

JERZY KACZMAREK (1940–2022) – OBITUARY

Rev. Jerzy Kaczmarek (15 September 1940–9 May 2022) was an amateur malacologist, who over nearly 50 years assembled a malacological collection, now deposited at the Faculty of Biology, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland.

He was born in Poznań on 15 September 1940, as the younger son of Edmund and Gertruda nee Czekalska. From early childhood he was fascinated by living things: he reared diving bell spiders, gastropods, bivalves, and other animals caught in the Warta and Cybina. As a young boy, he became interested in philately and soon started to collect postage stamps. His collector's passion persisted till the end of his life: for decades he collected molluscs, insects, bird nests, eggs, and feathers, postage stamps, and matchboxes. As a teenager, he sang in Poznań Nightingales (a famous boys' and men's choir). In 1954, he started his comprehensive secondary education at Marcin Kasprzak School (later renamed as St. John Cantius School) in Poznań. He graduated in May 1958 and next entered the Archbishop's Major Seminary in Poznań. During theological studies he participated in meetings with Prof. Jan Sokółowski, who was then an unquestioned authority in the field of ornithology. During summer holidays, he cycled a lot in the Poznań Land as well as in the Tatras and Beskid Mountains. On 17 May 1964 he was ordained a priest by Archbishop Antoni Baraniak, who was a victim of Stalinist repressions in Poland.

After graduation from the seminary, he became a parochial vicar in Saint Nicholas Parish in the town of Ujście (on the river Noteć), where he worked till 1968. In that parish, the historical complex of Kalwaria Ujska was located and it was an area of his malacological research. He then created a collection of Polish molluscs in a systematic order on the basis of works of Prof. Jarosław Urbański. Thanks to the close distance from the Noteć Forest (Puszcza Notecka) and Drawsko Forest (Puszcza Drawska), he spent his free time on nature walks (alone or with his pupils), to enrich the malacological collection. At that time, he reported new localities of *Caucasotachea vindobonensis* in Ujście and *Helicigona lapicida* near



Drawsko. He did not limit his investigations to molluscs. He observed and recorded birds, collected insects, especially beetles (Coleoptera) and – less frequently – butterflies and moths (Lepidoptera).

As a vicar, in 1968 he was sent to Saint Martin Parish in Swarzędz and in the following year to All Saints Parish in Kórnik near Poznań. The existence of the Department (later: Institute) of Dendrology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Kórnik allowed him to use its library and facilitated his contacts with scientists specialised in various fields. He participated in bird census works, which also broadened his contacts with scientists, and corresponded with some of them for several decades. He then already knew Prof. Maria Jackiewicz, and sent her specimens of *Succinea elegans* and *Succinea sarsi*, identified by him (mentioned in her article “Distribution of *Succinea elegans* Risso and *S. sarsi* Esmark in Poland (Gastropoda, Pulmonata)”, published in *Fragmenta Faunistica* in 1978. He also cooperated with Prof. Leszek Berger, Prof. Kazimierz Stępczak, and other malacologists. He used to send more interesting specimens, often

identified by him anatomically, to other scientists. He also collected scientific publications, which was not easy since he was not employed in any scientific institution.

In 1974 he became a priest in the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Sobota near Poznań. His pastoral work was characterised by his interest in birds: he not only observed them but paid attention to their protection. In each parish where he worked, he created favourable nesting conditions for rare bird species in churches, and next made use of them to watch birds, such as common kestrels (*Falco tinnunculus*) and tawny owl (*Strix aluco*). He did his best to protect the birds nesting in sacral buildings from damage caused by irresponsible modernisation or conservation. He put emphasis on the sacral buildings managed by him to serve both the Catholic community and animals. Birds nesting in the churches where he worked often led to tensions between him and his parishioners, but he used the discussions as occasions for environmental education of the lay people and emphasised our moral responsibility for respecting God's creation. He also shaped the churchyards to create favourable living conditions for various animals, although he was often accused of mismanagement. However, he was able to win over people with simplicity, honesty, involvement, and directness.

The same applied to his next place of service as a priest: Saint Peter and Paul Parish in Obrzycko. He served there in 1982–1995. In that region he recorded new localities of e.g. *Vertigo ronnebyensis* (known then in Poland from 4 localities), *Truncatellina costulata* (a very rare gastropod of the family Vertiginidae) and *Borysthenia naticina* (in the river Warta). He then cooperated informally with Prof. Maria Jackiewicz, who directed students interested in gastropods to him, so that they could learn how to conduct field research. Considering the native malacofauna, he focused on the families Clausiliidae, Vertiginidae, and Succineidae, but as a naturalist he knew the whole malacofauna and was able to identify on the basis of anatomical features (an extremely rare skill among amateurs). His infrequent travels abroad were always for him occasions to enrich his malacological collection (e.g. with specimens from Germany, Bulgaria, Italy, France, Egypt, Israel, and Cameroon). At that time, he still intensively cooperated with ornithologists and entomologists, and his specialisation in Poland-related postage stamps made his philatelic collection one of the largest in our country. He participated in Polish Malacological Seminars, including those taking place initially in Krościenko (starting from 1985), and that is why till the end of his life he termed all malacological seminars "Krościenko". When he was the priest in Obrzycko, in 1994, the Association of Polish Malacologists was established

during the 10th Polish Malacological Seminar in Obrzycko. In 1995, he moved to Saint Martin Parish in Mchy near Śrem. His duties did not allow him to participate in Polish Malacological Seminars, however, he was constantly interested in the activities of the Association of Polish Malacologists. He continued his field research, sharing his observations with other malacologists. When he prepared for retirement, aware of the progressing health problems, which did not allow him to develop his naturalist collection any more, he decided to deposit it at the Faculty of Biology, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland. For this reason, the Dean of the Faculty of Biology of this university delegated Prof. Kazimierz Stępczak to assess the scientific value of the collection. In his report, Prof. Stępczak wrote as follows:

"About 2/3 of the collected specimens were catalogued in a special notebook, with a division into systematic groups and species. The specimens originate from at least 1000 localities. The number of specimens is impossible to assess quickly [...]. Most of them have been dried, but some specimens are preserved in alcohol (e.g. slugs, the family Succineidae, and others) as well as wet specimens of reproductive systems of the species whose identification can be confirmed only on the basis of properly preserved genitals. [...] The collection includes many very rare, rare, and threatened species, which are red-listed or protected by law in Poland. Some examples: *Vertigo ronnebyensis* (only a few localities in Poland, and red-listed), *Vertigo angustior* (endangered, red-listed), *Truncatellina costulata* (several localities in Poland), *Ruthenica filograna* (door snail, critically endangered in Poland), *Helicopsis striata* (several localities near Kostrzyn upon Oder), *Gyraulus laevis* (very rare and poorly studied, aquatic ramshorn snail species)."

[Opinion of Prof. Kazimierz Stępczak, 2 November 2009, for the Dean of the Faculty of Biology of Adam Mickiewicz University, private archive].

The whole collection was deposited at the Faculty of Biology, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland on 19 May 2010 [Letter of Dean, Prof. Bogdan Jackowiak, private archive]. In July 2010, Rev. Jerzy Kaczmarek moved to the Priest Retirement Home in Poznań, where he lived till death on 9 May 2022 in Poznań. His burial took place on 13 May 2022 in Mchy, during the 36th Polish Malacological Seminar in Toruń.

Rev. Jerzy Kaczmarek did not conduct scientific research in the academic sense. He was a naturalist interested in documentation of new localities and confirmation of uncertain localities of selected taxonomic groups, not only molluscs. All his life, as long



as his health allowed him, he was also interested in ornithology, entomology (Coleoptera), myriapodology (centipedes), and mycology. He read scientific literature in all these fields, corresponded and made friends with many scientists, including Prof. Leszek Berger, Prof. Maria Jackiewicz, Prof. Andrzej Dzięczkowski, Prof. Andrzej Wiktor, Prof. Beata M. Pokryszko, Prof. Kazimierz Stępczak, Dr. hab. Maria Urbańska, Dr. hab. Elżbieta Koralewska-Batura, Dr. hab. Anna Dyduch-Falniowska, and Dr. Krystyna Szybiak. Some of them considered him as their mentor. Apart from malacologists, he maintained for many years friendly and scientific relations with ornithologists Prof. Aleksander Winiecki and Prof. Tadeusz Mizera, entomologist Dr. hab. Marek Bunalski, myriapodologist Dr. hab. Małgorzata Leśniewska, and other researchers, so it would be difficult to list all of them here.

When I first met him in January 2019 (soon after the funeral of Prof. Andrzej Wiktor), he was unable to move independently. A year earlier he distributed his specialised books among scientists, as he sent them the most valuable publications. He described himself as a “hermit”, and his very modest apartment in the Priest Retirement Home resembled a hermitage rather than an active naturalist’s dwelling place. Till the end he was interested in faunistic is-

sues, so we often talked for many hours on the phone about molluscs, birds or beetles. When I visited him in Poznań, he asked me to check if *Candidula unifasciata* was still present in Łódź near Stęszew or to bring him specimens of *Monacha* from Poznań, as he was unable to collect them himself. He motivated me to verify other localities, resolved doubts concerning identification. He remembered very well the key to identification of the Polish species of Clausiliidae, patiently explaining differences in location of the lamellae. Till the end he believed that in Poland a new, endemic gastropod species could be discovered. He regretted that malacologists neglected faunistics and focused on genetics instead, losing sight of the beauty of God’s creation.

He joked that in heaven he would organise an Eternal Section of the Association of Polish Malacologists, and its Honorary President would be Saint James the Great, who is depicted in Christian iconography with a scallop shell on his pilgrim’s hat. Until death he was convinced that interest in nature is our moral obligation, derived from religious beliefs, as he had completely devoted his long life to them.

JAROSŁAW MAĆKIEWICZ¹
Łódź (e-mail: jarekmackiewicz@o2.pl)

¹ The author thanks to Sylwia Ufnalska for her help in translation of the obituary to English.