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IN MEMORY OF GERMAN VASILYEVICH KUZNETSOV

(1.09.1940 – 1.05.2022)

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Abstract. This is an essay on life and work of one of the main specialists on Vietnam's biodiversity, who spent many years investigating tropical forests of the country, the author of over a hundred articles on the results of those investigations and of the book "Mammals of Vietnam".

Keywords: Vietnam, mammals, Russian-Vietnamese Tropical Center.

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On May 1, 2022, German Vasilyevich Kuznetsov passed away. Being among the participants of the first expeditions within the framework of Soviet-Vietnamese cooperation in 1978, he was one of the chief specialists on Vietnam's biodiversity, who made the invaluable contribution to its study (Fig. 1).

German Vasilyevich was born on September 1, 1940 in Moscow. During the World War II he spent his early childhood in evacuation in Kazakhstan, and till 1956 he lived in village Izhevskoe of Ryazan oblast. In 1956 he returned to Moscow and in 1959 entered the biological faculty of Lomonosov Moscow State University. He graduated from the university in 1964. Since 1967 G.V. Kuznetsov worked in the A.N. Severtsov Institute of animal evolutionary morphology and ecology AS USSR (now A.N. Severtsov Institute of Ecology and Evolution RAS).

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Fig. 1. German Vasilyevich Kuznetsov. *Photo: T.N. Filatova*

At the end of 1979 the Institute of animal evolutionary morphology and ecology in cooperation with the Institute of Biology of the SRV National Center of scientific investigations organized work on investigation of Vietnam's fauna and biological resources with the purpose to conduct deep and comprehensive research of fauna as an important element of tropical forests (on the history of those works see: [Bobrov 2017]). Originally all the investigations were carried out at the station Buon Luoi in Central Highlands (Tay Nguyen), Gia Lai–Kon Tum province (now Gia Lai province). German Vasilyevich took part in that expedition. The results of works were published in “Animal World of Vietnam”, a collection of articles [1982] opened with the article summarizing the results of the investigations of mammals of Vietnam, G.V. Kuznetsov was one of the article's co-authors [Sokolov et al. 1982]. Since then, German Vasilyevich participated in all those expeditions; their results were published in articles, the first list of mammals of Vietnam among them [Sokolov et al. 1986].

A new strong impetus for Soviet-Vietnamese investigations of biodiversity of Vietnam was attached with the establishment of Joint Soviet-Vietnamese (now The Joint Russian-Vietnamese Tropical Research and Technological Center (Tropcenter) (on the history of establishing and functioning of this unique organization see: [Bobrov 2020]). In 1996 Tropcenter launched a series of complex zoological and botanical expeditions; German Vasilyevich participated in all those expeditions. The result of his many years of work and consolidation of the collected data was his doctor dissertation [Kuznetsov 2003], soon followed with the monumental monograph “Mammals of Vietnam” [Kuznetsov 2006], which for many years was the manual for all mammalogists working in Vietnam, as well as for specialists on other animal groups (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Cover of “Mammals of Vietnam” (2006).

Photo: T.N. Filatova

The book contains a systematic review of more than 300 species of mammals, analyzes taxonomic diversity, the structure of mammals' fauna and their zoogeographical links. It describes the species diversity of local faunas, also, in connection with vertical zonation, examines possible ways of Vietnam's fauna formation. The book shows the impact of contemporary anthropogenic landscape transformation on Vietnam's

fauna diversity and mammals' ecology. It exposes at length the materials devoted to the impact of anthropogenic factors on resistance of various species of rodents. The results can be used for monitoring the current condition of tropical forests, what attaches a great practical value to the book.

In the early 2000s German Vasilyevich, his wife Tatyana Nikolaevna Filatova, and V.V. Bobrov, one of the authors of this essay, worked for several years in the laboratory of general and applied ecology of the Tropcenter South Department in Ho Chi Minh City. During those years we visited many regions of South Vietnam, and spend weeks and even months in the heart of tropical forests (Fig. 3). G.V. Kuznetsov published about a hundred articles on the results of those investigations, each of them was a significant contribution to Vietnam's fauna study.



Fig. 3. G.V. Kuznetsov in the tropical forest of Vietnam. *Photo: T.N. Filatova*

It is noteworthy that in one of collections of articles there was published G.V. Kuznetsov's article devoted to the greatest Vietnamese zoologist Dao Van Tien [Kuznetsov 1998], whose works served for education of several generations of Vietnamese scientists. This article shows Kuznetsov as a master of biographical genre.

In recent years, again in Russia, German Vasilyevich paid great attention to popularization. From 2009 to 2015 he published (co-authored with his wife) six articles on Vietnam's nature and fauna in "The World of Animals" popular science magazine. One of his articles describes the yellow-footed squirrel (*Callosciurus flavimanus*). Once the scientist saved such a squirrel-baby. She lived in his flat and grew quite tamed [Kuznetsov, Filatova 2010]. You can see her in the picture (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. G.V. Kuznetsov with the squirrel Masha. *Photo: T.N. Filatova*

It seems symbolic that the last article by G.V. Kuznetsov [Kuznetsov, Filatova 2015] was dedicated to Sai Gon (now Ho Chi Minh City), the city where he spent, probably, the best years of his career, closely connected with Vietnam, where he left not a particle of his heart, but a great part of it.

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