

In Memoriam

Dr. DÉNES JÁNOSSY
1926–2005

Dénes Jánossy, one of the most important and worldwide acknowledged Hungarian contributors to the Pleistocene bird and mammal fauna research, after a long and painfully sickness, passed away on August 16, 2005, in Budapest.

He was born on March 24, 1926 in Budapest. His mother was Margit Boros and his father Dénes Jánossy, former executive director of the National Archive, corresponding member of the Hungarian Academy of Science. He graduated, in 1949, the Péter Pázmány University in Budapest, taking a degree, first in natural history–chemistry, than in geology. From 1948 until his retirement, for over forty years he worked at the Hungarian Museum of Natural Sciences in Budapest, for several years as curator of the Geological and Palaeontological Collection of the Museum. He got through the scientific hierarchy, being a Doctor of Earth Sciences and honorary professor, but he took the most pride in his title of founder president of the Hungarian Ornithological Society. The research field of Dénes Jánossy can be precisely outlined: the study of Pleistocene mammals and fossil birds. Joining László Vértes' archeological explorations, he worked on Upper Pleistocene and Holocene vertebrate faunas, the most important of these being the interpretation of the Kálmán Lambrecht Cave in the Bükk Mts where he discovered the 'Hystrix Horizon' and established the "Varbó level". In the 1960's, his interest turned to the vertebrate fauna of the Pleistocene, this being relatively unknown on an international level, as well. His individual explorations in Kövesvár in the Bükk Mts, and especially in the Tarkő rock-shelter have revealed the fauna of a period which was almost unknown in Europe. The "Tarkő level" and the *Lagurus transiens* species described by him from this level are of great importance in the Eurasian research up to this day. In the 1970's, the

explorations of the rich sites of palaeovertebrates in the quarry in Osztramos (Esztramos) Mts (North-Eastern Hungary) have presented some great scientific results. Among the more than twenty sites ranging from Middle Pliocene to Middle Pleistocene, the fauna of the Pliocene "Torna level" or the fauna of the Osztramos 7 site is to be found, this being proposed as the Plio-Pleistocene boundary, as well as the most strange of the many other described taxa, the *Estramomys simplex*. In the 1980's Dénes Jánossy returned to Villány, the classical site for the Hungarian palaeontological research. He has been working for over forty years on the fauna of the site nr. 2 of the Lower Pleistocene Somssich Hill (with over 40 levels delimited), and also on the older, as well as the newly revealed sites of Villány, Csarnóta, and Beremend. Besides this, he systematically published his papers presenting the development of the bird fauna of the Carpathian Basin, participating, due to his wide international contacts, at the processing of the bird and mammal faunas of numerous sites abroad.

Dénes Jánossy has published a significant part of his research first in Hungarian, in 1979, than in English too, in 1986 (*A magyarországi pleisztocén tagolása gerinces faunák alapján – Pleistocene Vertebrate Faunas of Hungary*), this being an essential reference book even after twenty years.

Dénes Jánossy was an important and worthy successor of the legacy of János Salamon Petelényi, Antal Koch, Lajos Méhely, Ottokár Kadić, Mária Mottl, Tivadar Kormos and Gyula Éhik.

LÁSZLÓ KORDOS
Geological Institute, Budapest