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Birdcages, nestboxes, bushes, or on attitudes to wild birds in the space Warsaw at the turn of the 20th century¹

In this draft, which is an initial study, I would like to indicate what in the second half of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century the attitude to birds present in the city was – the birds that we would call wild today – that is to those which were not kept or bred, though people involved them in their activities in all sorts of ways. On the one hand, I will be interested in the fact how the residents of contemporary Warsaw encountered this type of birds in urban space and thus the practices connected with it, but also objects used in these practices. On the other hand, what people thought and wrote about birds – what figure of thinking birds were. As long as the separation of these two levels of analysis is not usually recommended, in this case it appears to be justified. I have concentrated on this particular period, because – as it appears to me – the changes which were initiated

¹ The published article was created on the basis of the chapter of the master thesis *Ludzie – zwierzęta – miasto. Warszawiacy i wybrane gatunki zwierząt w przestrzeni publicznej Warszawy w drugiej połowie XIX wieku i na początku wieku XX (People – Animals – City. Citizens of Warsaw and Chosen Species of Animals in Public Space of Warsaw in the 2nd half of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century)*, prepared under the direction of Prof. Paweł Rodak at the Institute of Polish Culture of the University of Warsaw (2015). The thesis was awarded in the 21st edition of the Jan Józef Lipski Competition.

then after some time completely transformed the attitude of inhabitants of Warsaw towards birds present in the city, including practices and objects used in them, and this subject had not actually existed till that time in the Polish literature on the subject matter. I propose a thesis that this transformation primarily consisted in developing a separate and deep reflection on birds in which they were considered as a part of the larger whole – and all other changes resulted from this. Therefore in the first part of the article, in which I reconstruct the state from before the transformation, I am focusing on practices, reconstructed certainly on the basis of written sources, and in the other part, where I describe what was new in the attitude to wild birds present in the city, I am analysing mainly a discourse and concepts appearing in it.

The 19th century and in particular the years 1840–1890 – as Gabriel Brzęk writes (1959) – was the golden age of Polish ornithology. The eminent representatives of this discipline and the pioneers of it at the same time worked then, such as Władysław Taczanowski or Konstanty Tyzenhauz, impressive ornithological and zoological collections were built up then, and – which would seem the most important from the point of view of a historian – approximately three hundred publications on bird-residents of Poland were developed (Brzęk, 1959). Ornithologists, however, focused on classifying consecutive species, they rarely went beyond the specific way of description, thus the achievements left by them only to a small degree can be useful in the analysis designed in such a manner. Yet the birdwatchers with another attitude were needed, having specific objectives so as to not only notice the sphere of contact of birds and people in the space of the city, but also – more importantly – describe it. In Warsaw it was a small group of activists and journalists gathered around the Warsaw branch of the Society for the Protection of Animals and the magazine issued by them entitled "Przyjaciel Zwierząt" (Friend of Animals) – initially published with the title "Opiekun Zwierząt Domowych i Pożytecznych" (Protector of Domestic and Beneficial Animals). It was them who primarily realised the need to reflect on the role of birds and to change the existing order. Therefore the articles published in the press body of the Warsaw Society for the Protection of Animals (the Warsaw TOZ) were the main source for me; the picture emerging from them was supplemented by me with book publications on birds issued then and rare reports from Warsaw daily press².

² I carried out queries on, inter alia, the following magazines and daily newspapers: "Kurier Warszawski" (1831–1908, selected volumes); "Opiekun Zwierząt Domowych i Pożytecznych" (1880–1883); "Przyjaciel Zwierząt" (1885–1910); "Warszawska Gazeta Policyjna" (1865–1909).

"I like birds either in cages or on a platter"

In Łazienki Park and Promenade Park, beyond the bounds of Belweder, crows were killed off. In 1887 in "Kurier Codzienny" Bolesław Prus announced that "amateurs kill daily from 30 to 40 of them"³, and in "Kurier Warszawski" it was added that "when in the Orangery a patisserie and a restaurant were established, the owners granted the right to themselves to hunt crows"⁴. This necessity – because it was described in such categories – was explained by the fact that crows had excessively reproduced in Łazienki and they pollute air⁵, but above all they issued sounds and noises. This was not a question of individual preferences, but a conviction shared in the society. "Who of Varsovians visiting Łazienki Park does not find the unpleasant caw of the whole flock of crows offensive [...]?"⁶ – the journalist of "Kurier Warszawski" asked. The caw seemed to bother pedestrians, and cause that the "charming" Łazienki stopped being charming, and it even led to the situation when "the more nervous people refrained from walking in the park"⁷. Prus wrote about this reluctance showed by at least some of Varsovians in a bantering and overdrawn manner:

They [crows] are always screaming, screaming as loud as the trumpets of Jericho and they fill the souls of the guests enjoying themselves with gloomy thoughts. When you are going to a shooting range – the scream of a crow reminds you of unfortunate accidents with weapons. When you are eating a fresh cucumber salad – a flock of crows is cawing over you, as if you were dead already. You are getting on a boat – they are circling over your head as above the head of a drowned body. You are squeezing a "white hand" and looking in "blue eyes", and crows remind you that love is also one of the things of which the poet sings: Sing before breakfast, cry before night...⁸.

On the basis of these fragments we can certainly state that in the area of fun and entertainment the caw was for a certain part of the Varsovians an unpleasant sound, having clearly negative associations. This would mean therefore that the caw was not perceived by some social groups as a sound which favoured entertainment and rest (e.g. in the Saxon

³ (Prus, 1887, p. 1). If not stated otherwise, all the translations are done by the translator (Joanna Modzelewska-Jankowiak).

⁴ ("Polowanie na wrony", 1887, p. 4).

⁵ (M...ski, 1888, pp. 5–6).

⁶ ("Polowanie na wrony", 1887, p. 4).

⁷ ("Polowanie na wrony", 1887, p. 4).

⁸ (Prus, 1887, p. 1).

Garden swans, India ducks and cranes were kept⁹). Prus seemed to suggest that in accordance with the expectations of the society, such public space should be rather filled with the sounds of a music orchestra. He wrote: "Sonenfeld's orchestra is trying to deafen the ominous screaming [of crows] in vain"¹⁰. However, it was possible that the caw was unpleasant for the Varsovians also in other places and situations. It is worth noting that not only the noises issued by crows were perceived then reluctantly. Karol Erg. – what should be stressed: a defender of birds – in the article in which he persuaded people to establish bird-feeders, recommended to place them "in the backyard at the far end, so as the loud chirping of birds would not disturb [...] your work", he called sparrows tub-thumpers, and he closed his article with the appeal: "Then [in spring] do not be horrified at their [sparrows'] screaming, do not complain that the sparrows fill air with their chirping, who knows?... Perhaps there is a thanksgiving hymn in their speech ..."¹¹.

Quite different was the attitude of the Varsovians to the sounds issued by siskins, blackbirds, starlings, goldfinches, chaffinches, larks, or nightingales. The singing of these birds – because it was called so – appealed to everyone and these birds were purchased gladly and kept in cages at home. As the publicist of "Ziarno" wrote in 1901: "[...] in Warsaw today there is hardly any flat without a cage, in many flats we will find two or even more cages"¹². According to the district guardian of the Warsaw TOZ, Szpack, these "zoological gardens" were made in the flats mainly by wealthier people¹³, but in another number of "Przyjaciół Zwierząt" it was written that this type of bird "lovers" should be rather sought in the poorer class¹⁴. Despite consecutive prohibitions on catching singing birds – and for the first time such a ban was introduced in 1871¹⁵ – the interest of buyers was not decreasing and, as a result of this, a market of this was not declining, either. Birds for sale were delivered above all by out-of-town boys, but sometimes also adults, e.g. bricklayers in autumn and winter when they could not earn a living in another way¹⁶. Birds were caught primarily outside the boundaries of the city (at Wilcza street

⁹ ("Na żywność dla ptactwa...", 1891, p. 10).

¹⁰ (Prus, 1887, p. 1).

¹¹ (Karol Erg., 1897, pp. 5–6).

¹² Quoted from: "W niewoli", 1901, p. 140.

¹³ ([The letter to the editor by the district guardian Szpack], 1909, pp. 93–94).

¹⁴ (A.C., 1905, p. 2).

¹⁵ ("Opieka nad zwierzętami (ciąg dalszy)", 1897a, p. 2). In 1893 the governor of Warsaw repeated the regulations of 1871, issuing the circular regulation, see "Opieka nad zwierzętami (ciąg dalszy)", 1897b, p. 3.

¹⁶ ("O ile nam wiadomo...", 1887, p. 10; O.C.XI, 1903, p. 13).

and in Saska Kępa, in Wierzbno, at the Jewish cemetery), less frequently in the city parks (e.g. in the Aleksandryjski Park)¹⁷. The sales were made on the street, at markets and in shops; depending on the period, singing birds could be bought at: Zapiecek, Piwna, Gołębia, behind the Żelazna Brama (Iron Gate), on the Witkowski square and at Kercelak¹⁸. If keeping singing birds at home was considered separately from the above context, we could easily conclude with the interpretation that this practice was a manifestation of longing of the Varsovians for the world of nature, if we considered that the birds were treated as nature. In the context of the crow hunting, however, another interpretation is also worth considering. Perhaps, as much as crows were killed off – what was noticed by Prus – for aesthetic reasons¹⁹, also for aesthetic reasons singing birds were kept in cages. Such birds would therefore be an object of aesthetic contemplation, a kind of entertainment, and the fact that they could be the recollection of the world of nature, would not be of any significance.

Such attitude to wild birds is also confirmed by hat fashion which became popular in Warsaw in the 1880s and continued quite long (it was described also at the beginning of the 20th century). It was about decorating headgear as well as dresses with "stuffed birds, starting from bats and ending with hummingbirds"²⁰ or – as it was described in another place – dried small birds²¹ (bird's feathers and wings were also used as ornaments). The author of the monthly chronicle published in "Przyjaciel Zwierząt" reported that "this ornithological ornament is worn [...] by a rich lady everyday, and by a stallholder during the holidays"²².

The crow hunting in Łazienki Park draws our attention to yet another aspect of the attitude of the inhabitants of Warsaw to wild birds. Both Prus and the quoted columnist of "Kurier Warszawski" claimed that crows killed in Łazienki Park are sent to consumption. Prus summarised this matter in one sentence: "There is a secret rumour that dead remains of the Łazienki territories are given to cooks and under the spell of their art they take the form of pâtés..."²³, and the journalist of "Kurier Warszawski" went on about it:

¹⁷ See e.g. (O.C.XI, 1903; "Wiadomości z Towarzystw Opieki nad Zwierzętami. Warszawa", 1906, pp. 18–19).

¹⁸ See e.g. ("Handel ptakami...", 1891, p. 11; [The letter to the editor by the honorary member M. Malcz], 1909, pp. 56–57; "O ile nam wiadomo...", 1887).

¹⁹ (Prus, 1887, p. 1).

²⁰ (C.R., 1888, p. 4).

²¹ ("Czynności Warszawskiego Towarzystwa Opieki nad Zwierzętami", 1886, p. 9).

²² (C.R., 1888, p. 4).

²³ (Prus, 1887, p. 1).

Someone from Łazienki Park service has assured us that killed crows are eagerly purchased by several Warsaw restaurant owners in Warsaw, who prepare broths and meat sauces of them. One of them even serves crows as roast meat instead of partridges²⁴.

And although it would be the safest to treat these two remarks as anecdotes, a type of an urban legend, these speculations are worth a closer examination. As it is difficult to find whether the Varsovians really tasted crows in restaurants, not necessarily knowing this, for me more important here will be how the mentioned columnists wrote about this. The further part of the article in "Kurier Warszawski" is interesting in this context.

This culinary mystification is successful because a talented chef prepared it well. After all, the famous Stanislawian cook Tremeau²⁵ prepared roast venison of mutton without a chance to observe the difference²⁶.

It appears from the article that the journalist of "Kurier Warszawski" did not see the difference between replacing venison with mutton and serving crows instead of partridges. Although the basis of this conclusion is weak, we can formulate the hypothesis that crows were then within the scope of edible thinks. Some sign may also be the fact that at the end of the 19th century in the Mazovian countryside crows, together with sparrows, were regarded as delicacy, which is described by Wincenty Jastrzębski in his memoirs:

Four young crows were cleaned, put in an earthenware and covered with juniper berries. On Thursday they were baked in fat and spices in which juniper seemed to be predominant. [My] father with his guest gorged on it with relish and drank vodka. No one in the family except for [my] father did not touch this delicacy. [...] Baked sparrows, golden brown, crispy, were similar to walnuts. The gluttons, encouraging each other, grasped the protruding legs of such a walnut with two fingers, put directly into the mouth and ate with small bones (Jastrzębski, 1966, p. 15).

But why was this piece of information about such use of crows supposed to function out of official circulation, as it arises from wording used in both articles: "there is a secret rumour", "someone from Łazienki Park service has assured us"? And why did Prus conclude his mention on this subject with a remark: "Poor enthusiasts of pâtés..."²⁷? Being influenced by today's standards, we should seek the answers to these questions in hygienic norms

²⁴ ("Polowanie na wrony", 1887, p. 4).

²⁵ Paul Tremeau, the cook of Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowski.

²⁶ ("Polowanie na wrony", 1887, p. 4).

²⁷ (Prus, 1887, p. 1).

or norms establishing our nutritional taboo. Nevertheless, these answers can also be sought within the hypothesis presented above. Perhaps this piece of information functioned out of official circulation because crows were a cheaper alternative and as pigeons shot at *tir aux pigeons*²⁸, popular then in Warsaw shooting at pigeons in flight, they were mainly a meal of the poorer population. Prus's remark would therefore be either sympathy for the fate of a cheated client or a mockery of gourmets.

Finally, a practice completely different to those described above is worth mentioning: feeding wild birds. The articles published in "Przyjaciel Zwierząt" and "Kurier Codzienny" show that mainly elderly people were involved in it. In the Saxon Garden grain and bread crumbs were thrown by old office workers, some old woman took care of pigeons inhabiting the bell tower of the St. Anne's Church, and in Ujazdów Avenue (Aleje Ujazdowskie) and in the Botanic Garden this activity was carried out by Mr. M., a pensioner, he appeared every day among sparrows in a cloth cap and with a small bag full of grain²⁹. In turn "in the square, in Krakowskie Przedmieście, near the post-carmelite church beggars showered bread, as they often received slices of bread instead of cash..."³⁰. Birds were fed on the window sills as well, some people made special feeders. Birds – as it was written in "Przyjaciel Zwierząt" – both knew their owners and knew where to find them. It was therefore not only practice but also interaction. "A short hunched figure [of Mrs. W., a 70-year-old lady] and [her] carpet bag always full of grain was well-known to the Varsovians and... sparrows]"³¹.

In most of these practices we are struck by a high degree to which in contemporary Warsaw the worlds of people and wild birds were meshing together, to which extent wild birds, despite everything, remained in the orbit of human activities. The Varsovians treated wild birds present in the city in a free manner, they took them to their homes and gained control over them. At the same time it does not seem that in these practices people treated birds as representatives of the natural world, that it was of any importance to them. Per-

²⁸ The author of the article published in "Świat" wrote about the situation that pigeons shot at *tir aux pigeons* were purchased primarily by the poorer population: "[...] the sport of shooting at pigeons result in more abundant breeding of these birds and there are hundreds of them on the marketplace at low prices – therefore the poorer »carnivores« have no reason to complain. It can be added that the Warsaw sports association sends a substantial part of their trophies to hospitals for free..." (Redivivus, 1908, p. 18). In turn, in "Przyjaciel Zwierząt" it was announced that these pigeons were bought also to prepare pâtés: "We do not stand up for this sport, but we stress however that this play takes place in all countries and that killed pigeons are bought willingly (as it happens here as well) by those producing pâtés", the note by the editorial office of "Przyjaciel Zwierząt" to a letter received from a reader, "Przyjaciel Zwierząt" 1887, nr 8, p. 10.

²⁹ ("Czytam w »Kurierze Codziennym«..." 1896, p. 11); ("Prawie każdej zimy...", 1893, p. 10; "Śnieg, pokrywający bruki...", 1896, p. 2).

³⁰ ("Opiekunowie ptaków rozwinęli swoją działalność", 1895, p. 2).

³¹ ("Corocznym zwyczajem...", 1897, p. 11).

haps the attitude represented by the main character of the short story *Jaskółki*, printed in "Przyjaciel Zwierząt", a real Varsovian, was not only an educational tool, but also in some way it corresponded to reality. He says:

I must admit, frankly speaking, as a real Varsovian, I am not a lover of nature at all; I do not understand the excitement over some landscapes or over the lives of animals. I like birds either in cages or on a platter, in fact these creatures are unpleasant, a proof is the Saxon Garden where you cannot sit on a bench without worrying about the cleanliness of your hat³².

The state of emergency: protoecologists

The above described practices were highlighted by the authors who published in "Przyjaciel Zwierząt", because they thought that some of them deserved praise and some required reprimand. Criticism – in particular regarding the discussions about catching and keeping singing birds in cages, hat fashion and hunting crows – was dominated by one type of arguments, introducing the division into nature and culture to the discussion on wild birds present then in Warsaw, and forcing to leave the borders of the city. As a matter of fact, the arguments of this type appeared not only in "Przyjaciel Zwierząt".

Firstly, it was pointed out that as a result of such practices some species of birds might become extinct. The opponents of hat fashion raised the alarm:

If this absurd fashion indeed lasts a few years longer and encompasses all cities following the example of Paris, we will soon be able to see a swallow in ornithological rooms only³³.

At the same time they also wrote that, e.g. "in the vast part of the United States birds of ornate plumage have already been killed off"³⁴. Secondly, it was stressed that singing birds and crows, but also sparrows, fed on insects, and therefore their role in the world of nature and the importance for a human being emphasised. This sequence of relations was as follows: insectivorous birds fed on pests, so they protected forests, fields and gardens against them, and thus in turn they contributed to the increase

³² (Z.L.S., 1890, p. 6).

³³ ("Dziwaczna moda zimowa...", 1889, p. 11).

³⁴ (Mr., 1910, p. 7).

in harvest and profits of, among others, farmers³⁵. It was claimed that even if some of these species in addition to insects ate grain and fruit, they were still more beneficial than harmful (Dyakowski³⁶, 1901, p. 6). Those who put forward such arguments were convinced that unique times had set in. At the beginning of the 20th century Bohdan Dyakowski, the author of many works about birds, wrote: "There is no doubt that in recent years the quantity of birds decreased here considerably" (Dyakowski, 1901, p. 12–13)³⁷. A decade later it was an indisputable fact for the author of the article *Ochrona ptaków i budowniczości* published in "Przegląd Techniczny". The power of these arguments was additionally enhanced by the vision of coming, or even already happening, catastrophe, caused by interrupting by people the natural sequence of relations mentioned above. On the occasion of the crow hunting in Łazienki Park, Prus prophesied in the second half of the 1880s: "And the time may come that in Łazienki Park a scream of a crow would become as peculiar as a metallic rouble, and instead of leaves on trees we would admire... worms..."³⁸. According to Jan Barszczewski, this was indeed what happened; in 1899 he wrote: "Together with crows other birds have been killed off and in this way vermin has reproduced so strongly that the naked limbs of trees have been glowing"³⁹. In turn, the mentioned journalist of "Przegląd Techniczny" wrote about the plague of mosquitoes⁴⁰, and Dyakowski described even darker visions:

Without [insectivorous birds], insects would reproduce in such great numbers that we would have neither cereal crop in fields nor fruit and vegetables in gardens. [...] Having reproduced excessively, insects could even completely destroy the entire vegetation in a particular place [...] (Dyakowski, 1901, pp. 1–2).

These two arguments and several statements present a specific view of the world of nature and its mechanisms, and a view of the relationships between this world and the human world, and thus also between the city and the reality beyond it. In Warsaw of the turn of 19th and 20th centuries this perspective introduced a new way of thinking about

³⁵ Sometimes arguments for the usefulness of insectivorous birds were provided with detailed calculations of the losses caused by a lack of birds in orchards or on fields, see e.g. ("W kwestii mody barbarzyńskiej", 1906, p. 11).

³⁶ Dyakowski's booklet was published in Biblioteka dla Młodzieży (the Library for Young People), but it was reprinted a few times in "Przyjaciel Zwierząt" as well (see, for example, "Przyjaciel Zwierząt" 1905, nr 4, p. 41 and nr 5, pp. 53–54; "Przyjaciel Zwierząt" 1907, nr 2, pp. 25–29 and nr 3 pp. 41–45).

³⁷ See also (Taczanowski, 1860, pp. 6–7).

³⁸ (Prus, 1887, p. 1).

³⁹ (Barszczewski, 1899, p. 6).

⁴⁰ (Wawel, 1912, p. 86).

the presence of wild birds in the city, their role and the inhabitants' attitude to them. I will try to organise it and carry out a preliminary analysis.

On the one hand, it is worth noting that in the cited statements and arguments, nature is a certain entirety which has its own rules independent of people, and these rules – according to the quoted authors – were to be at least partly respected. For the relationships between sometimes distant elements of this world were noticed and its ability to self-regulation was observed – one of such mechanisms of self-regulation seemed to be the very eating insects by birds. Citing Prus once again: "Do not improve [...] the laws of nature which with the help of noisy crows keeps a tight rein on very numerous and voracious vermin"⁴¹. The confidence in the self-regulatory mechanisms was however limited. Those which were beneficial for people were noticed and appreciated – because the natural world was brought under human needs and from this point of view it was divided into beneficial elements and harmful ones (in this respect it was not a vision far from that which was emerging from the practices described in the previous section). But some self-regulatory mechanisms were particularly important because at that time another possibility of solving some problems was not noticed. Dyakowski, writing about insectivorous birds, stated: "A successful fight [against insects] can be led only by birds: no other animals, no even the largest human efforts can kill off as many insects as birds can" (Dyakowski, 1901, p. 2). Due to this fact people should not harm beneficial birds and, moreover, they should help them, for example protecting against predators: "[...] cats and predatory birds ought to be scared off and chased off, and it would be best to shoot them immediately if we notice that they are stealing up to the nest too often" (Dyakowski, 1901, pp. 10–11). Pests⁴² were to be killed off definitely and nobody had nothing against hunting them or using their feathers to adorn ladies' hats.

On the other hand, it can be seen that the relations were noticed not only within the natural world, but also between this world and the human world. These relations were described when the attention was drawn to positive mechanisms and also when disastrous effects of human activity were stressed. Observations on the latter were not limited to hunting

⁴¹ (Prus, 1887, p. 1).

⁴² As it was written, in the list of birds that "counteracted the cultural work of people", there were then, among others, eagles, "most important pests", "always [...] dangerous and worthy of persecution", see (Brzeziński, 1890, p. 4). As far as some species were concerned, it was not sure whether they were more helpful or harmful – this was the case of owls, crows and sparrows (maybe aesthetic choices of the Varsovians were somehow related to the fact that these birds were regarded harmful). Their usefulness or not was most frequently proved by examining "content of the stomachs of birds just killed", see ("Ptaki pożyteczne i szkodliwe", 1905, p. 1).

crows, hat fashion and keeping singing birds in cages. It was also a matter of interest, and not only in the pages of "Przyjaciel Zwierząt", what impact such processes as industrialisation and urbanisation have on the natural world⁴³. There was a connection between this thinking on a macroscale and the awareness that the world resources were not inexhaustible, which was becoming more common: apart from mentioned swallows, also European bisons, elks, beavers, and more exotic animals such as giraffes, elephants or seals were expected to become extinct soon⁴⁴. When analysing the causes of decrease in the number of birds, particular attention was paid to the processes of urbanisation and management of forests. Dyakowski wrote:

Today the cities are growing, they occupy more and more space, and the building development is becoming denser and denser. Similar situation happens to villages: forests are cleared, and in turn there are more fields. In the places where dozens or even hundreds of different birds settled comfortably in old forests, today on fields, only quails and larks may build their simple nests (Dyakowski, 1901, p. 12).

The adverse effects of forest management in this context was highlighted also in the pages of "Przyjaciel Zwierząt":

Contemporary forest management gradually but ruthlessly leads birds to extinction: forest clearing, removing brushwood, cutting thicket and low branches, all this deprives birds of the possibility of nesting⁴⁵.

A detailed analysis of the impact of changes in the structure of the urban tissue on the life of birds was worked out by the author of the article published in "Przegląd Techniczny":

Sewage systems and water supply systems are placed underground. In old towns and cities it was sticking out floors and eaves as well as poorly maintained structures that provided birds with excellent conditions for nesting. Pouring out sewage together with waste matter onto open spaces gave them food, and in particular swallows received rich building material for nests. All this in modern human settlements is eliminated and, as a result, living conditions for birds have become significantly difficult⁴⁶.

⁴³ Hannu Salmi wrote that both in Western Europe and in the Scandinavian countries the attention was paid quite quickly to the disastrous effects of industrialisation on the environment, see (Salmi, 2010, p. 17).

⁴⁴ In the second half of the 1890s in "Przyjaciel Zwierząt" quite a lot of such reports started to appear, see e.g. ("Zwierzęta znikające" [about hippopotami], 1895, pp. 7–8; "Wiadomości bieżące" [about European bisons], 1895, p. 11; "Żyrafy wymierają" [about giraffes], 1904, pp. 6–8).

⁴⁵ (Kudelski, 1906, p. 4).

⁴⁶ (Wawel, 1912, p. 86).

Both drawing attention to self-regulatory mechanisms in the natural world and noticing the relationship between this world and human activities can be considered as a germ of modern ecological thought. If the aforementioned sequence of relationships connected with insectivorous birds were supplemented appropriately, we would be able to find signs of one finding which, in the opinion of Stanisław Zięba, prepared the ground for development of ecology as a science, which was shaping in the 19th century. In accordance with this finding "the land is supported by people and people are supported by the land", because "the death of animals causes the production of humus, which contributes to the expansion of plants; plants provide food for animals which are food for a human being; human body decays, which strengthens the forces of nature" (Zięba, 2008, p. 198). Although in this case actions were more important than the circulation of matter, but the mechanism of thinking remained the same.

Sentimental burghers, boxes and bushes

Protoecological concepts of "Przyjaciel Zwierząt" introduced two important changes to the way of thinking about the presence of birds in the city. One of them was associated with finding the relationship between wild birds present in the city and nature. In "Przyjaciel Zwierząt" it was made – not necessarily consciously – not only by continuously repeated information about the role of birds in the natural world. In the stories and articles affected by anti-urbanism, in which the positive impact of contacts with nature on the physical and moral condition of residents of the city was stressed, and in which these contacts were becoming "the condition of health and happiness" of people, and sometimes they even allowed people to become really human – in this type of visions wild birds present in the city were becoming a figure of nature and longing for it. Swallows reminded a mentioned real Varsovian of "nature which he knew very little [...], life in the bosom of nature, among forests breathing aromatic resin, old pines and spruces [...]"⁴⁷. Another author wrote that birds were one of few ways of the contact with nature in the city, and, moreover, a way somewhat adapted to the lifestyle of its inhabitants:

In the frantic pursuit of happiness, occupation and wealth, in the huge work on the one hand, in the fatal lust for taking advantage of a present moment on the other, we find very little time [...] to familiarise and commune with nature. So birds surrounding us are in fact the only thread, leading us to mother nature [...]⁴⁸.

⁴⁷ (Z.L.S., 1890, p. 6).

⁴⁸ (Ga. War., 1891, p. 11).

Perhaps together with the closer linking of wild birds present in the city with the world of nature also the changes in the aesthetic assessment of the sounds issued by certain species occurred. One of the authors of "Przyjaciel Zwierząt" who had reproached female fashion victims that during an after lunch walk they felt interfered by "cheerful" caw – as he wrote himself – confessed:

As far as I am concerned, as a person writing these words, I admit honestly that I listen to this caw of different tones with pleasure, because I can feel in it a joy of spring beginning after long winter – I can feel new life in it [...]⁴⁹.

The other change was connected directly with the first one. The recognition that urban wild birds are closely related to nature in which they have certain functions, and more widely: that nature is a certain whole, partly independent of people and governed by its own laws, entailed exempting urban birds from absolute power of citizens of the city and granting to birds a certain degree of autonomy in the borders of the city⁵⁰. But it was not that these two worlds should be completely separated, but this relation should be redefined. This change can be symbolised by the transition from keeping birds in cages to hanging boxes specially prepared for them on buildings and trees.

Artificial nests, as they were called then, were probably the invention of the 19th century, and certainly they appeared only then on the Polish lands. In 1888 in Warsaw the knowledge of boxes for birds (Pl: skrzynki dla ptaków – J.M.J.) – using another expression functioning then – seems to have been small because the proposal by Antoni Piasecki to build them from metal sheet had to be verified by the management of the Warsaw TOZ with the decisions of the Geneva society⁵¹. It seems that the popularisation of bird feeders on the Polish lands started for good only in the 20th century. In 1901 the already cited booklet by Dyakowski was published, partly devoted to this very issue, in which the author wrote:

Abroad [...] bird lovers and bird friends came up with an idea to arrange a kind of artificial hollows by hanging boxes with round holes on young and thin trees. [...] Here this custom is still very uncommon (Dyakowski, 1901, p. 17).

⁴⁹ ("Krukarnie", 1889, p. 9).

⁵⁰ We may be wondering whether this change was much more extensive and whether it concerned the attitude to nature in the city in general. Perhaps because of recognising that the city is a part of a greater entirety, a certain ecosystem, this city begun to be differentiated structurally: it was not a monolith created and managed by a human being yet, but a hybrid consisting of both elements depending on people and independent of them.

⁵¹ ("Z zarządu Towarzystwa Opieki nad Zwierzętami", 1888, p. 11).

Four years later in an article for "Przyjaciel Zwierząt" his reports seemed to be more buoyant for bird lovers:

Hanging bird boxes, slowly but increasingly starts to become more popular here. In support of this sentence I am going to use an example of Zakopane, where a few years ago there were no bird houses, and now such boxes are here and there⁵².

In the aforementioned booklet there were detailed instructions for the construction of such a box, and the guidance on how to adjust its shape and dimensions to the needs of the individual bird species. In Warsaw in 1904 models of such artificial nests could be seen in Księgarnia Polska (Polish Bookshop) in Warecka street⁵³. Bird boxes were therefore an expression of new thinking about the presence of wild birds in the city, but they also were an evidence for industrialisation and urbanisation or fears related to them. Those who had popularised this concept wanted this idea to be the way of counteracting the adverse effects of human activities of that type: the reduction of the number of birds and the disruption of the functioning of the natural world.

Boxes were not the only solution. An alternative was avoiding cutting down trees with hollows, mending already existing hollows, planting trees and bushes, and having dense thickets and hedges instead of fences. The point was not only to introduce greenery pleasant for people, but also giving shelter to birds. This was the proposal of the author of the article already mentioned *Ochrona ptaków i budowniczości*:

When designing new road network not so long ago, a major emphasis was placed on the establishment of parks and green spaces; let us notice that in such circumstances birds will not stay long enough; [...] Next to flower beds expensive to arrange and maintain, let us plant dense thickets, thorn bushes, rose bushes, etc. near paths and children playgrounds, and let them grow wild⁵⁴.

And although maintaining this type of greenery in the city and arranging bird boxes did not exclude each other (according to Dyakowski they were complementary), they set two different directions of the development process of the city.

⁵² (Dyakowski, 1905, p. 54).

⁵³ ("Z innych Pism", 1904, p. 9).

⁵⁴ (Wawel, 1912).

* * *

The change in the way of determining and making place for wild birds in the city by people, the change which may be symbolised with the transition from bird boxes and thickets – which is a model approach, not showing the dynamics and complexity of real historical processes – can be perceived as linking of this type of birds with the natural world and thus liberating them from absolute power of a human, which was possible thanks to a deep reflection on this subject. Reflections on the attitude towards wild birds present in the city lead to the wider and noteworthy issues concerning the relations between the urban space and the world of nature – how the city was seen as an element of nature and what the place of nature in the space of the city was.

Translated by Joanna Modzelewska-Jankowiak

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Birdcages, nestboxes, bushes, or on attitudes to wild birds in the space of Warsaw at the turn of the 20th century

Abstract

The article attempts to present how at the turn of the 20th century the attitude of the inhabitants of Warsaw towards wild birds living in the city was being shaped. The author focuses on objects used to allocate such birds their space within the city, on practices related to birds and discourse concerning this subject. She points to changes that were initiated then, mainly by members of Warsaw Society for the Protection of Animals and journalists publishing in its magazine, „Przyjaciel Zwierząt” (Friend of Animals).

Keywords:

wild birds, city, space, practices, ecology, Warsaw, 19th/20th century

Klatki, budki i krzaki, czyli o stosunku do dzikich ptaków w przestrzeni Warszawy na przełomie XIX i XX wieku

Abstrakt

Artykuł jest próbą ukazania, w jaki sposób na przełomie XIX i XX wieku kształtował się stosunek mieszkańców Warszawy do dzikich ptaków obecnych w przestrzeni miasta. Autorka skupia się przedmiotach wykorzystywanych do wyznaczania tego rodzaju ptakom miejsca w mieście, praktykach z ptakami związanych oraz dyskursie. Zwraca uwagę na zmiany, które w tej sferze zaczęły wówczas zachodzić, głównie za sprawą osób związanych z warszawskim Towarzystwem Opieki nad Zwierzętami i jego organem prasowym, „Przyjacielem Zwierząt”.

Słowa kluczowe:

dzikie ptaki, miasto, przestrzeń, praktyki, ekologia, Warszawa, XIX/XX wiek