

## The Ornithological Collection of Emil WERNER in the National Museum of Natural History of Sofia

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**Abstract.** According to a catalogue published in 1907, the collection of Emil WERNER in the National Museum of Natural History of Sofia (NMNHS) contains 695 birds. WERNER's birds were acquired by LEVERKÜHN and Tzar FERDINAND I for the National Collection. The majority of specimens had been collected by WERNER himself mostly in Germany, some in Austria and few also in the countries of the Balkan peninsula. Some additional birds from elsewhere were obtained for WERNER's collection by exchange. Meanwhile, however, a quarter of them seem to be lost. The WERNER collection contains specimens of 27 families. Almost half of them belong to the Passeriformes.

**Key words.** Historical collection, National Museum of Natural History of Sofia (NMNHS), Emil WERNER

A total of 695 specimens of birds, collected by Dr. Emil WERNER, an eminent German ornithologist, are listed in the catalogue of the King Ferdinand's Royal Natural History Museum, today's National Museum of Natural History of Sofia (NMNHS) (ANONYM. 1907; this catalogue might have been compiled by Dr. GRAETZER).

WERNER was born in Kiel in 1865. Less than thirty years later, on 23 May 1894, Dr. Emil WERNER already died in Linz, Austria, of typhus, just 7 months after his marriage. He was by training a dentist. However, he was also an outstanding ornithologist with a keen interest in ornithological field research, avian biology and taxonomy. He contributed a lot to the knowledge of the bird life of Schleswig-Holstein. Especially his ornithological collection served as an indispensable source of information for the birds of Lower and Upper Austria as well as the West Palearctic (LEVERKÜHN 1894; GEBHARDT 1964: 382).

During numerous hunting excursions throughout Europe, WERNER built up a considerable avian collection. During most of these excursions WERNER was accompanied by his colleague and friend Dr. Paul LEVERKÜHN, the court physician of Tzar FERDINAND I. The exotic birds in WERNER's collection were very likely obtained from other collections in exchange. The number of these exchanged specimens in the WERNER collection is 94. They derive from 13 different countries in Europe, Africa, Asia and America. However, the great majority of his specimens were collected in Germany and Austria: 385 birds from Kiel, 98 from Linz (Austria) and 45 from the German state of „Holstein“. Some birds were also collected in the vicinities of Ebersberg (18 specimens), Halle/Saale (12), Oedenburg (5), Gating (4). A few

specimens were obtained from Hungary, Italy, Norway, The Netherlands, Poland, Russia (13 from Volgograd), and Turkey. Forty-five specimens originated from South America: Brazil 23, Colombia 12, Trinidad 4, Mexico 3, Venezuela 2, Peru 1. Other 20 specimens came from USA: Rhode Island 12, Pennsylvania 3, Florida 2, Oregon, Michigan, Maine one specimen each. Six specimens originate from India and five from Malaysia. No specimens derive from Bulgaria, despite its considerably larger territory in the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

This valuable historical collection was built up in the last ten years of WERNER's life (1884-1894). His skillfully prepared birds (mounted specimens as well as study skins) are of high quality. Subsequently to WERNER's death his collection passed to Dr. Paul LEVERKÜHN and Tzar FERDINAND I of Bulgaria.

The only paper written entirely by WERNER himself is on the occurrence of Pallas' Sandgrouse (*Syrhaptus paradoxus* PALL.) in the vicinity of Kiel in 1888 (WERNER 1889), suggesting a talented researcher. Three of these specimens, shot in the surroundings of Kiel, are still in the NMNHS. These additional records of the Sandgrouse invasion of the year 1888 were not recorded in BLOTZHEIM et al. (1977: 875-879). WERNER became an active member of the German Society for the Protection of Birds in 1886. In the same year WERNER was one of the compilers for the annual report of bird observations in Germany (section Kiel; BLASIUS et al. 1888). He showed a thorough approach when researching and studying wild birds. He was a modest, but very careful researcher and naturalist.

WERNER's collection was not handled as a separate collection of the NMNHS (BOEV 1991). Only the

mounted specimens of WERNER's collection are registered properly with numbers of the NMNHS. No NMNHS' numbers have been given to the study skins. Following the catalogue of GRAETZER, about one fourth (24.3 %) of the original specimens seems to

*stinus* as an endangered subspecies, distributed only in the Alaka'i Swamp forest on the Kauai Island (Hawaiian Islands). A proper taxonomic examination of this specimen has not taken place so far.

**Table 1:** Overview of WERNER's collection at the NMNHS (2001).

Order	number of families	number of genera	number of species	Specimens number		
				Available	Non-available	Total
Podicipediformes	1	2	5	15	-	15
Ciconiiformes	2	2	2	4	2	6
Anseriformes	1	6	9	23	14	37
Falconiformes	2	3	4	4	4	8
Galliformes	2	5	5	8	6	14
Gruiformes	1	4	4	13	2	15
Charadriiformes	9	19	30	123	39	162
Pterocliiformes	1	1	1	3	-	3
Columbiformes	1	4	5	7	-	7
Psittaciformes	1	1	1	2	-	2
Cuculiformes	1	1	1	1	2	3
Strigiformes	1	5	5	10	2	12
Caprimulgiformes	1	2	2	1	1	2
Apodiformes	2	14	17	14	14	28
Coraciiformes	3	6	6	9	1	10
Piciformes	2	8	10	21	6	27
Passeriformes	27	65	102	265	79	344
<b>Total</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>527</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>695</b>

have been lost, and their present existence and whereabouts, respectively, is unknown. On the other hand, after the publication of GRAETZER's catalogue in 1907, 79 specimens were posthumously added to WERNER's collection. The WERNER collection contains also some bird heads besides the study skins and mounted birds.

The WERNER collection contains specimens of 27 families. Almost half of them (344 specimens) belong to 102 species of the Passeriformes. Charadriiformes include specimens of 30 species, Apodiformes of 17 species and Anseriformes of 9 species (for details see table 1).

Possibly the most valuable specimen is a study skin of an adult female Hawaiian Thrush (*Phaeornis obscurus*), collected on „Hawaii“ in July 1887. Two of the four subspecies of *P. obscurus* (*rutha* from Molokai Island and *lanaiensis* from Lanai Island) are today considered to be extinct (HOWARD & MOORE 1991). The nominate subspecies is distributed over the island of Hawaii, while the subspecies *myadestinus* from Kauai Island is listed as a candidate for the Red Data Book (MOUNTFORT 1989) and „under review“ (WORLD CONSERVATION MONITORING CENTER 1993), respectively. KING (1981) handles *P. obscurus myade-*

Because of the limited access to GRAETZER's catalogue, the data of all specimens of WERNER's collection housed at the NMNHS have been checked and subsequently re-issued. This new edition of the catalogue to WERNER's collection is available from the author as a data file. The taxonomy follows DEL HOYO et al. (1992, 1994, 1996, 1997, 1999, 2001), which follows that of PETERS (1931, 1934, 1937, 1940, 1945) and HOWARD & MOORE (1991), respectively.

#### Acknowledgements

The author thanks Hans-Martin Berg (Natural History Museum – Vienna) and Dr. Gerhard Aubrecht (Biological Center, Upper Austria – Linz) for the provided information on Emil Werner, Dr. Alexi Popov (NMNHS) for translating some of the German texts, and Ms Vera Hristova (NMNHS) for extracting the collection data of Werner's specimens.

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