

Alois Honěk: 70th Birthday

Alois Honěk (known as “Lojza” to all his friends), an outstanding international entomologist currently working at the Crop Research Institute, Prague-Ruzyně, in the Czech Republic, celebrated his 70th birthday in May 2015. To mark this event we (I.H. & A.F.G.D.) review his major contributions to the ecology of insects, slugs and weeds over the past fifty years.

Alois was born on 3 May 1945 in Prague to a family of physicians. His surgeon father’s hobby was making violins and he accompanied the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra on its journeys abroad to take care of both the musicians and their instruments.

Alois studied at the Faculty of Science of Charles University, Prague (1963–1968). The title of his RNDr thesis was “Adult development and diapause of *Aelia acuminata* (Pentatomidae, Heteroptera)”. It is a great honour for me (I.H.) to know Alois very well because we worked together and cooperated for many years on many topics of common interest from 1963 to 1972, when I also supervised his thesis studies, and then later, when Alois worked in the Agricultural Research Institute at Prague-Ruzyně. He has always been an enthusiastic researcher, extremely active and diligent and devoted to his research. His outstanding achievements are well demonstrated by his extensive list of publications and the high number of citations, which are probably the highest for any insect researcher in the Czech Republic.

For his RNDr thesis Alois worked in the Institute of Entomology of the Czechoslovak Academy of Science in Prague, where he joined our team working on ecophysiology. At that time it focused mainly on adult diapause in insects (coccinellids, two *Aelia* spp., *Pyrrhocoris apterus*, *Chrysopa carnea*). We were able to construct a laboratory in a cellar where different photoperiods and temperatures were regulated in three light-proof chambers and grew wheat plants there to feed the insects we used in our experiments. This provided us with a simple but fully functional laboratory, climatic cabinets being unavailable at that time. Alois not only worked on his doctorate but at the same time published a long series of papers. He was, in addition, also a co-author with I.H. of three books on Coccinellidae (1973, 1996, 2012), the chapter on predators in the Elsevier monograph (1998) and a review on non-aphid prey of coccinellids in a special issue of Biological Control (2009).

After 8 years of dedicated research, which began in the second phase of his university studies, Alois left the Institute of Entomology in 1972 when, because of his religious views the then director did



not allow him to complete his post-graduate study there. This resulted in Alois not finishing his PhD (CSc) until 1983, when he submitted his thesis titled “Effect of agro-ecological factors on the populations of aphid predators”. By then he was already a successful researcher in the Research Institute of Plant Production at Ruzyně-Prague. In 2008 he was appointed as an Associate Professor in the University of Agriculture (now: Czech University of Life Sciences) and lectured on Insect Ecology (1987) at both Charles University and the University of Agriculture in Prague.

Thereafter, Alois actively continued his research and published many scholarly papers on *Pyrrohocoris apterus* (e.g., often on wing polymorphism), coccinellids and chrysopids. In 1981 Ivo Hodek invited A.F.G.D. to what was then Czechoslovakia to meet Alois and Marcel Rejmánek, one outcome of which was that a student of Alois', the late Vojtěch Jarošík, came to work with me twice in Norwich on population dynamics of cereal aphids, which subsequently led to several joint papers on population dynamics of aphids. This in turn led to a long friendship and many enjoyable discussions and joint projects with both Vojtěch and Alois. In the late 1980s / early 1990s Alois also began to cooperate with new colleagues at Ruzyně and internationally. This was associated with a great widening of his interests to include studies on life history strategies, population dynamics and thermo-biology of insect pests, weeds and their natural enemies. Many of the resulting publications are not only major contributions to applied ecology but they also greatly increase our understanding of the ecology of insects, molluscs and plants. The significance and importance of Alois' findings for entomology and biology in general is particularly well illustrated by articles in this Special Issue, where his colleagues from Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Egypt, France, Japan, Poland, Russia, the Netherlands, Turkey, UK, and USA celebrate his 70th birthday. He has indeed had an outstanding career.

Ivo Hodek & Anthony Dixon

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[Figure: Alois Honěk in the garden of the Crop Research Institute in Prague-Ruzyně, summer 2014; photo by P. Saska]