

Max Hinsche

Draft for en.wikipedia

This work will soon be published in en.wikipedia.

Max Hinsche (* May 2, 1896 in Radeberg, + November 23, 1939 in Rottenmann, Styria, Austria) was a German taxidermist, who also worked in the field of dermoplastics. He was a big game hunter, a trapper, a natural scientist and a writer.

Hinsche was instructed by the “Staatliche Museen für Tierkunde und Völkerkunde Dresden” (State Museums of Zoology and Ethnology Dresden) to explore Alberta and the Yukon Territory in Canada – almost not reconnoitered areas at that time – to collect and preserve rare and previously unknown mammals and birds. Hinsche did his researches for nine years, from 1926 to 1935. He set his results and experiences out in writing, all of them scientifically based, in his book “Kanada wirklich erlebt” (“Canada – really experienced”); First edition at the publisher's J. Neumann, Neudamm and Berlin 1938, with 30 art prints and a map [1]; unrevised reprint 1940; new edition in 2 parts, from 1988 [2] [3].

Biography

Hinsche was the son of the cartwright Wilhelm Hinsche (*1872 Zörbig; + 1946 Radeberg) and his wife Agnes, née Leuschner (*1874 Steinölsa; +1909 Radeberg). He had three siblings. After his mother's early death, his father married Ernestine Pauline Roitsch, née Neugebauer (*1876 Strehlen; + 1965 Radeberg), a woman who already had two children.

From 1902 to 1910 Max Hinsche attended the boy's school in Radeberg (today “Pestalozzischule Radeberg Oberschule”). He was a scientifically gifted boy and he was completely absorbed in collecting small animals and birds with their eggs, a favorite leisure pursuit at that time. In this way he also developed his skills of a taxidermist. Early in his life he read the reports of the gold rush in Canada and Alaska eagerly and dreamed of going there, too, later. He wanted to become a forester or a hunter after school, but his parents weren't able to afford such an occupational training. So he served an apprenticeship in sheet glass working and he got his master craftsman's diploma at the age of 18.

During the First World War, in 1915, he was called up, went into the infantry of “Königlich Sächsisches 16. Infanterie Regiment Nr. 182” (“Royal Saxon 16 Infantry Regiment no 182”), the so called “Freiberger”. The fierce fighting on the Westfront (Western front) shaped his world view. In August 1916 he was injured in the battle at the Somme and discharged from the army. After his recovery he worked in his trade again. In May 1919 he married Emma Frieda, née Horst (*1896; + 1979) from Bautzen. In December 1919 his first daughter Lieselotte (+ 1939) was born, and in 1936 his second daughter Annegret saw the light of day.

During his 9-year-Canada expedition Hinsche suffered more and more from stomach complaints as a result of his hunger and malnutrition; the extreme physical challenges gradually sapped his strength. In November 1939, while hunting in Styria, he suffered a perforation of the stomach. Help came too late, and Hinsche died in hospital in Rottenmann/Styria on November 23, 1939.

Work

Early scientific work

Hinsche worked as a taxidermist in his free time and that was also his second job. After the First World War he had first contacts with "Staatliche Museen für Tierkunde Dresden" (State Museums of Zoology Dresden). Here he got to know the famous ornithologist Paul Bernhardt (* February 5, 1886, Mittweida; + May 29, 1952, Moritzburg). He stayed in scientific contact with him all his life [4]. They both devoted themselves to nature conservation and the research of bird migration. They put a ring on hundreds of birds (breeding, resting and migrant bird population) in the Radeberg area core zone Hüttertal [5], at the ornithological institute of Helgoland and at the ornithological institute of Rossitten/East Prussia.

Hinsche and Bernhardt made the film "Gefiederte Räuber" [6] ("Birds of prey") together in 1920. They had been instructed to make such a film by "Dresdner FilmFirma A. Linke" (Dresden Film-Firm A. Linke) and the "Landesverein Sächsischer Heimatschutz" (Association of the protection of the countryside in Saxony) and did the shooting in the area around Radeberg, mainly in the valley of Hüttertal. They were about to make another film in the reserve of birds in the north of Dobrudscha, the Danube delta. But Hinsche had to make preparations for his Canada-expedition. The State Museum of Zoology Dresden had succeeded in getting the permission from the authorities in Canada for Hinsche to go on a scientific expedition there in order to collect mammals and birds.

Expedition to Canada

On May 26, 1926, Hinsche got ready for his journey and boarded together with his partner Georg Naumann (*November 10, 1901, Radeberg; + June 6, 1978, Athabasca/Upper Wells) the RMS "Empress of France" from Hamburg to Quebec, both of them almost without means. Until September 1926, they worked on a farm in Headingly near Winnipeg/Manitoba to earn the necessary money for their equipment to survive in the primeval forests of Canada and to be able to go to the north of the Canadian Province of Alberta, to Athabasca.

Athabasca/Alberta

At the beginning of October 1926, they ventured further into the wilderness and went ca. 220 km downstream the Athabasca River and northwards, through the rapids of the Pelican-River into the area of Pelican Portage. Together they built a log cabin and lived as trappers. Both of them made their living from the selling of animal's skins. However, they separated from each other after a year for reasons to do with their economical situation. At the same time Max Hinsche shot big game, such as moose, bears, deer, elk, lynxes, wolves, foxes in a purposeful manner, and also small mammals and birds which were still unknown at that time, and which he prepared and stuffed for the Museum of Zoology Dresden. In January 1931, he went for a short holiday to Germany. Here he was awarded with a gold medal for his stuffed animal of a huge life-size moose (*Alces alces andersoni*) at a hunting exhibition in Berlin on the occasion of "Grüne Woche" (Green week). In June 1931 he returned to Canada. Living there as a trapper and all on his own, he had to face extremely difficult living conditions. Every time he met native descendants of the Indian tribe of the Cree (especially the Plains Cree), his behavior towards them bore all the marks of humanity and willingness to help. [2]

Yukon Territory

At the end of 1934 he started to go to the north-west, to the Yukon-Territory. He had always dreamed of going to that uncharted region where many mountains were still without names. He wanted to hunt there and collect rare species of big game. It can be proved that Hinsche was the first "white hunter" there. Near the terminus of the Kaskawulsh-Glacier, at the confluence of the Kaskawulsh River and the Alsek River, he shot the Alaska-gigant bear (Kodiak-bear, *Ursus arctos middendorffi*), the only bear of its kind that has been seen in that region up to now. It is still a sensation; those bears are found absolutely seldom on the mainland. The bear that was shot by Hinsche was 3 metres high, when placed in an upright position, and had a weight of 500 kilograms. Only in March 2014 its hide, which was prepared for long durability, turned up again [7] and was identified [8] in "Senckenberg Naturhistorische Sammlungen Dresden, Museum für Tierkunde" (Senckenberg Museum of natural history collection Dresden, Museum of Zoology). It had been assumed that the hide was lost owing to war damage.

In the mountains and the alpine ice fields of the Yukon Territory he shot rare mountain sheep, among others Dall-sheep (*Ovis dalli*) and the extremely rare mountain goats (*Oreamnos americanus*), which can be found only at heights of 3,000 to 5,000 metres, Alaska-Yukon Moose (*Alces alces gigas*), caribous (*Rangifer tarandus*) or reindeer, brown bears (*Ursus arctos*), among them grizzlies (*Ursus arctos horribilis*), black bears (*Ursus americanus*), beavers (*Castor canadensis*). He lived in the Yukon Territory for almost one year, most of the time as a nomad, equipped with a simple tent. He had to survive temperatures of up to minus 60 degrees Celsius, and the inconceivable forces of nature.

In that time he went out on expeditions to the Kaskawulsh River, into the McArthur Mountains; he almost came to the Arctic Circle, to the Malaspina Glacier and the Kluene Lake. When asked by the Canadian authorities, Hinsche worked out a list of wild animals on the basis of his scientific observations for the authorities in Whitehorse. He also put necessary proposals forward for protecting those animals. Some years later, a part of that huge area was protected by law, which was the basis of the Kluane-National Park (Kluane National Park and Reserve of Canada), founded in 1976.

Back in Germany

At the end of December 1934 Hinsche's residence permit expired. In February 1935 he went back to Germany, to his home town Radeberg. Back in Germany after 9 years, he was confronted with a country that bore all the marks of National Socialism. With the help of the government of Saxony, the Museum of Zoology Dresden bought a large part of the valuable and rare items of Hinsche's collection from Canada. In the 'goods inward' books of the Museum of Zoology you can still find a list of over 130 kinds of animals, trophies and skins of animals and birds, documented by Hinsche, which were all preserved through the art of taxidermy. A large part of those exhibits, amongst them extremely valuable and rare species (birds mainly in pairs) survived the Second World War by relocating the exhibits to other places. They can still be seen in the Museum of Zoology, Dresden (Senckenberg museum of natural history collection).

Already in September 1935 Hinsche's longing for being in harmony with nature and his own body increased again. He also wanted to get away from the notorious gauleiter and Reich Governor Martin Mutschmann, who wanted to use Hinsche and his popularity for his dirty aims. His retreat was the Saxon Switzerland, the frontier area of the Bohemian Switzerland. There he went to Hinterdaubitz and the area around Reinhardtsdorf, where he

worked as a manager of a hunting ground.

Romania / Transylvania

A year later Hinsche got an offer from an heir of the "Kaufhaus Renner" in Dresden (department store 'Renner') to work as a manager of his hunting ground in the Carpathian Mountains / Transylvania. Hinsche started his new job in August 1936. That hunting ground in the Carpathians, south of Mühlbach (district Alba), between Surian-Mühlbacher Gebirge and Zibinsgebirge, extended over area of about 300 square kilometres and up to altitudes of over 2,200 metres above sea level. There he worked for over a year. During that time he traveled via Bucharest to the Black Sea and into the bird paradise of Dobrudscha. He succeeded in collecting rare bird skins, among them sea eagles (*Haliaeetus albicilla*), Eastern Imperial Eagles (*Aquila heliaca*), various kinds of vultures (*Aegypiinae*), Great Bustards (*Otis tarda*), wood grouses (*Tetrao urogallus*) and others.

During the time in the Carpathians he also worked on his manuscript for his book 'Kanada wirklich erlebt' (Canada really experienced), which was published in 1938 for the first time.

Return to Radeberg

In October 1937 Hinsche returned to Radeberg. In January 1938 he was honored by the Museum of Zoology Dresden with a special display of his most beautiful and valuable skins and stuffed animals, which were highly recognized among experts. One of Hinsche's friends, the owner of the manor in Kleinwolmsdorf Hans Fleischer (1892 – 1967) recruited him to work in his hunting ground in Karlswald as a game keeper, providing him a reliable income in addition to his work as a taxidermist. In Radeberg Hinsche was engaged in his trade as a taxidermist on his plot 'Kleinwolmsdorfer Straße 7'. In his company publication you can read 'Specialist for hunting trophies with 25-year-experience at home and abroad'. In his publication he also gives instructions how to preserve and handle them. After his return from Canada Hinsche was engaged in publishing and in a series of lectures and presentations that he gave for the experts and for the public. [9]

Hinsche had a lasting effect on generations. He introduced interested young people to the job of a taxidermist and into the art of dermoplastics. One of them was the later famous entomologist Werner Heinz Muche (1911 – 1987) from Radeberg. Because Hinsche wasn't good at doing business, Muche took on the job of selling rare species, skins and trophies to museums institutes and universities later, among others to the University of Forestry Eberswalde and to the collection of Julius Riemer (1880 – 1959) in Wittenberg.

Styria

In 1939 Max Hinsche's state of health got worse. He had always suffered from stomach complaint after his years of privation in Canada. He ignored the advice of his friends and his family to undergo an operation and accepted an invitation of one of his hunting friends to work as a forest warden in Styria. He was absolutely determined to shoot a special kind of charmois, which would complete his collection. In November 1939 he went to Rottenmann in Styria. From there he climbed up on the mountains to hunt. He succeeded in shooting a charmois, but the strenuous climb in the almost impassable mountain wilderness resulted in a perforation of his stomach. Help came too late and Hinsche died at the age of 43 in hospital in Rottenmann. There, at the cemetery in Rottenmann, he was laid to rest, too.

Merits

Hinsche's pioneering work on the exploration of the northern Alberta and the Yukon Territory is highly recognized. He was acknowledged as the first explorer and collector of zoological objects in those regions who described his observations as a trapper, a big-game hunter and a taxidermist and his conclusions in a book, namely in 'Kanada wirklich erlebt' (Canada – really experienced). In the archive of Schloss Klippenstein (Castle Klippenstein) in Radeberg you can find Hinsche's original diaries with his daily notes and other written documents from his time in Alberta.

Hinsche's photo album with a lot of photos (in private ownership), started by himself, and his collections reflect his hard life under extreme conditions in the far North of Canada from 1926 to 1936. They are of remarkably good quality considering Hinsche's conditions of life. So are most of his stuffed animals, among them species of mammals and birds from the Canadian wilderness that are already died out there today. You can find items of Hinsche's collection, for example, in the Museum of Zoology Dresden (Senckenberg museum of natural history collection), Naturkundemuseum Leipzig (museum of nature study), in Berlin, Basle Rome, in the Julius-Riemer-Museum in Lutherstadt Wittenberg (Luther's town of Wittenberg), in the University of Forestry Eberswalde, in the Museum Schloss Klippenstein in Radeberg (Castle Klippenstein) and in the school named Pestalozzischule Radeberg. Hinsche's observations and analysis of the behavior of wolves (*Canis lupus*) are highly informative for scientists of today, too. Scientists of the University of Calgary refer to Hinsche's important discoveries in their current studies about the problems of the reintegration of wolves that live in the wilderness, into cultivated and inhabited areas. [10] [11] [12]

In 2014 members of the study group 'History of the town of Radeberg' delved into Hinsche's life and work. Hardly anybody knew anything about him then. The studies resulted in publishing the book with the title "Traum von Kanada – Traum von Freiheit. Das Leben des Max Hinsche" [13] (The dream of Canada – the dream of freedom. The life of Max Hinsche). Soon after that, on the initiative of "Förderverein Hüttertal e.V." (association for supporting) Hinsche's work was acknowledged with a memorial site (a kind of grove) – the Max-Hinsche-Hain [14] in Hüttertal (valley) Radeberg. That event, and with it Hinsche's life, was appreciated in many publications. [15][16] [17] [18] [19]