

Prof. Gordon Howard Copp (1956-2023)

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Prof. Gordon Howard Copp (1956-2023)

In 1982, the Ichthyology Department of the Institute of Vertebrate Biology at the Czech Academy of Sciences, Brno, established a collaboration with Claude Bernard University in Lyon (Professor Louis Albert Roux, Georges Carrel), focused mainly on embryological, deterministic, and ecological aspects of early fish development under natural conditions. Gordon H. Copp was one of the students at this University, and in 1986, he completed his internship at our Institute. Thanks to his enthusiasm and erudition, his activities soon expanded from the study of fish fry and his work on his PhD dissertation into other areas. Gordon's sociable nature made it easy for him to make friends, and he selflessly and patiently helped us overcome problems we had regarding language at that time, both in spoken English and in scientific texts and publications. With particular zeal and inventiveness, he gradually began to cooperate with the editorial staff of *Folia Zoologica*, the journal published by our Institute, first as a linguistic expert proof-reader and later also providing substantive assessments of manuscripts as an additional expert referee, gradually maturing into an experienced editor with a flair for journal publication strategy, despite his young age. He became the youngest member of the Editorial Board for vol. 41/1992 and, for vol. 42/1993 the following year, he became Associate Editor. He served in this capacity until vol. 68/2019, when the journal underwent a transformation, continuing to be published as the *Journal of Vertebrate Biology*.

The originality, impact, and quality of the scientific work produced by Prof. Copp is clear from his official bibliographic data: during 45 years of scientific activity (1988-2023), he published 217 peer-reviewed manuscripts with a citation total, as of 31 August 2023, of 8663 (i.e. 39.78 citations per paper!) and an h-factor of 47. His scientific work is characterised not only by its respectable volume and high quality but also by his sensitive choice of topics addressed and his original methodological and interpretative approach. Gordon was often able to attract the reader by the very title of his publications; for example, who can forget the Hamlet-like "To be or not to be"



in the title of one of his most cited works ever, dealing with the pan-European inventory on the distribution of non-native fish species. His verbal delivery was equally excellent, using persuasive argumentation and clearly thought-out proofs.

It is worth noting, however, that this dedicated and underappreciated activity of Gordon's was not limited to the Czech Republic. He had countless collaborators, personal friends and institutional relations within West European countries, the United States, Canada, and China, as well as with other Central and East European countries, especially Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary. Gordon freely provided and encouraged professional contacts between these institutions, helping the careers of many scientists who may otherwise not have had such opportunities. He also put a huge amount of his energy and time into arranging international student exchanges and supporting former students throughout their subsequent careers. These contacts

were not limited to professional issues only; there was always time for private friendships, for sitting and chatting over a good meal, a glass of wine or a jug of beer. One of our many unforgettable experiences with Gordon was a trip to the snowy plains of the Bohemian-Moravian Highlands. Though it was the first time he had ever stood on cross-country skis, Gordon was an enthusiastic and equal partner.

The late Professor Gordon Copp was a successful researcher, a great research organiser and an experienced editor. The results of his work enriched the quality and publication strategy of our journal for many years. Above all, he was a good man, a friend, and a comrade who will never be forgotten.

Milan PEŇÁZ, Kevin F. ROCHE, Pavel JURAJDA