

MEMORIAL DATE

HERPETOLOGIST ZOYA PAVLONA KHONYAKINA (the 100th anniversary)

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of Zoya Pavlona Khonyakina, a zoologist, teacher and wonderful person who is known for her studies on amphibians and reptiles native to Caucasus. Unfortunately, her death was not marked by an obituary or press reports as a result of a difficult economic situation in Russia, especially in the North Caucasus, at this time. In addition, the herpetological society at the time was not aware of the year of death of Khonyakina. We have written this article



Fig. 1. Zoya Pavlovna Khonyakina. 1970.

to correct this. A biographical sketch of Khonyakina published in the memorial issue dedicated to the 90th anniversary of Ilya Darevsky not without reasons. She was the first scientist to present her defense for her candidate dissertation (equivalent to PhD) under his supervision.

Zoya Khonyakina (Fig. 1) was born to a family of railway workers on December 24, 1914, in the village of Novokhoperskiy in the Voronezh region. Since her earliest childhood, she was fascinated by natural science. In 1931, she successfully graduated from high school and entered the Faculty of Biology of the Voronezh State University. Even as a student, she began to produce active scientific work. She received valuable advice from the famous herpetologists Alexandra M. Andrushko, Oleg P. Bogdanov, and Paul V. Terentyev, and especially her Ph.D. thesis supervisor Ilya S. Darevsky. For her diploma in research, she studied the detailed biology of amphibians in the famous Caucasian Reserve. These studies resulted in her published first scientific work and she subsequently defended her diploma thesis. In 1936, she graduated from university as a specialist in vertebrate zoology and qualified as a scientist of the 2nd category in the biological sciences, eligible for college and high school teaching positions. Zoya Pavlovna started her career in July 1936, immediately after completing university, as a research fellow at the Caucasian Reserve, where she continued her research work.



Fig. 2. Dagestan State University, Makhachkala, Russia.



Fig. 3. Sarykum sand dune, Kumtorkala, Dagestan, Russia.

In 1940, Zoya Khonyakina accompanied her husband, the famous scientist and botanist Peter L. Lvov (1908 – 1995), to his work at the Dagestan Pedagogical Institute (renamed the Dagestan State University in 1957) after his graduation from doctoral studies at Voronezh University. All her subsequent scientific and pedagogical work, which began in 1942, took place within this institution. Here, she was promoted from the position of a senior laboratory assistant of the Department of Chemistry to Assistant Professor of the Department of Zoology (Fig. 2), where she worked until May 1973 before retiring.

Zoya Pavlovna has made significant contributions to the study of lizards that are native to Caucasus. In 1956, she began a stationary study of the fauna of vertebrates of the unique Sarykum sand dune (Fig. 3). At this time, she chose herpetology as her specialization. The main object of her study was the psammophilous lizards, which had not been intensively studied before. Within a short period of work, Khonyakina obtained the results she wanted and published papers on various aspects of the biology of these lizards. These and other accumulated data served as the basis for her Ph.D. thesis *Lizards of Dagestan*, in which she studied 14 species of lizards; these included the Caspian gecko which was recorded for the first time. This thesis paid particular attention to lizards of Turanian origin, which main area is located eastwards of the Caspian Sea, i.e., in the sandy deserts of Central Asia: *Phrynocephalus mystaceus* (Fig. 4), *Ph. guttatus* (Fig. 5), *Trapelus sanguinolentus*, *Eremias velox*, and *E. arguta*.



Fig. 4. *Phrynocephalus mystaceus*. Sarykum sand dune, Kumtorkala, Dagestan, Russia.



Fig. 5. *Phrynocephalus guttatus* from sand biotopes, vicinity of Leninaul village, Nogai rayon, Dagestan, Russia.

№	Наименование вида	Локация	Дата	Примечания
74	<i>Boettgeria caucasia</i> - <i>Parus major</i> L.	о.с.с.г. в долине	19-10	3-4 x 3 x 3 x 3
75	<i>Aspergeria</i> - <i>Parus caucasicus</i>	о.с.с.г.	11	4
76	<i>Aspergeria</i> - <i>Parus caucasicus</i>	о.с.с.г.	11	4
77	<i>Aspergeria</i> - <i>Parus caucasicus</i>	о.с.с.г.	11	4
78	<i>Aspergeria</i> - <i>Parus caucasicus</i>	о.с.с.г.	11	4
79	<i>Aspergeria</i> - <i>Parus caucasicus</i>	о.с.с.г.	11	4
80	<i>Aspergeria</i> - <i>Parus caucasicus</i>	о.с.с.г.	11	4
81	<i>Aspergeria</i> - <i>Parus caucasicus</i>	о.с.с.г.	11	4
82	<i>Aspergeria</i> - <i>Parus caucasicus</i>	о.с.с.г.	11	4
83	<i>Aspergeria</i> - <i>Parus caucasicus</i>	о.с.с.г.	11	4
84	<i>Aspergeria</i> - <i>Parus caucasicus</i>	о.с.с.г.	11	4
85	<i>Aspergeria</i> - <i>Parus caucasicus</i>	о.с.с.г.	11	4
86	<i>Aspergeria</i> - <i>Parus caucasicus</i>	о.с.с.г.	11	4
87	<i>Aspergeria</i> - <i>Parus caucasicus</i>	о.с.с.г.	11	4
88	<i>Aspergeria</i> - <i>Parus caucasicus</i>	о.с.с.г.	11	4
89	<i>Aspergeria</i> - <i>Parus caucasicus</i>	о.с.с.г.	11	4
90	<i>Aspergeria</i> - <i>Parus caucasicus</i>	о.с.с.г.	11	4
91	<i>Aspergeria</i> - <i>Parus caucasicus</i>	о.с.с.г.	11	4
92	<i>Aspergeria</i> - <i>Parus caucasicus</i>	о.с.с.г.	11	4
93	<i>Aspergeria</i> - <i>Parus caucasicus</i>	о.с.с.г.	11	4
94	<i>Aspergeria</i> - <i>Parus caucasicus</i>	о.с.с.г.	11	4
95	<i>Aspergeria</i> - <i>Parus caucasicus</i>	о.с.с.г.	11	4
96	<i>Aspergeria</i> - <i>Parus caucasicus</i>	о.с.с.г.	11	4
97	<i>Aspergeria</i> - <i>Parus caucasicus</i>	о.с.с.г.	11	4
98	<i>Aspergeria</i> - <i>Parus caucasicus</i>	о.с.с.г.	11	4
99	<i>Aspergeria</i> - <i>Parus caucasicus</i>	о.с.с.г.	11	4
100	<i>Aspergeria</i> - <i>Parus caucasicus</i>	о.с.с.г.	11	4

Fig. 6. Page from field diary of Zoya Khonyakina.

In Dagestan, these lizards inhabit the periphery of their ranges in different climatic conditions.

When one of the authors (Natalia Ananjeva) met Khonyakina in Makhachkala in 1978, after her retirement, she gave some very impressive and vivid expert opinions on her field of study. She also donated the series of skulls of *Trapelus sanguinolentus* from Nogay steppe to store in Zoological Institute. Her practical advice and publications were of great value to Natalia Ananjeva with regards to the collection and analysis of materials from the agamid lizards of North Caucasus. It is sufficient to say that after Tsarevsky and Shibanov, Khonyakina was the only scientist who has studied the structural characteristics of the skull and geographic variations in North Caucasian populations of lizards of the *Phrynocephalus* genus including those inhabiting the unique Sarykum sand dunes.

Her research portfolio is impressive with regard to its thoroughness and scientific importance, with years

of relevance and major contributions to the development of the field of herpetology. She continued to work actively, exploring the lowland, parts of the foothills and mountain areas, to study the species composition of the vertebrate fauna of Dagestan and create a detailed list of the amphibians and reptiles. Some aspects of the biology of many species were studied for the first time, such as those described in the regional faunistic reviews in *Fauna of Dagestan* (Khonyakina, 1967) and *The Fauna of Dagestan* (Khonyakina, 1975), which include species accounts of 6 species of amphibians and 35 species of reptiles.

In the 1960 – 1970s, she published a number of works, most of which were devoted to the detailed study of the biology of the Turanian species of agamid and lacertid lizards of the genera *Phrynocephalus*, *Trapelus*, *Paralaudakia*, and *Eremia*, as well as other species such as *Lacerta agilis*, *L. strigata*, and *L. media*. She also published a number of papers related to the biology of anurans, problems regarding the conservation of amphibians and reptiles, and the general study of reptiles including helminthofauna. However, Zoya Khonyakina was a zoologist of the true academic type, as her wide research interests were not limited to herpetology. She also published papers on the biology of birds and mammals (Fig. 6). In addition, she was interested in different fields of zoological research, ranging across systematics, zoogeography, faunistics, and field research methods.

She accumulated the most valuable collection of amphibians and reptiles from the eastern Caucasus, which is now stored at the Zoological Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Zoological Museum of Moscow State University. She published about 6 – 7 dozen publications in total from 1938 – 1998, which remain invaluable and have contributed significantly to the development of herpetology and zoology.

We would also like to underline the pedagogical talents of Zoya Khonyakina. She was the most successful combination of a thorough scientist and educator. According to the opinion of her students, she dedicated much time and effort to helping them and was a kind and sympathetic person. She retired early to pursue her other creative interests and gave her position to a young colleague. However, she continued to conduct research and publish work until her death in 1998.

Her important scientific contributions and immense research work in this area has placed her name among the best herpetologists of the Soviet Union.

Liudmila Mazanaeva,
Natalia Ananjeva,
Igor Doronin