

The beginnings of the modern mammal protection in Poland

in the last century

by

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A hundred anniversary of the legislation of the wild mammal protection Bill passed several years ago; that was the Bill passed by the Galician Sejm (Parliament) in 1868 and put into force a year later as Bill of 19th July 1869 (Kawecki, 1968, 1970; Kirk, 1970). The Bill concerned the animals threatened with extinction living in the highest parts of the Polish mountains, the Tatras, i. e. marmot (*Marmota marmota* L.) and chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra* L.). Both species, occurring only in the mountains, are not so rare in the other parts of the mountains of Europa as they are in the Tatras. That is probably due to the fact that the Tatra range is relatively small - 57 km long and 18 km wide, as compared with the Alps - 1200 km long and 150 - 200 km wide.

Two causes were responsible for the additional threat of a complete extinction of marmot and chamois in those mountains. On the one hand it was a hunting passion of the mountaineers eager to experience dangerous chamois hunting both in the Tatras and in the Alps (the subject was extensively described by von Tschudi in the middle of the XIXth century); on the other hand it was a widely prevailing among the Polish and Slovak mountaineers prejudice that marmot leaf lard was a universal remedy for almost all the ailments.

By the middle of the XIXth century the number of both marmot and chamois in the Polish part of the Tatras was so small that it seemed that nothing could save these two species from complete extinction. Fortunately, at that time (1863) Dr. Maximilian Nowicki was appointed Head of the Department of Zoology at Jagiellonian University (Cracow), one of the oldest universities in central Europe (founded in 1364). After spending his first vacation in the Tatras in 1864 (Fedorowicz, Kawecki, 1962) Nowicki knew that a wise and immediate action was necessary to save these animals from complete extinction. Together with his friend, Rev. Dr. Eugene Janota (a philologist, later a professor of German philology at Lwów University) Nowicki gained important supporters - two famous Tatra guides, until then dedicated chamois hunters, Andrew (Jędrzej) Wala (senior) and Matthew (Maciej) Siczka.

Soon they succeeded in getting assistance of Rev. Joseph Stolarczyk, one of the first Polish alpinists, and of the owners of some parts of the Tatras, e. g. W. Uznański and Adolf Tetmajer a noblemen marshall of Nowy Targ county (the father of the Polish writer K. Tetmajer and of the painter and writer W. Tetmajer). Propaganda action was conducted in Cracow among members of the Cracow Society of Sciences (later transformed into Academy of Knowledge), among local people and among administrative service, in the form of various publications.

At that time, after the partition of Poland, Cracow together with the southern part of Poland belonged to the Austrian Empire. Professor Nowicki, who was member of the Viennese "K. u. K. Zoologisch-Botanische Gesellschaft", directed the action aimed at marmot and chamois protecting.

At that time, Lwów was the capital of the Partition of the Polish territory called Galicia (at present Lwów belongs to the Ukrainian Republic of the USSR).

The Galician Parliament sessions were held in Lwów where local state and municipal authorities were centred. As a result of a long extensive action the Parliament passed two Bills on 5th October 1868 concerning natural protection in Poland; one Bill concerning marmot and chamois protection was confirmed by the Emperor of Austria and put into force, another one concerned the protection of useful animals including numerous species of bird and mammals of the bat order.

The latter Bill, which greatly surpassed the contemporary notions of natural protection, was not confirmed by the Austrian authorities and was never put into force; it was returned to be reedited and another worth protection was included in it, i. e. hedgehog.

The marmot and chamois protection Bill, although confirmed by the authorities, would just be a "paper Bill" as there was no fund to keep a special service guard that would enforce the law. For over a dozen years the mountain guides Jędrzej Wala and Maciej Sieczka did the function of the service guard. They were paid for their work from the private fund of Professor Nowicki and Rev. Janota. Maximilian Nowicki, who at that time wrote a monograph of marmot (1865) and chamois (1868), offered the money received for the publication for the payment of the service guard, although he found it difficult to provide for his own numerous family. It should be noted that Nowicki's monograph on the chamois had been the most extensive study of that species until Coutourier's monograph appeared in 1938.

Another turn of good luck was the foundation of the Tatra Society (1874) under the auspices of M. Nowicki. Professor Nowicki was one of the authors of the charter and introduced into it compulsory marmot and chamois protection; thus, the service guard was paid by a social institution and not by private individuals.

It should be stressed that the marmot and chamois protection Bill limiting the right of the land owners to hunt on their territories is an example of the understanding of the problem by members of the Galician Seym who did not hesitate to limit the right of ownership for higher aims - protecting



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for succeeding generations of the two living mammal species. At present, both marmot and chamois are under full protection on the Polish and Slovak sides of the Tatra mountains and their number greatly increased.

Another Bill passed simultaneously by the Galician Parliament concerning protection of many species of birds and bats (in the reedited version also hedgehog) should also be mentioned. However, that Bill has not been into force. Its authors, mostly E. Janota and M. Nowicki, in one of its items suggested introduction of the elements of natural protection into primary school syllabus, which seemed to be a revolutionary idea on a world scale.

At the time of the preparations to the International Conference on human environment protection, which in consequence of the famous report of the United Nations Secretary U Thant of 1969 "Man and his Environment" is planned to be held in Stockholm in 1972, it seems justified to remind ourselves of those pioneers who had initiated the trend which undoubtedly will comprise the whole world.

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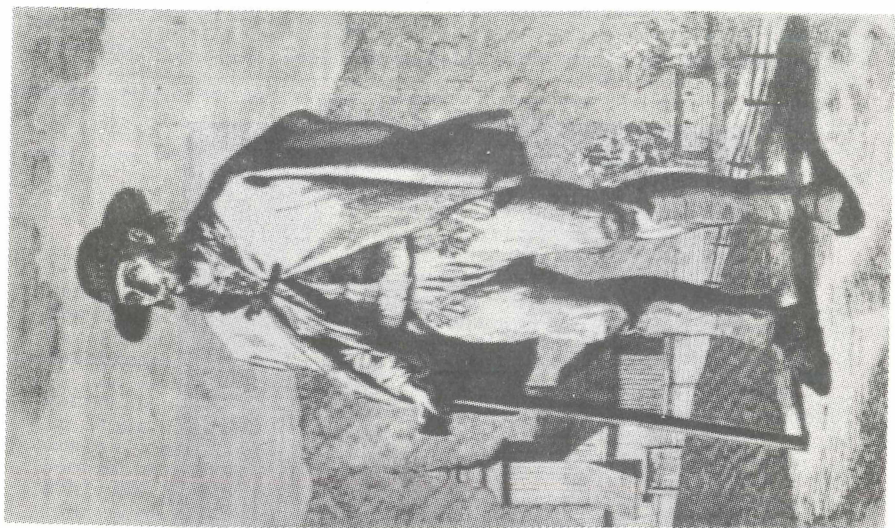
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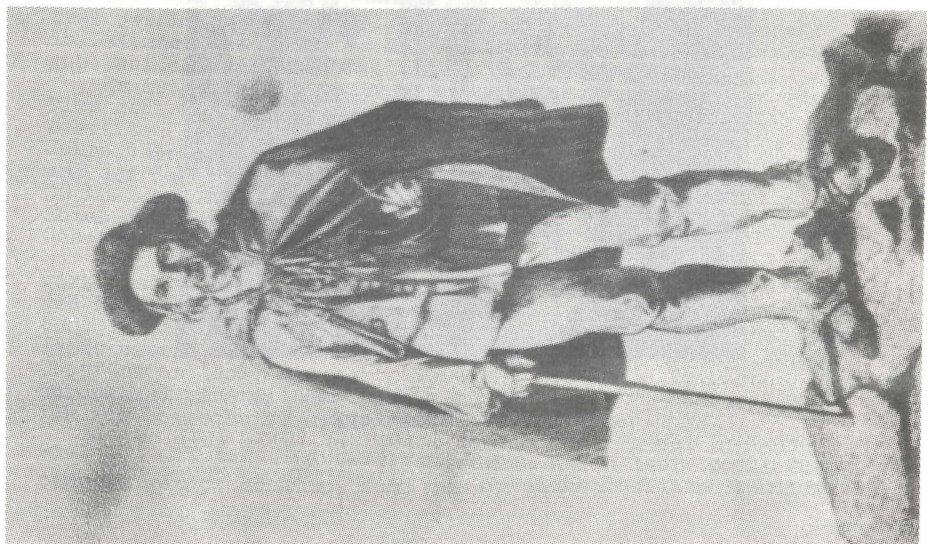
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Professor Dr. Johannes C. Ondrias, Zoologisches Institut der Universität Patras, Griechenland, legt einen Bestimmungs-schlüssel für alle Land- und Wassersäugetiere Griechenlands vor. Gute Strichzeichnungen zeigen die Merkmale der griechischen Säugetiere.

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