



On the 75th anniversary of Alexandr Pavlovich Rasnitsyn К 75-летию Александра Павловича Расницына

Alexandr Pavlovich Rasnitsyn was born on September 24th, 1936 in Moscow, USSR. He joined Moscow State University in 1955. In 1960, A.P. Rasnitsyn prepared a Master of Science thesis entitled «Hibernation of ichneumon flies of the subfamily Ichneumoninae» and graduated from the MSU Department of Entomology (that time lead by Prof. E.S. Smirnov) with a Master's degree in Biology (with honour). The same year he started to work at the Palaeontological Institute, Academy of Sciences of the USSR (now the Russian Academy of Sciences). Here, A.P. Rasnitsyn worked in the Arthropoda Laboratory led by Prof. Boris B. Rohdendorf, first as a technician, then as a junior researcher, a senior researcher, and finally as the Head of the Laboratory (1979 to 1996, and then since 2002 up to now) and Principal Researcher (1996–2002). He got his Doctor of Philosophy degree from the Institute in 1967 for the thesis entitled «Mesozoic Hymenoptera Symphyta and early evolution of Xyelidae». In 1978, A.P. Rasnitsyn received his Doctor of Science degree for the thesis entitled «Origin and evolution of Hymenoptera». A.P. Rasnitsyn got full professorship from the Palaeontological Institute in 1991. He has published about 300 papers, including 13 books, and raised eleven Doctors of Philosophy.

Photo by R.A. Rakitov

A.P. Rasnitsyn is one of the world's leading experts in palaeoentomology. His scientific interests are centered on palaeontology, phylogeny, and taxonomy of hymenopteran insects and of insects in general. He has discovered and described more than 300 taxa of fossil and extant insects, including a new superfamily and five families of extinct Hymenoptera. As an expert on extinct and extant Hymenoptera, A.P. Rasnitsyn has created the most successful phylogenetic reconstruction of the order. He also studies a number of more general biological problems such as evolutionary theory and principles of phylogenetics, taxonomy, and nomenclature.

During his more than twenty collecting seasons, A.P. Rasnitsyn visited many regions of the former Soviet Union, including Fergana, Issyk-Kul and other places in Central Asia, Transbaikalia, Taimyr, Okhotsk, Sikhote-Alin, and other remote localities in Siberia and in other parts of Russia, as well as various fossil sites in Mongolia, the UK, Germany, the USA, and Israel.

In addition to his permanent study and supervision of the collection of fossil insects at the Palaeontological Institute, A.P. Rasnitsyn has thoroughly investigated both living and fossil insects at various institutions in Russia and abroad, namely, in the Zoological Museum, Moscow State University and Zoological Institute, Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg (Russia,

1952-present); the Museum of the Earth (Warsaw), Wrocław University (Wrocław), and the Institute of Zoology (Kraków) (Poland, 1978–1988); Deutsches Entomologisches Institut (Eberswalde), Palaeontologisches Museum, Humboldt University (Berlin) and Universität Göttingen (Germany, 1983–1999); Zoological Museum, University of Copenhagen (Denmark, 2003); Biosystematic Research Centre, Agriculture Canada (Ottawa, Québec, Canada, 1988); Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University (Cambridge, MA), Smithsonian Institution (Washington, DC), American Museum of Natural History (New York, NY), American Entomological Institute (Gainesville, FL), University of Kansas (Lawrence, KS), California Academy of Sciences (San Francisco, CA), etc. (USA, 1989–2008); Natural History Museum and Imperial College (London), Booth Museum of Natural History (Brighton) and the Maidstone Museum and Art Gallery (Maidstone) (UK, 1994–2006); Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle (Paris, France, 1998); Universitat de Barcelona (Barcelona, Spain, 1998); the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, and the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg (South Africa, 2001–2007); Nanjing Institute of Geology and Palaeontology (China, 2002–2010).

A.P. Rasnitsyn participated (often with plenary lectures) in the 13th and 18th International Entomological Congresses (Moscow, 1968; Vancouver, 1988), in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 6th Congresses of the International Society of Hymenopterists (Vancouver, 1988; Sheffield, 1991; Davis, 1995; Sun City, 2006), in the Conference on Major Arthropod Group Relationships (London, 1996), and in the 1st – 5th Palaeontological Congresses (Moscow, 1998; Kraków, 2001; Pretoria, 2005; Vitoria-Gasteiz, 2007; Beijing, 2010), 13th Entomological Congress of the Entomological Society of Southern Africa (Pietermaritzburg, 2001), the 1st and 2nd CIS Symposia on Hymenopterous Insects (Moscow, 2006; St. Petersburg, 2010), and in a few other meetings.

For a long time, A.P. Rasnitsyn was the President of the International Paleontological Society (2001–2005). He is the Vice President of the RAS Scientific Council on Palaeontology and a member of editorial boards of several scientific journals including the Russian Entomological Journal.

A.P. Rasnitsyn is the Honoured Scientist of the Russian Federation (2001) and the Honorary Member of the Russian Entomological Society (2004). He is a recipient of Hans Rausing Award (1st grade – 2003, 2nd grade – 2009) and of the Distinguished Research Medal of the International Society of Hymenopterists (2008).

Despite his numerous commitments, A.P. Rasnitsyn always has time for a friendly and warm discussion of

various research and more general items as well as for a highly qualified advice which are greatly appreciated by many of us. The Editorial Board of the Russian Entomological Journal congratulates Alexandr Pavlovich Rasnitsyn on his 75th anniversary and wishes him health, happiness and fruitful activities in all fields. We dedicate the present issue of the Journal to Prof. A.P. Rasnitsyn. This special issue contains a collection of papers on the order Hymenoptera prepared by just a few out of many more colleagues from Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, the United States of America and the United Arab Emirates.

Main monographs and volumes published and edited by A.P. Rasnitsyn

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- Tatarinov L.P., Rasnitsyn A.P. (eds). 1987. Evolution and biocenotic crises. Moscow: Nauka Press. 159 pp. [in Russian].
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- Zherikhin V.V., Ponomarenko A.G., Rasnitsyn A.P. 2008. Introduction into palaeontology. Moscow: KMK Scientific Press Ltd. 371 pp. [in Russian].

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