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In Memoriam: Miroslav Čapek (1927 – 2008)

With 1 figure

MIROSLAV ČAPEK, Jr. and CORNELIUS VAN ACHTERBERG



A braconidologist and forest scientist, Associate Professor Ing. Miroslav Čapek, DSc. was born at Bezdekov in former Czechoslovakia on August 24, 1927. After leaving grammar school in 1946 he started studying at the Faculty of Forestry of Agricultural College in Brno (now Mendel Agriculture and Forestry University).

He spent almost 40 years in Slovakia where he worked for the Forestry Research Institute in Banská Štiavnica, Slovak Republic. In 1959 he completed his PhD at the Biological Institute of

the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in Prague. In the early 1960s, he attended a postdoctoral course focused on world forestry at the Agricultural College in Prague. In 1962, he received research fellowship from the National Research Council of Canada and spent one year working under the supervision of the well-known specialist P. B. Beirn at the Research Institute of Biological Control in Belleville, Ontario. In 1967, he became associate professor of forest protection at the Faculty of Forestry of Agricultural College in Brno where he also lectured in the 1980s. In 1973, he received his DSc degree from the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Bratislava.

For 25 years he held the position of the head of the Forestry Research Station in Banská Stiavnica, which was a part of the Forestry Research Institute in Zvolen. In the same institute he also held the position of the head of the Department of Forest Protection for 19 years. He was instrumental in the developing of forest protection, particularly forest entomology, and contributed greatly to the knowledge of health status of forests, insect pests, their natural enemies and the use of biological control to reduce their populations. However, his main research interests were in braconids. He studied their larval taxonomy, host relations, and life histories, and tried to apply these non-traditional aspects to the classification of suprageneric taxa. Some of his approaches were generally approved of by braconidologists, and nine species of braconids were named after him (received a specific name *capeki*). He is an author or coauthor of over 233 scientific papers and magazine articles, 17 books and two textbooks, including the first English-Slovak and Slovak-English dictionary of forestry and forest products.

M. Čapek also coordinated or participated on research projects within Czechoslovakia and Europe, reviewed scientific papers and books, and moreover he wrote a lot of external examiner's reports. He represented Czech and Slovak entomology at an international level. During his long and fruitful career he took part in numerous international conferences, congresses and symposia in many countries and studied braconids in the USA, the UK, Switzerland and Germany where he made contact with prominent specialists in braconids including W. R. Mason, C. F. W. Muesbeck and G. E. J. Nixon.

For many years he was a supervisor of PhD students in entomology, agricultural and forestry phytopathology and plant protection. In 1985 and 1988 he lectured on population dynamics of forest pests and entomophagous species in postgraduate courses at the University of Bayreuth, Germany as a visiting professor.

After his retirement in 1990 he taught English at a secondary school in Banská Stiavnica and a year later he moved to Brno (Czech Republic) where he continued his study of braconids, and kept in touch with his colleagues in Europe and overseas. He determined braconids for various institutions. One of his most noteworthy achievements was organizing and determining 12,000 individuals of braconids in the collection of the Zoological Museum in Lausanne, Switzerland. In the late 1990s he worked at the State Phytosanitary Administration in Brno.

Besides his scientific activities he never lost interest in folk and classical music, history, geography, botany, and he was a keen stamp collector and mushroomer. Last but not least, he had a passion for travelling – he visited 38 countries of four continents.

Miroslav passed away on October 8, 2008 at the age of 81.

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¹Taxapad 2005 includes REFINd for Windows 98, 2000, NT & XP by Dicky S. Yu, Kees van Achterberg & Klaus Horstmann.

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