

## Lars von Haartman 60 years



Lemsjöhölm 13 May 1977. — Photo: J. Ulfvens.

Three persons have played especially prominent parts in the history of Finnish ornithology. The first of these was J. A. Palmén (1845—1919), whose doctoral thesis on the migratory pathways of birds (1874) may be said to have laid the foundations of scientific ornithology in this country. The second, Pontus Palmgren (born in 1907), became the leading ornithologist in Finland in the early 1930s, and achieved international renown as a pioneer in several important fields of this science. In more recent times we have had a number of good ornithologists in this country, but one stands out clearly among the rest: Lars von Haartman, born 60 years ago, on 24 March, and since 1968 Professor of Zoology at the University of Helsinki.

The name von Haartman is usually connected with the Pied Flycatcher — his monograph on this species is one of the classic works in ornithology. It should be remembered that when v. Haartman started his long-term population study in 1941, the only thorough species monograph so far published was that by Margaret Nice on the Song Sparrow. In many respects, his population study of the Pied Flycatcher was therefore a pioneer work, whose significance for later students can hardly be overestimated. The first part (1949) dealt

with site-tenacity and race formation, the second part (1951) with population problems and the third (1954) with feeding ecology. Besides these three main studies, v. Haartman has published numerous papers treating many special aspects of the biology of the Pied Flycatcher. And the study is not ended yet: each summer v. Haartman still checks his nest-boxes and makes detailed observations on the breeding of the Flycatchers — while all around the world expectant ornithologists eagerly await the next instalment!

Lars von Haartman is one of the decreasing number of ornithologists who have a truly comprehensive grasp of their subject, knowing it inside out. His own production deals with many questions of central interest in bird ecology and ethology. His first scientific publication concerned the social attraction of the Tufted Duck to larid colonies in the Finnish archipelago (1937), and his doctoral thesis also treated the biology of coastal birds (1945). Some basic questions recurring throughout the monograph on the Flycatcher are examined separately in a number of later publications of v. Haartman; these include adaptations to hole-nesting, territoriality, clutch size and polygamy. In addition, he has long been fascinated by changes in the Finnish avifauna, and has been in a unique position to follow trends in the bird fauna of the same area in southwestern Finland for a period of more than four decades. His investigations on long-term trends comprise both studies of certain species, such as the Razorbill, Tufted Duck and Corncrake, and extensive general surveys. Population dynamics has been one of the favourite topics of his writings and his two reviews on this subject, published in the United States in 1971 and 1972, are well known all around the world. In contrast, it may well be news to many that at the beginning of his ornithological career v. Haartman also published several papers on bird migration. A study on the arrival dates of the Swift (1951) led him from migration to phenology, especially the nesting times of birds in Finland, which he treated frequently in the 1950s and 1960s. An important cornerstone in our country's ornithology is his comprehensive work *The nesting habits of Finnish birds. I. Passeriformes* (1969), based mainly on data provided by a nest card project which has been run since its initiation by v. Haartman himself. The same material has been used in the new handbook on Finnish birds *Pohjolan linnut värikuvin, I—II* (1963—72), in which v. Haartman wrote the sections on breeding and behaviour. Of his many papers on ethological subjects, special mention may be made of *Charles Darwin and ethology* (1960), which furnishes an excellent example of his capacity to treat a subject with penetration and originality.

Besides its diversity, another characteristic of Lars von Haartman's scientific production is his synthesizing approach, in which the concepts of adaptation and evolution form the basis of his study. While focusing sharply on apparently minor details, he is able to see them as parts of a whole and uses them to reach conclusions of general interest. This approach is perhaps seen most clearly in his popular writings and lectures, whose effect is heightened by his distinctive and elegant style. Another special feature of the portrait of v. Haartman as a scientist is his habit of working without assistants and carrying out all his research alone — the field work, the treatment of the material and the preparation of the manuscripts. All his studies, from start to finish, have been made by v. Haartman himself, and nobody else!

Lars von Haartman's acknowledged position as one of the foremost ornithologists in the world can be attributed not only to his extensive literary production, but also to the important role he has played in international ornithological activities. With the exception of the Australian Congress of 1974, he has participated in all the International Ornithological Congresses held since 1954, figuring prominently both within and outside the official programme. At the Congress held in Helsinki in 1958, v. Haartman was the secretary general and had to take care of a vast amount of practical work. It is even said that he wrote out all the name tags for the participants, and attached the pins to each one with his own hands! In addition, v. Haartman has taken part in numerous other conferences and symposia, and gone on lecture tours in Europe and America; in the years 1958—59 and 1966—67 he held the post of visiting lecturer at the University of British Columbia, Canada. On these journeys his remarkable knowledge of languages, his gifts as a lecturer and the breadth of his culture made him a worthy ambassador of Finnish ornithology. As a fitting climax to his international career, v. Haartman has been elected president of the next International Ornithological Congress, to be held in Moscow in 1982.

Ever since he became a member in 1936, v. Haartman has been a staunch supporter of the Finnish Ornithological Society. During his period as chairman, 1963—69, annual two-day meetings and excursions were started in different parts of Finland, and the Finnish-Estonian Ornithological Congresses were resumed, in 1968, after a break of more than 30 years. He also acted as president in the first Nordic Congress in Finland in 1974. v. Haartman's first paper was published in *Ornis Fennica* in 1937. Since then, this periodical has contained no less than 18 of his articles, besides numerous brief reports and literary reviews, and his remarkable contribution to its contents has certainly helped to establish the good international reputation of the journal. v. Haartman was the editor-in-chief for *Ornis Fennica* in the years 1972—76.

At the time that Finland was part of Sweden, Lars von Haartman's ancestors were already well known and belonged to the Finnish nobility. One of them, Lars Gabriel v. Haartman, was the most influential man in Finland in the middle of the 19th century; he served at the Russian Court and, on account of his hasty temper, was known in Finland by the nickname of "His Terror". A visit to the v. Haartman estate on Lemsjöholm, the study area of so much ornithological research, gives the feeling of a journey backwards in time. Memories from past centuries crowd around the old manor house, where Mrs. von Haartman can display such historical treasures as the dress worn by "His Terror" as a baby or the gold embroidered clothes used by him at the Russian Court. The experience of growing up in this historical home with its carefully guarded traditions must have had a powerful effect on the young v. Haartman. This special setting explains the aristocratic bearing and the slight lack of familiarity with the technical modern world that we find in v. Haartman today.

The portrait of Lars von Haartman would be far from complete if he was depicted solely as an ornithologist. He is in fact a rare bird among biologists, a gifted many-faceted personality — bibliophile, art connoisseur, essayist, poet, art critic; no one who learns to know him more closely can fail to be impress-

ed by the depth of his knowledge on a wide variety of subjects. v. Haartman's extensive library contains many antiquarian rarities of considerable value, including real gems such as the original editions of many of Darwin's writings, the 10th edition of Linné's *Systema Naturae* and two Chinese bird books from the 18th century with extremely delicate pictures painted in water colour on silk. For many years v. Haartman was an active member of the editorial board of the cultural journal *Nya Argus* and he also served as chairman of the literary society *Sällskapet Bokvännerna*. His essays in Swedish, appearing in many periodicals and also published in the collection *Av samma blod* (Of one blood, 1964), combine profound biological and humanistic views with a brilliant often drily humorous style. An excellent example of v. Haartman's unusual gift for treating a subject at many levels is provided by his study *Skuggan från hans ögonbryn* (The shadow from his eyebrows, 1975), a literary historical-cum-ethological approach to one of the best-known poems of the Finnish national poet J. L. Runeberg. v. Haartman himself has published three collections of poems (1960, 1969 and 1977), which reflect his sensitive perception of nature, and a deep awareness of the changing course of the seasons and the life of man. Here, too, are flashes of his special humour, as in the poem *Förutsägelse* (Prophecy) at the end of the first collection, which describes the arrival of a yellowing consular letter from South America announcing that "Finnish citizen L. A. A. von Haartman was torn to pieces by raging coatis on a journey to the dark interior of the continent".

Besides literature, another passionate interest of Lars von Haartman is art; he is almost as great an expert in this field as in ornithology. For years he was the art critic on *Hufvudstadsbladet*, one of Finland's leading daily papers, and he has provided working facilities for young artists on his estate at Lemsjöholm. A fresh example of his sovereign competence in the field of art is his short penetrating study of the life and work of the Finnish artist Alvar Cawén, which appeared in connection with a memorial exhibition held in Stockholm in 1975. Art also figures prominently in v. Haartman's essays and poems — even in some of his scientific papers — and is much in evidence in his home.

If fate had wished otherwise, Lars von Haartman could equally well have become a professor in art or the history of literature, or even a full-time writer. Ornithologists both in Finland and abroad have reason to be thankful that his interest in birds proved to be the most powerful of his enthusiasms and made him choose ornithology as his principal pursuit.

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*This double issue of Ornis Fennica is dedicated to Professor Lars von Haartman on the occasion of his 60th birthday on 24 March 1979*