destroyed in a fire. The specimens being exhibited were also burnt. It was then that the still-unsolved problem of finding a suitable location for the Zoological Museum, and especially for the exhibition halls, presented itself for the first time. After the 1935 fire, the institution had to be moved to another location. It was transferred from the Warsaw University building to an edifice at 64 Wilcza Street built in 1910 and formerly housing a school of commerce. No exhibition was organized at the new site before World War II as the premises were not suitable for this purpose. It was only in 1947 that a new exposition was opened. Thanks to the efforts of Stanisław Feliksiak and on his initiative, a small set of specimens representing all major systematic groups of animals (except the protozoa) was selected for viewing. Both indigenous and foreign fauna were included. For a number of years the exhibition served as a teaching aid for zoology teachers. It originally occupied three small rooms in a one-storey extension overlooking Wilcza Street. One room housed specimens of invertebrates, another showed fish, reptilians and amphibians, while the third one was devoted to mammals. Three more rooms were incorporated in time and one of them was set aside for special occasions. However, it could by no means replace the old setting in a university building at Krakowskie Przedmieście. Therefore, initiatives were made to build proper exhibition rooms.

The Department of Exhibitions and Popularization at the Institute of Zoology was very active. In

1955 two short-term exhibitions were organized and presented in the small rooms at Wilcza Street: "The ten years of our Institution" in July and "Traditions of Friendship and Cooperation at our Institution" in October. The Department of Exhibitions and Popularization collaborated with other zoology promotion centres, borrowing specimens for various exhibitions such as "The Origins of Man" and "The Protection of Nature" organized at the Palace of Science and Culture in 1956. On September 1, 1956, a short-term exhibition was opened in an exhibition room at Wilcza Street presenting reptilians and their position in the evolution of the animal world. The title was "The phylogeny and systematic position of reptilians". The exhibition was on display until March 31, 1957. That year also saw complete refurbishment of the exhibition hall, now designated as a place where the visitors could "get prepared" before going on to see other parts of the exhibition grounds. A table of geographical distribution of animals was placed there together with the genealogical tree of the animal kingdom.

In January 1957 an Exhibition Committee was established under the leadership of S. Feliksiak. It collaborated closely with the Department of Exhibitions and Popularization towards constant improvement of the exhibition and enhancement of its scientific and didactic values. A relevant working group was also formed, chaired by Antoni Goljan.

Since there seemed to be little chance for a new building to be constructed for the zoological exhibition, the Board of the Institute of Zoology, set up by the Polish Academy of Sciences in 1953 on the basis of the State Zoological Museum, accepted the offer for exhibition space put forward by the Board of the Palace of Science and Culture. Six exhibition halls occupying a total area of 800 sq. m. were rented with a view to organizing an exhibition there. In the period 1959-1976 permanent exhibitions and a number of short-term exhibitions were shown in these halls. The permanent exhibition, with two basic sections: vertebrates and invertebrates, was the result of joint efforts of all the staff of the Institute. It was prepared and supervised by A. Goljan. The

graphic design was developed by Jerzy Świecimski, Jan Tereszczenko and Bratysław Wolczański.

One of the first expositions housed at the Palace of Culture and Science was a short-term exhibition entitled "Charles Darwin, his life and work", opened on February 14, 1959. The idea was developed by the working group chaired by A. Goljan, and J. Tereszczenko was the author of graphic design. The exposition celebrated the 150th anniversary of Charles Darwin's birth and the 100th anniversary of the publication of his fundamental work on evolution. It was closed before the end of the year. In the same year the exhibition at Wilcza Street was closed and the extension to the Museum's headquarters dismantled.

On June 17, 1960, the first permanent exhibition, "The evolution of vertebrates", was opened at the Palace of Culture. It occupied 4 halls with a total area of 400 sq. m. The mode of presentation was problem-based. Diagrams, tables, models and anatomic preparations prevailed among the exhibits, with relatively few specimens of animals. The exposition and the issues it addressed were accessible to the general public. The programme accounted for the requirements of the school curriculum. The visitors could track the evolution of vertebrates over a few million years and see how the continuous struggle for survival shaped different body organs, how it made entire tribes of animals develop and disappear. Lovers of nature could admire beautiful specimens of indigenous and exotic animals, including extinct forms. Starting from January 1963 the exposition was modernized with new show-cases, exhibits and wall charts added. It was opened again on September 1.

Another exhibition presented in 1960 was a short term one under the title "Protection of Nature". It accompanied the International Nature Protection Conference in Warsaw. Occupying 90 sq.m., it was shown from June 17 to February 1 the next year.

March 7, 1961 saw the opening of a new short-lasting exhibition "Ornithological photography", organized by the Ornithological Section of the Polish Zoological Society. It was closed on April

1. The exhibits were 120 photographs made by 8 members of the Section, including employees of the Institute of Zoology, mostly non-professional photographers.

On October 28, 1961, a second section of the permanent exhibition was opened under the name of "Review of Invertebrates". It displayed invertebrates arranged taxonomically. The idea was to present a large number of groups of invertebrate animals using a large number of specimens supplemented by tables showing anatomy, developmental cycles and genealogical relations between the groups. About 250 formalin preparations were presented alongside 460 dry preparations (of sponges, corals and mollusca) and 1000 specimens of insects. There were also 100 graphic charts, 60 photographs and one sculpture. The section introduced visitors to a great number of animal forms. A variety of shapes and colours was illustrated in the photographs. The exhibition, situated in the largest hall of 250 sq.m., also addressed the problem of animal and human pests.

A short-term exhibition on "Animal geography" was opened on September 1, 1962 in a 90-sq.m. hall. It was managed by A. Goljan, B. Wolczyński prepared the graphic design and A. Czajkowski supervised the production of wall charts. The exposition presented the geographical distribution of animals in the world as well as their migrations.

The permanent display and short-term exhibitions prepared by the staff of the Institute became popular all over the country. They enjoyed a good reputation among the employees of other Natural Museums and representatives of various Museums in Poland came to seek advice or offered to co-operate with the Institute. The Regional Museum in Białowieża National Park asked the Institute to lend know-how support to an exposition to be shown in the Museum's newly-erected building. The Regional Museum in Olsztyn asked for zoological exhibits. The Museum of the Flora and Fauna of the Bieszczady Mountains in Lesko asked for assistance in the preparation of expositions. The Institute responded to the requests by entering into co-operation with these institutions. The Institute was also invited to participate, along with 10 other Museums, in a large exhibition on

the development of Polish Museums during the 20 years of People's Republic of Poland showing in the National Museum in Warsaw in 1964. At the same time the entire team of the Section of Exhibition and Popularization was being involved in organizing an exhibition at Warsaw University concerned with the 100th anniversary of the Central School.

On December 4, 1964 at the Palace of Culture, an exhibition was opened documenting the then PAS Department of Palaeozoology's expedition to the Gobi desert in 1963 and 1964. The exhibition was organized in collaboration with the Scientific Board of the Department of Palaeozoology.

Over the years 1964-1976 the Department of Exhibitions and Popularization shared the experience in organizing exhibitions with other museums all over the country. Co-operation was started with the Museum of the Chair of Evolutionism of Łódź University, Świętokrzyskie Museum in Kielce, the Natural Science Museum on the Święty Krzyż Mountain, the Natural Science Museum in Ustrzyki Dolne, the Museum of the PAS Systematic Zoology Department in Cracow, the Regional Museum in Nowa Sól, Kampinos National Park Museum, Babia Góra National Park Museum, Karkonosze National Park Museum, Wolin National Park Museum and the Museums in Gorzów Wielkopolski and Kwidzyń. Assistance was provided concerning the content projects of exhibitions, specimens were lent, new preparations made and skeletonizing techniques explained during training seminars.

On June 1, 1976 the permanent exhibition at the Palace of Culture and the skeletonizing laboratory were taken over by the PAS Botanical Garden in Powsin. A Museum of Evolution was formed as a division of the Botanical Garden. The Museum is currently part of the PAS Institute of Palaeobiology. The exhibition work of the PAS Institute of Zoology was suspended.

At the end of 1992, the PAS Museum and Institute of Zoology, still situated at Wilcza Street, resumed its exhibition activities. A relevant working group was formed under the leadership of Paweł Kozłowski. Its first accomplishment was "The Humming Birds" exhibition, showing from

January 1993 to February 1994 in a hall supplied by the Museum of Evolution at the Palace of Culture. In the initial period, the working group also contributed its logistic experience and professional knowledge to preparing the zoological section of an exhibition entitled "Benedykt Dybowski (1833-1930)", presented in the Museum of Independence between June 25 and October 31 1993.

At the beginning of 1993, as a result of talks with the Presidium of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the PAS, Institute of Palaeobiology the PAS Museum and Institute of Zoology was given access to a 100-sq.m. exhibition hall at the Museum of Evolution. In April 1993 preparations were started for a large-scale exposition entitled "The animals of South America (from the collections of the PAS Museum and Institute of Zoology)", which was eventually opened on February 14, 1994. The aim of the exhibition was to present the richness and variety of the exciting animal world of South America, while accentuating the contribution of Polish travellers and scientists to the exploration of the Continent's wildlife. The majority of specimens were collected by expeditions in the years 1865-1924. The expeditions were organized first by the Zoological Cabinet in Warsaw, and later - in the 1920s - by the State Zoological Museum. The Museum and Institute of Zoology has inherited these collections and seeks to continue the scientific traditions they are a token of.

The exhibition displays a variety of groups of invertebrates: sponges, corals, crabs, millipedes, arachnids, snails and insects (altogether about 600 specimens representing 450 species); and vertebrates: reptiles, birds and mammals (250 specimens of 240 species). An aquarium has been installed to exhibit species of South American fresh-water aquarium fishes. "The Rainforest Animals" is the title of a specially-designed structure consisting of a rack with birds and mammals affixed next to photographs showing the different forest floors where the animals can be found.

The exhibits are accompanied by a multitude of informative wall charts. The first one "The Au-

thors of the South American Animals Collections at the PAS Museum and Institute of Zoology" gives a overview of the history of the Institute from the establishment of the Zoological Cabinet in 1819. It also shows a calendar of expeditions to South America made by Polish explorers alongside quotations from their letters and the outcome of their exploratory and collecting work. Another chart "The Vegetation Zones of South America" shows a map of South America indicating the boundaries of the main vegetation zones illustrated in photographs. A third chart presents "Threats to South American Wildlife" such as the reduction in area of natural rain forests over the last few decades (based on satellite photographs) and endangered species of neotropical animals. The last chart presents "The Origin and Development of South American Fauna" by showing the relations between present-day South African mammals and mammals inhabiting other continents.

For the first three years there was also an ethnographic section showing various items made by South American Indians from animal skin, feathers, bone, beetle integument, as well as animal motifs in their artwork.

June 1994 brought the revival of the Department of Exhibition and Popularization, first managed by P. Kozłowski, and then by Katarzyna Wiśniewska.

In December 1994, in co-operation with the Museum of Hunting and Equestrianism and the Polish Foundation for Science Advancement, an exposition entitled "Sea Shells - Celebrating the 170th Anniversary of the Birth of Władysław Lubomirski, Naturalist and Conchologist" was opened in the Koszary Kantonistów building in Łazienki Park in Warsaw. The exposition was a tribute to Władysław Lubomirski, a naturalist and scientist, a collector of shells. His huge collection of shells of sea snails now belongs to the Museum and Institute of Zoology. The exhibition was also intended to acquaint visitors with the life and biology of sea snails and mollusca. Apart from 246 shells representing 208 species, the exhibition also displayed reproductions of Lubomirski's scientific papers as well as specimens of parrots and hummingbirds purchased by Lubomirski for

the Zoological Cabinet. There were also wall charts presenting the structure of a snail and mollusc shell, the structure of a snail radula, the world distribution of sea mollusca and their vertical distribution in the ocean, supplemented with a number of colour photographs of live mollusca and snails. As the exhibition was originally meant to be a mobile one, its contents were partly changed after some time to suit that purpose. The section on Lubomirski's accomplishments was excluded and the section presenting shells of other mollusca: chitons, Cephalopoda and Staphopoda was considerably extended. Additionally, some shells of fossil snails and mollusca were also included. Exceptionally valuable shells from Lubomirski's collection were replaced with shells from less valuable collections. Additional charts were also made to present shell structure of the remaining phyla of molluscs and more photographs were added. At present the exhibition material consists of 423 shell specimens, 9 graphic charts, 3 text charts and 22 photographs of live mollusca. A guide to the exhibition has also been developed, including a history of the malacological collection at the Museum and Institute of Zoology as well as a description of every mollusc group shown.

The exposition attracted many Polish museums wishing to present it in their exhibition halls. The Regional Museum in Chełm was the first museum to show it, under a different title "Sea Shells from the Collection of the PAS Institute and Museum of Zoology". The opening ceremony took place on April 5, 1995, in the halls of the Nature Department. The exhibition was open to the public until June 20. A few days later, on June 24, it was reopened in the Sea Fishing Museum in Świnoujście and was showing until the end of October. In the same year, on November 15, it was transferred to the exhibition halls in the Lubomirski Palace Museum in Przeworsk and stayed there for nearly 5 months. Later it was moved to Krosno and opened in early April 1996.

An unusual zoological exhibition was inaugurated at the Museum and Institute of Zoology at Wilcza Street on February 28, 1995. It had been organized to celebrate the 175th anniversary of the

foundation of zoological collections in Warsaw and the 75th anniversary of the Zoological Museum in Warsaw. The celebrations included a scientific session during which specially-prepared papers were presented and the exhibition, located in room 409 and in the 4th floor corridor in the building of the Museum and Institute of Zoology at Wilcza Street. The exhibition was divided into two sections: one was devoted to the period from the foundation of the first zoological collections in Warsaw until World War II, the other concentrated on the post-war period. The first section, including the foundation of the Zoological Cabinet, Branickis' Zoological Museum and the State Zoological Museum, was illustrated by zoological specimens from our collections, including original exhibits from the collection purchased for the Zoological Cabinet in 1818, books written by members of our staff or collaborators, their photographs and portraits and press excerpts describing the most important events. The post-war history of our institution was presented by photographs. An informative booklet was also compiled, describing the foundation of our institute and the specimens shown. The exposition was closed on March 9, 1995.

The Department of Exhibitions and Popularization organized another exposition, showing from April 7 to May 28 in a hall at the Museum of Hunting and Equestrianism, entitled "Childhood Has the Wings of a Butterfly". The exposition presented 943 specimens of butterfly larvae, chrysalises and imagines, 21 photographs and 2 graphic and 6 text charts. It was designed to cater for the youngest visitors: children from kindergartens. The didactic section was reduced to a minimum. It described the development of butterflies, their mode of feeding, variability, diverse colours, size and defense techniques. Although not designed as a mobile one, at the end of May the exhibition was transferred to the 3rd State Clinical Hospital of the Medical Academy at 1 Działdowska Street in Warsaw. It was the main feature of the Children's Day (June 1) celebration at the hospital. In mid-July it was moved to the Museum of Evolution at the Palace of Culture, where it was rearranged and opened to the public until April

1996, under the title "Butterfly Wings". An informative booklet was printed.

The Department of Exhibitions and Popularization also lend its support to the exposition "Noah's Ark of Our Times - Selected National Parks in the World" organized by the Museum of Hunting and Equestrianism in Warsaw and the Roztocze National Park in Zwierzyniec. The exhibition was open for a year starting June 29, 1995, at the Education-Museum Centre of Roztocze National Park in Zwierzyniec. It occupied two large halls, an area of 250 sq.m., presenting species of dying-out and extinct animals that can now be seen only in national parks. 76 mammal and avian species coming from 16 selected national parks in all continents were shown. A guide with a systematic list of the animals and their descriptions was compiled for visitors.

On the initiative of the PAS Museum and Institute of Zoology, in cooperation with the PAS Institute of Palaeobiology, the Museum of Evolution hosted an exhibition "Travelling in the Invisible World - an Exhibition of Natural Scanning Photography", prepared by Rainer Ehrnsberger of Osnabrück University, Germany. The exhibition focused on the diversity of structures that are not to be seen under an optical device and can only be observed in the plant and animal world under a scanning microscope. It was open from August 11 to December 18, 1995.

Lately the team of the Department of Exhibitions and Popularization prepared an exhibition entitled "Do We Know Her? - Earth, the Environment for Life", in cooperation with the PAS Institute of Palaeobiology and the Polish Foundation for Science Advancement. The exhibition is was open on September 16, 1996. It is presenting at the Museum of Evolution in the Palace of Culture in Warsaw. The atmosphere, lithosphere, hydrosphere and biosphere in two biomes: the tundra and the tropical forest was shown. With such a wide spectrum of topic to be presented in the limited space of only 100 sq.m., the authors were forced to select the most important issues to help the visitor get acquainted with how abiotic factors influence conditions on the Earth and how living beings adapt to the conditions.

Preparatory work is also being done for more exhibitions in cooperation with the Museum of

Hunting and Equestrianism in Warsaw and the Regional Museum in Chełm.