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IN MEMORIAM: WILHELM MEISE, 1901–2002

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Wilhelm Meise, the oldest and longest standing Corresponding Fellow of the AOU, elected in 1938, died in Hamburg on 24 August 2002, at the advanced age of almost 101 years. Born on 12 September 1901 in Essen, he studied zoology, botany, chemistry, geography, and mathemathics at the University of Berlin (1924–1928), where he did his Ph.D. dissertation on the distribution of and hybridization between the Carrion Crow and the Hooded Crow under Professor Erwin Stresemann (1889–1972). The results of that classic study have been cited in numerous textbooks as an example of secondary contact and hybridization between populations of birds near or at the species level of differentiation. In another important study, Meise (1936) analyzed taxonomic and historic relationships between the House Sparrow and the Spanish Sparrow, in particular the status of the "Italian Sparrow." He was curator of vertebrates at the Museum of Natural History in Dresden from 1929 until World War II interrupted his work. He survived the war and three years in a prison camp in Siberia, and resumed his research at the Berlin Zoological Museum in 1948. In 1951, he was appointed curator of ornithology at the Museum of Natural History in Hamburg and Adjunct Professor at the University of Hamburg, serving until 1969 and 1972, respectively.

Meise authored, coedited, or contributed substantially to several handbook series, including the three-volume *Natural History of Birds* (1958–1966), the four-volume *Handbook of Oology* by M. Schoenwetter (1960–1992) and the three volumes on birds (1968–1970) in Grzimek's *Animal Life Encyclopedia*. His 170 publications dealt mainly with the taxonomy, zoogeography, and evolution of birds, but also with territory theory and brood parasitism. Occasionally he also worked on taxonomy of scorpions, spiders, lizards, snakes, and molluscs. From 1930 until 1932, he encouraged and collaborated with Willi Hennig (1913–1976), at that time still a high school student, and he later introduced Hennig's cladistic methodology into ornithology.

During the 1950s, Meise was the highly efficient President of the Jordsand Club for the Protection of Seabirds at a time when such endeavors were at an early stage. He undertook an expedition to Angola, Africa in 1955 and, during the following years, published several papers on geographical variation, speciation, and evolution of African birds.

Meise attended most annual meetings of the of German Ornithologists' Society between 1926 and 1999 and all International Ornithological Congresses (IOC) from 1930 in Amsterdam until 1994 in Vienna (except the IOC in New Zealand in 1990). He was a member of the International Comittee published and in the 1934 IOC Proceedings the first analysis of the status of newly described avian species (later continued by Ernst Mayr and associates). He was married in 1930 and had three children.

After his retirement, he continued his many self-imposed tasks for 30 more years. He was a quiet person, not overly ambitious but always eager to reconcile disputes between opposing parties. Therefore, he had many friends in Germany and abroad. The international community of ornithologists lost a well-known and faithful member.

A more detailed and illustrated appreciation of his life and scientific contributions will appear in the journal *Abhandlungen und Verhandlungen des Naturwissenschaftlichen Vereins in Hamburg* (2003).

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