

Nikolai Petrovich Prokopyev, a well-known zoologist (1944–2020)

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On 11 April this year, Nikolai Petrovich Prokopyev, a well-known Yakut scientist - zoologist and ecologist, Candidate of Biological Sciences, veteran of the Research Institute of Applied Ecology of the North of the North Federal University of Yakutia, would have turned 80 years old.

Nikolai Petrovich was born during the Great Patriotic War, on 11 April 1944 in the village of Chymnaiyi, Ust-Amga legacy of the Tattinsky district of the Yakut ASSR in a family of rural toilers. His childhood was spent on the picturesque banks of the Amga River.

Like all rural children, Kolya, experienced all the hardships of the post-war years from an early age. In those years, the collective farmers of the Yakut hinterland, as well as all Soviet people, worked hard to rebuild the war-ravaged national economy. But they were happy that the sufferings of the war were over, and they piously believed that a bright future was waiting for all of them. Young people of those years strived to get a decent education. After graduating from secondary school in Cherkeh in 1963 and working in production on the 'Communism' collective farm, Nikolai Prokopyev entered the Biology and Geography Faculty of Yakutsk State University in 1966, from which he graduated in 1970 as a biologist and a teacher of biology and chemistry. The professors noticed the inquisitive and hard-working student with a passion for science and offered him a place at the Department of Zoology. In the same year Nikolai became the head of the zoological museum of the BGF YSU, where he worked until 1983. In 1972, Nikolai Petrovich entered the postgraduate programme of the Department of Zoology, Faculty of Biology and Geography, YSU, specialising in zoology, where, under the guidance of Prof. I.I. Mordosov, he chose a topic devoted to the study of the ecology of small mammals of Central Yakutia. After completing his postgraduate studies, he spent a year as an intern at the Department of Zoology, Faculty of Biology and Soil Science, Tomsk State University. In 1982, Nikolai Petrovich successfully defended his thesis 'Narrow-skulled Vole in Central Yakutia' at the Special Academic Council of Zoological Sciences at the Biological Institute of the Siberian Branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences (Novosibirsk).

In the period 1983-1991, N.P. Prokopyev worked as a junior researcher at the Institute of Biology, YD SB AS USSR. In 1991 he moved to the Department of Nature Conservation of the YSC SB RAS at the invitation of Prof. D.D. Savvinov.

From then on, Nikolai Petrovich worked successfully at the Institute of Applied Ecology of the North of the Academy of Sciences of the RS(Y), then at the M.K. Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University for many years until his retirement in 2013.

The main direction of Nikolai Petrovich's scientific activity was the study of regularities of interrelations between herbivorous mammals and various components of the alas ecosystems of the Lena-Amga interfluvium. His research, carried out between 1986 and 1995, focused on understanding the functional role of animals in ecosystems and identifying the peculiarities in the functioning of biogeocenoses as a result of the activity of mammals. Mouse-like rodents, which make up the majority of the biomass of all mammal species in the Lena-Amga interfluvium, were the focus of Prokopyev's research. The main results of these studies were summarised in the monograph 'Plant-eating mammals of the alas ecosystems' (Yakutsk, 2011).

In the following years, he conducted research on the impact of mining on the population of small mammals in Yakutia. As part of his research into the anthropogenic impact on fauna, Nikolai Petrovich worked in many industrial areas of our republic, the results of which were published in leading Russian journals.

Nikolai Petrovich, as one of the leading specialists on fauna, actively participated in the scientific researches of the Institute of Applied Ecology of the North. An experienced field researcher, he has often travelled to many regions of Yakutia as a member of scientific expeditions. He willingly shared his ability to collect the necessary scientific material with young researchers. As a representative of Soviet academic science, his notes in the field diaries were always meticulous and accurate, which helped in the later processing and analysis of the collected material.

The recognition of his works by the scientific community of the republic confirms the high qualification of N.P. Prokopyev as a scientist-teriozoologist. Thus, in 2015 the monograph 'Mammals of the Lena-Aldan interfluvium' written by Dr. I.I. Mordosov and Cand. N.P. Prokopyev, two well-known zoologists of Yakutia, was named the best scientific publication of the year. This was indeed a well-deserved appreciation of the long-term work of the authors, who managed to generalise the data on the theriofauna, landscape and biotope distribution of wild animals in the vast region of Yakutia. In the monograph, not only the issues of wildlife nutrition and reproduction and their practical significance were considered in detail, but also the optimal model of the strategy of protection and rational use of the theriofauna of the Lena-Aldan interfluvium was worked out.

For many years Nikolai Petrovich was actively engaged in popularisation of science in the republic. In various journals and newspapers N.P. Prokopyev published more than 20 popular scientific works, essays and memoirs devoted to the problems of zoology, hunting and ecology.

Nikolai Petrovich Prokopyev deservedly enjoyed great authority among his fellow ecologists for many years due to his devotion to science, diligence, determination and high moral qualities such as honesty, kindness and modesty. Nikolai Petrovich's merits in the development of science in Yakutia were marked by many federal and republican departmental awards, including the Diploma of the Russian Academy of Sciences (1999), the Honorary Diploma of the All-Russian Public Organisation 'Russian Geographical Society' (2013), the Diploma of the YSC SB RAS (1997), the Badge of the Ministry of Science and Professional Education of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) 'For Merit in Science' (2009), and others.

Main scientific works of Candidate of Biological Sciences, Senior Researcher, N. P. Prokopyev

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